

Yeshua Shocks the Pharisees

by Avram Yehoshua

In Matthew 12:1-8, which Mark (2:23-28) and Luke (Lk. 6:1-5) condense, Messiah Yeshua is accosted by some Pharisees for allowing His students (disciples), to pick, rub, and eat grain on the Sabbath. Only Luke speaks of them rubbing the grain together (Lk. 6:1). All three Evangelists have Yeshua's reply about David eating the Bread of the Presence when he was hungry (Lk. 6:3-4), but only Matthew has Yeshua speaking of the priests profaning the Sabbath (Mt. 12:5), by offering not only the regular sacrifices for every day, but additional sacrifices (Num. 28:1-10). Matthew alone records Yeshua as saying, 'One greater than the Temple' was there (Mt. 12:6), along with Hosea's, 'I desire mercy'. All three have Yeshua speaking of Himself as Lord of the Sabbath (Mt. 12:7-8), but only Mark notes that Yeshua said the Sabbath was made for Man, and not Man for the Sabbath (Mk. 2:27).

The Second Sabbath After Passover

(Mt. 12:1; Mk. 2:23; Lk. 6:1)

According to Alfred Edersheim the setting was the second year of Messiah's ministry, just after the Passover. ⁽¹⁾ He and his disciples had been at the synagogue in Capernaum where Yeshua had been, most likely, teaching about the Kingdom. The people, because His teaching was one of authority, with miracles abounding, were literally amazed. ⁽²⁾

From Luke (6:1), we find a peculiar phrase for Shabat (Hebrew for Sabbath). Literally from the Greek it's rendered, the 'second-first Sabbath'. ⁽³⁾ The King James Version translates it as, 'the second Sabbath after the first', which is good. The problem is, what does it mean? Howard Marshall thinks it means the,

'second Sabbath after the Feast of Unleavened Bread', 'the first Sabbath being that which fell during the actual week of the feast'. ⁽⁴⁾

He is correct. Alfred Edersheim shows us that 'first' in the phrase ('second-first Sabbath'), refers to the day when the Omer count ⁽⁵⁾ would begin during Passover week. ⁽⁶⁾ In Lev. 23:9-16 the Lord speaks of offering up to Him a new grain offering (which would be wheat), seven weeks or Sabbaths from the time of the Passover Sabbath. With this we know that it was spring time, just a Sabbath after Passover week, most likely a Sabbath in mid to late April.

Unlawful to Pick Grain on the Sabbath?

(Mt. 12:2; Mk. 2:24; Lk. 6:2)

The grain that was being picked was wheat, as barley would have ripened and been harvested before Passover (Lev. 23:10). On any common day (days 1-6; i.e. Sunday through Friday), the students of Yeshua picking, rubbing and eating grain from a field not their's, was lawful. They were certainly not seen as stealing the grain. God, in His mercy, had set up Commandments to deal with hungry folks in others' fields:

'When you enter your neighbor's standing grain, then you may pluck (pick), the heads with your hand, but you shall not wield a sickle in your neighbor's standing grain' (Dt. 23:25; this was also true of grapes in a neighbor's vineyard, 23:24; and would have naturally extended to any produce in a field).

They weren't to put any grain in their pockets to take home with them but they could eat till their hunger was satisfied. The problem was that this wasn't a common day. It was Yahveh's 7th Day Shabat and He states that we're not to work on His Shabat (Ex. 20:10, etc.). The Pharisees accused the disciples of working on Shabat: 'Why do you do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?' (Lk. 6:2). They saw what the disciples did as 'work'. This was no light matter. Sabbath desecration was punishable by death.⁽⁷⁾ Yahveh said to Moses:

'Speak to the Sons of Israel, saying, 'You must observe My Sabbaths for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am Yahveh who sanctifies you.⁽⁸⁾ Therefore you are to observe the Sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it must be put to death for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people' (Ex. 31:13-14).⁽⁹⁾

The Talmud, in Shabat 7.2, states that there are 39 different kinds or categories of work prohibited on Shabat.⁽¹⁰⁾ Everyone there that day knew that they weren't to work on Yahveh's Sabbath. Was it really 'work' to do what the disciples did? According to the Pharisees it was.

David Stern tells us that Messiah's students picking the grain, were seen by the Pharisees as reaping or harvesting. Of course, reaping was something that was forbidden. And their rubbing of it in their hands (to take the husks off),⁽¹¹⁾ was seen as threshing (or winnowing), the grain.⁽¹²⁾ Threshing grain was definitely considered work too. And Marshall says that their eating of the grain was tantamount to having 'prepared a meal' on the Sabbath, which was also forbidden.⁽¹³⁾ Food can be prepared on an annual Sabbath like the first day of Unleavened Bread (Ex. 12:16), but not on the 7th Day Sabbath (Ex. 16:4-5, 22-30). In other words, food should be prepared on Friday to be eaten on Shabat. Why hadn't the disciples done that?

