

“Some of you will rebuild the ancient ruins; you will restore the foundations once established in long ages past; you will be called the repairer of broken walls, the restorer of streets where people live. If you keep from desecrating the Sabbath, from doing whatever you want on My holy day; if you call the Sabbath a delight, and the holy day of *Yehovah* honorable; if you honor this day by not pursuing your own interests, or by seeking your own pleasure, or by speaking many words; and instead you choose to delight yourself in *Yehovah*, then I will make you ride over the heights of the land, and let you enjoy the heritage of your father Jacob.” For the mouth of *Yehovah* has spoken. Isaiah 58:12-14.

The Lost and Forgotten Spirituality of Ancient Israel

A First Century Hebraic Perspective of the
Eternal Covenant of Peace

Book Two

Dedication and Appreciation

This is dedicated to my wife. I am so grateful for the sacrifices you made so that I could complete this book. You are my gift.

There are 8 friends—Charlie, Ihnna, Carol, Loren, Chuck & Sarah, Steve & Marge—who have given me tremendous encouragement and support in my research and publications. God placed each of you in my life to encourage me to write about all of these concerns. I see the light of the Lord in your lives and I am unspeakably grateful.

And there are just several good friends all of whom I cannot sufficiently explain the value you have added to my life.

Nevertheless, I want to say thank you Mike for inviting me into your home to study Hosea. The verses we studied had a tremendous impact upon my thoughts and this book. Thank you, Damon for insights, praying, and for your friendship. Thank you, Sam and everyone at The Gathering in Carmel—Bill, Brian, Steve, Greg, and others—for lovingly accepting me into your fellowship. Joseph & Nancy, and Denny & Kris—you were the best neighbors anyone could have hoped for. Bob & Barbara, and Kit and Tricia—you provided such kindness, care, and were stable prophetic influences in my life, especially when things became tremendously difficult.

Thank you for your love, time, and commitment. Karen, Jay, Kimberly & Andrew, the Barn would not have been the place of fond memories that it is without each of you and so many others as well. Randy and Carolyn—for enduring friendship, as well as for training and time on the white-water where I learned to pray hard! Monte—for being such a great roommate in seminary. Brent, Kathy and Jason—for opening your homes to us and making us part of your family when we moved. And especially, Steve and Barb—you have been life-long friends. I could never sufficiently express my gratitude to the Lord for your friendship in my life. I love each of you and your families so dearly!

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Table of Contents

Comment by Isaiah	ii
Dedication	iv
Copyright	vi
Table of Contents	vi-ix
Description	x
Acknowledgments	xi-xii
Reading and Listening Notes	xiii-xv

Sections One-Four are contained in TLFSAI Book One.

Section One

▪ Introduction—Biblical Knowledge Check	1
▪ The Genius of Einstein	3
▪ A Note for Jewish Readers	20
▪ An Axe Worth Grinding	28
▪ Aristotelian Influences of Orthodox Christianity	33
▪ Brief Corrective to the Biblical Knowledge Check	45
▪ From Eden Onward	66
▪ <i>Aionios</i> Covenant—God’s Dwelling in the Cloud	83

Section Two

▪ God’s Bow in the Cloud	114
▪ The Foundation of the <i>Aionios</i> Covenant	173
▪ <i>Memra</i> the Administrator of Grace	186
▪ Loss of the Biblical Concept of Grace	189
▪ Remembrance—Exercise & Calling Forth Grace	196
▪ <i>Eucharisteo</i> and Calling Forth Grace	209
▪ The Cloud in the Heavens—Faith vs. Belief	243

Section Three

▪ The Power of Ideas	295
▪ the Parable of the Russian Immigrant	296
▪ The Harsh Rationalism of John Calvin	302
▪ A Few Comments on Martin Luther	310
▪ A Hebraic Understanding of the Law and Grace	313
▪ Personal Aside—A Reform Experience	333
▪ Hebraic Biblical Interpretation	345
▪ John Nelson Darby	356
▪ The Problematic Ideas of John Nelson Darby	358
▪ The Era of John Nelson Darby	359
▪ Darby and The Malevolence of Bad Ideas	361
▪ Dispensationalism and Biblical Interpretation	363

▪ A Dictionary of Writers of the Prophecies	367
▪ Darby's Deceptive Rhetorical Method	369
▪ The Theology of John Nelson