The disciples picking, rubbing and eating of the grain were seen as three distinct sins by the Pharisees. Edersheim tells us that,

'according to the Talmud, what was really one labour, would, if made up of several acts, each of them

forbidden, amount to several acts of labour, each involving sin, punishment, and a sin offering.⁽¹⁴⁾

Edersheim goes on to reveal a passage from the Talmud (Jer. Shab. 10a), that must have been going through the heads of the Pharisees as they watched the disciples pick, rub and eat their grain:

'In case a woman rolls wheat to remove the husks, it is considered as sifting; if she rubs the heads of wheat, it is regarded as threshing; if she cleans off the side-adherences, it is sifting out fruit; if she bruises the ears, it is grinding; if she throws them up in her hand, it is winnowing.'⁽¹⁵⁾

It's extremely interesting though, that Yeshua doesn't take the Pharisees to task for their interpretation or understanding of what constituted work, in this case, the picking, rubbing and 'preparing'. At least, not at first. On the other hand, He would have certainly agreed with them that harvesting, winnowing and preparing meals on Shabat was sin. God is serious about resting on His Shabat. Rest implies the freedom that God has given to us. When we were in Egypt, we worked seven days a week. There was no rest for us. In Yahveh's Kingdom though, we rest from the toils of this life and enter into His Presence which refreshes and invigorates us. The Sabbath is a concrete picture of Yahveh's redemption.

Yeshua strikes directly at the heart of the matter. He doesn't quibble over whether it's sin to do those things. Can you imagine if He did?

Yeshua: 'I don't consider what My students have done as breaking the Sabbath.'

The Pharisaic leader of the group: 'Well, according to our laws, and the laws of our Fathers, we consider it a sin.'

Yeshua: 'Well, I don't. My Father says it's not a sin.'

The leader: 'Well, we do! And by the way, we thought your father, or blessed memory, was dead.'

Ad nauseam. Yeshua wouldn't have gotten anywhere with them and we wouldn't have understood the matter any better. In His defense, Yeshua appeals twice to the Old Testament (David, and then the priests of the Temple), to justify what the disciples did. He issued three New Testament revelations about Himself, one implied, based on what He says about David. He implies that He too is on a royal mission, which means He is the Messiah, David's Son.

By speaking of being greater than the Temple, He declared that He was deity, for the Temple housed Yahveh (John 2:16). By saying that He was Lord of the Sabbath, He again proclaims His deity. Any one of these would have been enough to supersede the Sabbath restriction. All three together form a veritable fortress defense for what the disciples did.

David and the Bread

(Mt. 12:3-4; Mk. 2:25-26; Lk. 6:3-4)

Yeshua's initial reference about David comes from 1st Sam. 21:1-9, where David, escaping the wrath of King Saul, tells the High Priest that he is on a mission from King Saul and needs some food for him and his men. In the story, David doesn't seem to have any men with him, but Yeshua relates that he did. Whether Yeshua is just following 'David's words' or Yeshua knew that there were actually men with David, remains to be seen. It's possible that David had some men with him. What is understood is that David lied. King Saul hadn't sent him. David was fleeing for his life. Yet, the men David brings up will have a bearing on the event that day, a thousand years later, with Yeshua and his disciples.

David asked the High Priest for some bread but the only thing that he had was the Bread of the Presence. Only the priests were allowed to eat the 12 loaves of the Bread that was in the Presence of Yahveh in the Holy Place. And only after they were taken out of the Holy Place. The loaves were taken out each Shabat, after having been there for a week, and replaced with 12 fresh loaves. The priests were commanded to eat it in a holy place (somewhere on the Tabernacle grounds).

'Then you shall take fine flour and bake twelve cakes' (round loaves) 'with it. Two-tenths of an ephah⁽¹⁶⁾ shall be in each cake. You shall set them in two rows, six to a row, on the Table of pure gold before Yahveh' (Lev. 24:5-6).

'Every Shabat he' (Aaron), 'shall set it in order before Yahveh continually, being taken from the Sons of Israel by an everlasting covenant. And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place, for it is most holy to him from the offerings of Yahveh made by fire, by a perpetual statute' (Lev. 24:8-9).

1 Sam. 21:6: 'So the priest gave him consecrated Bread, for there was no bread there but the Bread of the Presence which was removed from before Yahveh in order to put hot Bread in its place when it was taken away.'

Implied by Yeshua, and seen in David's lie, was that David said he was on a royal mission (sent by King Saul). Yeshua doesn't address the lie, but the fact is that the priest thought David was on an urgent mission from the King. The High Priest gave David the Bread. How much? We don't know. David had initially asked for five loaves, not knowing that there wasn't any common bread available. As such, we don't think that he took all 12 loaves of consecrated Bread, as that would have left the High Priest without any food for him and his sons (if it was Shabat and there were still 12 loaves left). Perhaps David received the five loaves he initially asked for (1st Sam. 21:3)?

The High Priest was righteous. Mark calls him Abiathar although 1st Samuel calls him Ahimelech.⁽¹⁷⁾ The High Priest overrode the fact that neither David, or his men, were priests, not because, as many have thought and preached, they were hungry, but because they were seen as being on an urgent royal mission. Therefore, they would be considered 'consecrated' and able to eat the consecrated Bread.⁽¹⁸⁾

Hunger was not the primary consideration.

Yeshua too, was on an urgent royal mission. Only He had truly been sent by the King of Israel; His Father. And as such, those that followed Him were considered 'consecrated' or 'holy' and also on a royal mission. The disciples were following Him, and not just in the physical realm. They were 'in the service' of the Messiah. They belonged to Him, much as the men of David belonged to David. That's why the High Priest gave the Bread to David, and his men.

The Rabbis thought that the reason was because David was hungry, and that 'danger to life superseded the Sabbath Law, and hence, all laws connected with it.'⁽¹⁹⁾ But they were wrong. Why wasn't hunger the primary motivation (or, as the Pharisees saw it, the sole motivation), for the giving of the Bread to David, and the feeding of the disciples? Neither one was starving to death. It was not a matter of life and death so it shouldn't have fallen under their category of 'danger to life'. David could have gone on and found food elsewhere. And the disciples could have fasted a meal. If their hunger was seen as starvation, the Pharisees wouldn't have bothered Yeshua. Edersheim relates that,

'Even Rabbinism', 'perceived this. It was a principle, that danger to life superseded the Sabbath Law, and indeed all other obligations.'⁽²⁰⁾

More to the point is the question that the High Priest asks David, about his men being defiled, which shows us that it wasn't because David was hungry that he got the Bread. David answers that they weren't defiled. They hadn't had any contact with women in three days or more. They hadn't had sexual intercourse in that time in which any of their semen could have gone on their clothes or in any vessels they might have had or on anything else of theirs.⁽²¹⁾ The Hebrew word klay is translated as 'vessels' (1st Sam. 21:5; NASB; NKJV; KJV), but really carries the connotation of 'clothes, as well as such things as were most necessary to meet the needs of life.'⁽²²⁾

1st Sam. 21:5: 'David answered the priest and said to him, 'Surely women have been kept from us as previously when I set out and the vessels (clothes, etc.), of the young men were holy, for if it was an ordinary journey; how much more then today will their vessels (clothes, etc.) be holy?'

David is both assuring the High Priest that the men's clothes, etc., have not come in contact with any semen, and that he's on a royal mission (by bringing up the 'for if it was an ordinary journey, how much more' today). Contact with semen would have defiled them (Lev. 15:18; Dt. 22:5). That would have been too much for the priest. He would not have given the Bread to David and his men as they would not have been 'consecrated' (on their mission). The High Priest gave David the Bread because David was 'an ambassador of the Lord' and so there was a certain 'holiness' about his mission and his men.⁽²³⁾ The Pharisees didn't understand this.⁽²⁴⁾

The Pharisees believed that what David did, happened on a Shabat,⁽²⁵⁾ even though there is no mention

of it. This is based on 1st Sam. 21:6 where the bread was 'taken from before Yahveh' (which would always be on Shabat). It's an assumption though, as it could easily have been said of that Bread, the next day or the day after, that the Bread had 'been taken' on Shabat with no reference to the day they were speaking. But the point here is that Yeshua knows that the Pharisees believed it was a Shabat, and this also parallels what His students did on that Shabat with the grain. If it was alright for David to eat the Bread of the Presence and give some to his men, and the Rabbis acknowledged that it was, even though they didn't correctly understand why, it should have been alright for His students to do what they did.

Not mentioned by Yeshua, but certainly implied in the story about David, was the fact that Yeshua, like David, was the anointed King of Israel; the Messiah; David's Son. Just as David was not 'recognized' by King Saul as such, so too Yeshua. He was not recognized by the religious authorities of His day (the Pharisees being one such group). David was anointed by Samuel the prophet (1st Sam. 16:1-13), the Holy Spirit coming upon David at that time. Yeshua was anointed when the Holy Spirit descended upon Him at His immersion in the Jordan River (Mt. 3:16; Mk. 1:10; Lk. 3:22; Jn. 1:32).

If David's men could eat consecrated Bread on a Sabbath, then surely, the Son of David could allow His men to eat something that was much less holy than the Bread of the Presence, and actually, not even bread at all but grain. The analogy is lop-sided in favor of the disciples as David's Son would be the Messiah and He was seen as greater than David (Ps. 110:1; Mt. 22:41-46). And, the Bread that David got for his men was only to be eaten by the priests yet the grain that the disciples ate that Shabat was ordinary grain that any animal could eat. Therefore, the Pharisees should not have had any problem with what happened, if they only acknowledged that Yeshua was the Son of David, the Messiah. And by Yeshua's second year of ministry, they would have had ample time and proof to have done so.

Yeshua was saying to the Pharisees that if they had understood that He was the anointed King on a divine mission, the hunger that led the disciples to do what they did that day, would not have been questioned and condemned. Yeshua is actually addressing the Pharisaic perspective head on. He is agreeing with them for the moment, taking their perspective on sin, but saying that in this circumstance, the disciples were not guilty. 'Look at David!' The Sabbath prohibition not to work was 'overruled' by Yeshua being the Messiah, on an urgent royal mission from His Father and the men as such, were in the service of the King. Hunger, as a reason for allowing the men to pick the grain, wouldn't become a primary factor until Yeshua speaks of 'mercy' in Mt. 12:7.

The Priests in the Temple

(Mt. 12:5)

The second reference that Yeshua used invoked the priests who sacrificed at the Temple on Shabat. Sacrifice, the actual slaughtering of the animal, skinning of it, dismembering of it, etc., and placing it on the Altar of Sacrifice was no small amount of work. Yet the priests were not guilty of violating the Sabbath, even though from a physical point of view, Yeshua said they 'profane the Sabbath' (KJV), Mt. 12:5 (NASB: ('break the Sabbath'), by working twice as hard.

Yahveh had commanded the actual doubling of the daily Dedication (whole burnt) sacrifice for the Sabbath (Num. 28:9-10). Was God guilty of breaking His own law? The Pharisees might have thought so, but would never have voiced such. They agreed that it was alright (because they saw no other alternative), but they had no idea why work in the Temple was allowed on the Sabbath, anymore than why David got the Bread. Alfred Edersheim says, 'The Rabbis were by no means clear on the rationale of Sabbath-work in the Temple.'⁽²⁶⁾

God commanded it because it 'just so happened' to fit in with one of four major themes of the Sabbath. The priests were not guilty of Sabbath desecration because one of the concepts of the Sabbath Day (Redeemer-Saviour), pictures what Yahveh did for Israel in saving her from Egyptian slavery (Deut. 5:11-15).⁽²⁷⁾ It also pictures what Yeshua would do in redeeming us from Satan, sin, sickness and death.

The priests were honoring the Sabbath above the others (with more sacrifice), and pictorially representing Yahveh's love and salvation to Israel in sacrificial form, every Sabbath. They were ministering unto Yahveh, which is the essence of the Dedication sacrifice (full and total surrender and dedication to Yahveh pictured in the death of the lambs). It also called to mind, because of the lambs sacrificed (Ex. 29:38-46), the Passover itself, the great deliverance and foundation stone of Yahveh's claim to Israel. And it pointed to the death of the Lamb whose ministry unto His Father was truly dedicated and would bring eternal salvation.

The priests ministered unto Israel, by displaying the Great Deliverance and what God required of His people. As such, they were not guilty of sinning on the Sabbath Day even though they did much work. It was the Work of God. They were displaying God's salvation to the people. Yeshua would use this as a defense in John (5:16-24), when He said that He saw His Father work on the Sabbath (Redemption work; deliverance of Israel), and He too must (do that kind of) work (setting Jews free from Satan, sin, sickness and death).

The Work Yeshua did proclaimed that He was the Messiah, the Redeemer of Israel, the Son of Yahveh. He set people free, especially on the Sabbath Day (Lk. 13:10-16; the women bound by Satan for 18 years, etc.).⁽²⁸⁾ It didn't mean He broke or did away with the Sabbath but showed one reason why the Sabbath is to be held in such high esteem (Dt. 5:15). It's the day of Redemption. The Pharisees understood that the priests of the Temple were guiltless, even though they worked. In the Talmud, Shabat 132b, it states, 'Temple service takes precedence over (the priest's work on), Shabat.'⁽²⁹⁾

Yeshua now paralleled what His students had done, in accompanying Him, with the ministry of the priests in the Temple on Shabat. His followers were ministering unto Him. They could eat from the fields on that Sabbath Day because their lives revolved around Yeshua. They would be considered 'exempt', as the priests were and therefore, able to 'work' at picking, rubbing and preparing (eating) the meal because, what they were in effect doing was helping God's Savior to be seen by all.

Another view is that their feeding of themselves would have been 'perfectly Pharisaic' if they were still fishermen at home in Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee. They wouldn't have been out in some fields,

away from their homes, had they not been walking with the Master. But having 'left all' (Luke 5:11), they were actually on a divine (life) journey in which they hadn't prepared their food before that Sabbath but were helping Israel to view God's Salvation. It was because of their following Yeshua that they weren't prepared before hand.

Yeshua: Greater than the Temple

(Mt. 12:6)

Yeshua now builds on the Temple illustration. He invokes Himself as greater than the Temple. This is the first explicit New Testament revelation at this event. (The first one was his implied 'royal mission' as Messiah.) It must have totally shocked all there, especially the Pharisees. They must have thought He was crazy! There was nothing greater than the Temple because Yahveh dwelt there (Jn. 2:16). By saying this, Yeshua emphatically declared that He was deity. The God of Israel was walking among His people. (30)

Yeshua wasn't saying that He was the Father, as some erroneously think, but rather, that He was God the Son, the Messiah. He was saying that He was one with the Father, as any husband is one with his wife (Gen. 2:24; Jn. 10:30, etc.). Concerning Messiah's point here, with this pronouncement, He was declaring that as deity, as God the Son, the disciples were 'in His service' just as much as the priests were and therefore, the Sabbath ordinance was superseded. Again, we see a lop-sided reality as the priests were truly working hard, with all the sacrifices, but how hard was it for the disciples to pick, rub and eat? The priests ministered to a Temple built with hands but the disciples were in the service of the Living Temple.

Mercy, not Sacrifice

(Mt. 12:7)

Having shocked his antagonists with His declaration of deity, He then tries to pierce their Pharisaic conscience. He tells them that they missed the whole point of religion. He says, 'if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless' (Mt. 12:7). Here is where hunger becomes the primary principle.

The heart of the Torah is to love Yahveh and one's neighbor as oneself (Dt. 6:5; Lev. 19:18; Mt. 22:34-40; Mk. 12:28-31). All the laws of God were to be walked out in love, mercy and forgiveness. The Pharisees 'knew' this but were devoid of it. He was appealing to them in a decisive but 'round-about' way. He was rebuking them with the hope that they would hear their failure and change their ways. Who knows? Perhaps one of them there that day became one of the Pharisees that would believe in Yeshua after the Resurrection (Acts 15:5; 23:6)?

The word translated as 'mercy' in the KJV (Mt. 12:7), is compassion in the NASB. In Hosea 6:6, where the phrase comes from, the word is translated as mercy (KJV), and loyalty (NASB). The Hebrew word is hesed. It is one of the most powerful words in all of Scripture. It describes God's heart-felt love toward

all those who walk in His covenant. A 'short' definition of hesed is 'God's forgiving-loving-kindness.' God initiates and maintains a relationship with Israel because of His heart, His forgiving-loving-kindness. If not for His attitude toward Israel, the relationship would break down after their first sin. In providing sacrifice for sins (as an expression of hesed), He made a way for the relationship to continue.

Messiah Yeshua's Sacrifice dramatically emphasizes God's hesed for us. This, so we might come to know the Eternal Life that is Yeshua (John 11:25). The Pharisees thought they had the right to Eternal Life (Jn. 5:39), but they didn't know God. They knew about Him, but they didn't know Him. And the second part of Hosea's sentence would also have been rolling around in their heads as knowledge of God completes the thought.

In Hosea 6:6, the sentence is, 'For I desire forgiving-loving-kindness and not sacrifice; knowledge of God rather than Dedication sacrifices.' The Hebrew word for knowledge is yadah and signifies an intimate knowledge of another. It's used of Adam having sexual relations with Eve (Gen. 4:1). The phrase, 'knowledge of God' implies a true understanding of Yahveh. Paul Gilchrist in the Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament tells us that it parallels the, 'fear of' Yahveh (Is. 11:2; cf. 58:2; Jer. 22:16) 'as a description of true religion.' 'The prophetic view of the messianic age is of a time in which the knowledge of God covers the earth as water covers the sea (Hab. 2:14; cf. Isa. 11:9).' (31)

Hesed, God's forgiving-loving-kindness, as evidenced in sacrifice and His great deliverance of Israel from Egypt, takes the forefront now. One needn't be a theological giant to grasp this, as one needed to be for the first two examples of David, and the Temple priests. All one needed to do was to love God and man with all their heart, the Two great Commandments, which even the Pharisees would acknowledge. The Pharisees knew the Word of God but they didn't know the Author. They had never sacrificed their lives to Him. They were content to sacrifice animals. As such, they were lost in their self-righteousness and self-deception. Messiah's rebuke fell on hard hearts.

The desire to satisfy one's hunger on Shabat, by picking, rubbing and eating the grain was presented by Yeshua now, as superseding the Sabbath. In the previous two examples, it was the fact of royal mission and the presentation of Messiah, and Son of God, as Savior that superseded the Sabbath law not to work. Here, it's just plain hunger. The simple need of men to eat was 'enough' to override the Pharisaic postulations because of God's forgiving-loving-kindness. The Pharisees were so busy with technicalities that they forgot the essence of true religion. Messiah then drills this point home with His next two statements.

The Sabbath Was Made for Man

(Mk. 2:27)

Mark (2:27) is the only account of the three Evangelists that has Yeshua saying, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath'. Many have used this to say that believers are no longer obligated to keep holy, the Father and the Son's 7th Day Sabbath. But their interpretation is strained and superficial. One of the characteristics of the Pharisees was that even God Himself couldn't teach them.

They thought they knew more about God than Yeshua who stood in front of them.

The Rabbis had similar sayings though, to what Yeshua had said, and no one would think that the Rabbis by saying this, were doing away with the Sabbath. In Mishna on Ex. 31:14 (109b), they say, 'The Sabbath is given over to you and not you to the Sabbath.'⁽³²⁾ And in Yoma 85b, a statement is made by Rabbi Yonatan ben Yosef:

'For it (Shabat) is holy unto you' (Exodus 31:14). That is, it is committed into your hands, not you into its hands!'⁽³³⁾

It's plain to see that the meaning here is that the Sabbath was not to enslave the Jew. The same holds true for all the followers of the Messiah. Yeshua was saying something the Pharisees could certainly identify with. Unfortunately, they had strangled the life out of the Sabbath by some of their unperceptive rules. The same holds true to this day, in Orthodox Judaism, which is the spiritual descendent of the Pharisees. That's why it's so important for us today, not to accept every 'Jewish' thing without spiritual scrutiny.

In Messiah telling the Pharisees that the Sabbath was made for Man and not vice-versa, and that Yahveh desires hesed (forgiving-loving-kindness), Yeshua showed them what He thought of picking, rubbing and eating grain on Shabat. It wasn't sin in His eyes. But he saved this 'debatable' point for last, having met and overwhelmed the Pharisees on their own ground. He exposed their theological absurdity first and then turned to an elementary and basic principle of God's character; compassion (God's forgiving-loving-kindness).

One concept behind keeping God's Sabbath Day holy is trust. On the Sabbath we get to practice 'trusting in God' in a very concrete way. When one could work on that day and earn money to live (food, shelter, etc.), but chooses to obey Yahveh, one is literally trusting God in a concrete, practical way. It's only simple math that if one works seven days a week (or on the Sabbath if one, say, works only five days a week but one of them is the Sabbath), that they will make more money. And money translates into 'life' as food, clothes, rent, cars, etc. But God says that if we keep His Sabbath holy, He will provide wonderful things for us (Is. 58:13-14). It comes down to whether we really believe God or not. It's faith, belief and trust when one doesn't work on Shabat.

Why does He provide when we don't work? One reason is that Israel (all believers), are the Bride of Messiah Yeshua. And before that, Israel was 'married' to Yahveh (at Mt. Sinai, which is standard Jewish belief for the event). As any good husband would, God provides for His wife (Ps. 113; Eph. 5:25-33; 1st Pet. 3:7). And the Sabbath pictures God's provision.

When we observe God's Sabbath Day we are saying to ourselves first and foremost, that we truly trust God for our physical provisions. It's a 'sign' to us that we are walking with, and trusting in Yeshua. It shows Yeshua this too, and all others who know us. Everything in the natural, like the Sabbath, has a spiritual reality 'behind' it. Just as we must recognize that it's not our intelligence or hard work that earns our daily bread, but that it comes as a gift from the Hand of the God (Mt. 6:26), so too with 'salvation'.

As hard as we can 'work out' our salvation (Phil. 2:12), our eternal life, we can never 'earn' it. It's not our 'work' that saves us. It is a Gift from Above. And it's the Sabbath Day that causes us to realize this more than anything else as we stop working and enter into His Day of rest (trusting in Him), and thanking Him for His provision and our freedom. We're saying that we trust Him to provide for us, both in the physical realm and in the spiritual. And this is truly freeing.

When believers or traditional Jews work on the Sabbath they slap God in the face. They are saying in effect, 'I cannot trust You to provide for my needs, so I must work to do so.'

As we walk in the knowledge of Shabat, we become free from having to work for our salvation, which is something every human being tries to do: 'Are we acceptable enough now God?!' God commands us to rest, both physically and spiritually, and the Sabbath Day is a concrete place to walk that understanding out, and to grow in trust of Messiah Yeshua. All Christians 'believe in Jesus' but if they can't trust Him for provision today, what does that say about their level of trust for salvation tomorrow (on the Day of Judgement)? The Sabbath offers us, among many other things, an opportunity to show ourselves that we truly trust in God for life today, and eternal life tomorrow, and have been freed from the Kingdom of Satan.

Yeshua told the Pharisees that hesed was not part of their lives. And that they shouldn't have perverted the Sabbath with their ridiculous rules. He reprimands them for majoring on the minors and sets them up for His next dramatic statement.

Lord of the Sabbath

(Mt. 12:8; Mk. 2:28; Lk. 6:5)

While the Pharisees were still reeling from His claim to deity (greater than the Temple), Yeshua launches a second salvo into their theological gridwork by saying that He was Lord of the Sabbath. Can you just imagine for one moment, what THAT sounded like in the ears of the Pharisees?! They knew exactly what Yeshua was saying. He was usurping Yahveh's position! Only Yahveh was Lord of the Sabbath! Or so they thought.

In the Tanach, it's mentioned a number of times that the Sabbath is Yahveh's. ⁽³⁴⁾ Some people mistakenly think that it's 'the Jewish Sabbath.' But nowhere in Scripture is it ever called that. It's always the Sabbath of Yahveh or the Sabbath of the Lord, etc. In the Old Testament, Yahveh is Lord. But now, the three Evangelists tell us that Yeshua speaks of Himself as such (and of course, the New Testament uses that title for Yeshua many times). Yeshua was saying that He was the Son and had the same divine authority that His Father had.

If it weren't for Yeshua's thousands of healings and miracles, the Pharisees would have tossed His claims aside by saying He was a lunatic. But the power of His personality negated that. They had to take a stand either for Him or against Him. And they chose to stand defiantly against Him, declaring that He healed by the power of Satan. It was not long after this meeting that they accused Him of such (Mt. 12:22-32).

In declaring that He was Lord of the Sabbath, Yeshua was again saying that He was deity. As God the Son, the Messiah, the Rabbis knew that Messiah would be very wise (Is. 53:13). As Lord, He had authority and wisdom to interpret Scripture correctly. He is the Son of David that is actually greater than His father (2nd Sam. 7:8-17; Mt. 22:42). He is King of Israel. He is God the Son (Jn. 8:58; 11:25, etc.), and the Son of God (Ps. 2:2, 6-7).

When King David gave his throne to his son, Solomon became King of Israel, but obviously, Solomon was not David. Yahveh, the King of Israel, the Shepherd of Israel (Ps. 23:1; Ezk. 34:12), has given way to His Son, Yeshua, to be King of Israel (Ps. 2:2, 6-7), the Good Shepherd (Ezk. 34:23; Zech. 13:7; Jn. 10:2, 11, 14), and Lord of the Sabbath (Mt. 12:8; Mk. 2:28; Lk. 6:5).

The two verses on Shabat have nothing to do with destroying, nullifying or throwing out the Sabbath. Messiah wouldn't arbitrarily throw out His Word (His Law). No king has that right, not even Messiah. He too abides by His laws. They are a reflection of Him. The incident helps us to see more fully, the glory that our God has given to His Sabbath Day.

When two or more Commandments and circumstances collide, as they did here (Sabbath, work, divine mission, ministry, divine personality, hunger), they have to be sorted out and weighed. Which were 'weightier'? Messiah Yeshua showed us in three brilliant ways, and in doing so, He amazes us with His understanding of Scripture. He overwhelmed, baffled and rebuked the Pharisees, and we're sure He left several of his disciples with their mouths open too.

Conclusion

It was an extraordinary confrontation that day. The examples and revelations that Yeshua offered were incredibly perfect. He countered the Pharisaic accusation of sinning on Shabat, not by denying it or fencing with the Pharisees over it, but by bringing up two extremely 'on-point' examples from the Tanach that proved that His followers were guiltless. The first one, that David and his men broke the Commandment not to eat the Bread of the Presence, and that on a Shabat, but were guiltless, was because David was supposed to be on a royal mission. Their being consecrated or 'set apart' for this mission meant that they were able to partake of something else that was normally only for the priests; the Bread of the Presence. As such, Messiah, David's Son, was on a royal mission and His men should have been allowed to eat common, everyday grain.

The second illustration spoke of the priests of the Temple offering twice as much national sacrifice on the Sabbath but being guiltless because Yahveh had commanded it. The sacrifices glorified Yahveh and pictured what was required of Israel (complete devotion). As such, Yeshua was glorifying His Father by what He was doing, with His followers serving Him, as the priests ministered to God. They disciples were Yeshua's helpers, ministering to the people as Yeshua directed them ('tell the crowd to sit down' for the feeding of the thousands, etc.). In a very real sense, the disciples were ministering unto God, just as the Temple priests did, but only in a different way. If the priests could do twice as much manual labor on

the Sabbath, profaning the Sabbath but not being held guilty, surely the disciples could 'work' by picking, rubbing and eating the grain.

Yeshua declared Himself greater than the Temple and thereby revealed His deity and the Father within. This built upon His previous illustration and was actually part of it. This completed the illustration of the Temple priests breaking the Sabbath in the service of God, as the disciples were doing.

Yeshua rebuked the Pharisees for not understanding the heart of the Scriptures; hesed. If only they had experientially known that, they wouldn't have judged the disciples. The disciples were hungry and it wasn't a sin to pick, rub and eat the grain. Yeshua continued to reprimand them, telling them that the Sabbath was made for Man, and that Man was not to be shackled to the Sabbath. Anyone who says that the Sabbath 'is too hard to keep', makes Yahveh, who made the Sabbath, a hard task master, no different than the ones we had in Egypt. But He is a caring Husband for His Bride Israel.

Finally, Yeshua reveals again that He was deity. In declaring that He was Lord of the Sabbath, He aligned and equated Himself with His Father. The Pharisees knew exactly what Yeshua was saying. There's no doubt that in this confrontation, Yeshua blasted the Pharisees out of the water. He spoke to them on terms that they had to accept, even if they didn't understand the reasons behind the illustrations.

In writing this paper the importance of Yahveh's Shabat has again 'come home' to me. I am excited about having another opportunity this Shabat, to rest physically and to trust in Him spiritually, and be thankful for the freedom that He has given to me. I hope too that the paper has caused you to desire to keep His Sabbath Day holy, as He would want you to.

Thank You, Lord for freeing us from slavery to Pharaoh.

Thank You, Lord, for freeing us from slavery to Satan (sin, sickness and death).

Thank You, Lord, for giving us Your holy Sabbath, a picture of what You have done for us.

Thank You, Lord, for making the Sabbath a concrete, expression of our trust and love for you.

You give us all our temporal, as well as eternal needs.

ENDNOTES:

1 Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), p. 511.

2 Ibid. p. 331, note 2: 'Mt. 7:28; 13:54; 19:25; 22:33; Mk. 1:22; 6:2', etc.

3 Robert K. Brown and Philip W. Comfort, Translators, J. D. Douglas, Editor, *The New Greek-English Interlinear New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1990), p. 220, at the bottom. The Greek is sabbato duteroproto. It's found in a number of ancient manuscripts and the KJV, as well as other Bibles, translates it as 'the second Sabbath after the first'.

4 I. Howard Marshall, Author; I. Howard Marshall and W. Ward Gasque, Editors, The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Gospel of Luke (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), p. 230.

5 The 'counting of the Omer' is a phrase that is used for the days from the time when an omer (a portion of fine barley flour, approximately 3.5 dry quarts), would have been offered up on the Altar during Passover week. (The rest of the barley reverted back to the High Priest who offered it up.) This ceremony (Lev. 23:10-21), began the countdown to Shavuot (Pentecost), fifty days later. For more on the ceremony and its significance, please see www.seedofabraham.net/feasts4.html Geoffrey W. Bromiley, General Editor, Everett F. Harrison, Roland K. Harrison and William Sanford LaSor, Associate Editors, The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, vol. four (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), p. 1051, for the Omer quantity.

6 Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah, p. 511, see also, pp. 510, 512.

7 According to the Commandments, Sabbath desecration was punishable by death but in the days of Yeshua, with the Romans holding authority on matters of life and death, and the Rabbis altering God's Commandments, the punishment for what the disciples did might consist of lashings and the offering of sin sacrifices.

8 It's not the keeping of the Sabbath that sanctifies or makes us holy, but in keeping the Sabbath, Yahveh says that He will make us holy.

9 When the Sons of Israel were in the Wilderness with Moses, a man was caught picking up sticks of wood on the Sabbath. Yahveh told Israel to stone him to death (Num. 15:32-36).

10 Robert H. Mounce, Author; W. Ward Gasque, New Testament Editor, New International Biblical Commentary: Matthew (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), p. 111.

11 Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah, p. 512.

12 Dr. David H. Stern, Jewish New Covenant Commentary (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Covenant Publications, 1992), p. 45.

13 Marshall, The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Gospel of Luke, p. 231.

14 Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah, p. 512, see note 12 which speaks of Shab. 70a: 'if a person were to pull out a feather from the wing of a bird, cut off the top, and then pluck off the fluff below it would involve three labours and three sin-offering.'

15 Ibid.

16 Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. four, p. 1051. An ephah was about 35 dry quarts. Two tenths of an ephah would be approximately 7 quarts. Each 'loaf' of Bread would have been huge.

17 C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary On The Old Testament*, vol. 2: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1st and 2nd Samuel (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001; originally published by T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, Scotland, 1866-91), p. 511. Note one says, 'When Mark (2:26) assigns this action to the days of Abiathar the high priest, the statement rests upon an error of memory, in which Ahimelech is confounded with Abiathar.' See 1st Sam. 21:1 where Ahimelech is named. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah*, p. 513, says, 'According to 1 Sam. 22:9 Ahimelech (or Ahijah, 1 Sam. 14:3) was the high Priest. We infer, that Abiathar was conjoined with his father in the priesthood.'

18 Ibid. p. 513.

19 Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah*, p. 513.

20 Ibid. p. 513, note 15: 'But only where the life of an Israelite, not of a heathen or Samaritan, was in danger (Yoma 84b).' Note 16: 'Maimonides, *Hilkh. Shabb. 2.1* (Yad haCh. vol. 1, part 3, p. 141a): 'The Sabbath is set aside on account of danger to life, as all other ordinances'.

21 This would have made them unclean for anything that was holy. For example, they wouldn't have been able to go to the Tabernacle to worship Yahveh if they were unclean (Lev. 15:16-17).

22 Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah*, p. 513.

23 Ibid. p. 512.

24 Ibid. p. 513. Also, note 20: 'Yalkut 2, par. 130, p. 18d.'

25 Marshall, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Gospel of Luke*, p. 228.

26 Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah*, p. 513.

27 The other three are that the Sabbath pictures the Father and the Son as Creator (Gen. 2:-13; Ex. 20:8-12); as bringer of the Messianic Age (Lev. 25:8-13; Is. 61:1-2; Lk. 4:14-21); and as Sanctifier of Israel (Ex. 31:12-17).

28 It's interesting to note that in the account, Yeshua uses the term 'freed' a number of times. Unfortunately, in English, it isn't translated that way. Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath To Sunday* (Rome, Italy: The Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977), p. 36, tells us that Yeshua

declared 'the woman 'freed' from her infirmity', 'to clarify the meaning of the Sabbath.' 'It is hard to believe that the verb' (lewin; freed), 'was used' 'accidentally, since in the brief narrative it recurs three times, though in English RSV translation it is rendered each time with a different synonym, namely, 'to free, to untie, to loose' (13:12, 15, 16).' After 'freeing' the woman bent over (Lk. 13:12), Messiah argues that even the Rabbis say that one can 'free' or loosen the rope on their donkey to lead them to water on the Sabbath (13:15), and so, shouldn't this woman, whom Satan 'bound for eighteen years, be loosed' (freed) 'from this bond on the' Sabbath Day (13:16)?! 'Arguing a *minori ad maius*, that is, from a minor to a greater case, Christ shows how the Sabbath had ben paradoxically distorted.'

29 Stern, Jewish New Covenant Commentary, p. 45.

30 The first stage was Yahveh dwelling in the Tabernacle and Temple. The second stage was Yahveh dwelling in Yeshua. The third stage is Yahveh dwelling in us. The fourth stage is Yahveh again dwelling in Jerusalem through Messiah Yeshua in the thousand year reign of Messiah (Ezk. 40-48; Rev. 20:6). And the fifth and final stage is Yahveh dwelling in us for eternity in a glorified way, in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21).

31 R. L. Harris, Editor; Gleason Archer, Jr. and Bruce Waltke, Associate Editors, Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, vol. 1 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), p. 367.

32 Marshall,, The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Gospel of Luke, p. 232.

33 Stern, Jewish New Covenant Commentary, p. 89.

34 Ex. 16:23, 25; 20:10; 35:2; Lev. 23:3; Dt. 5:14, etc.

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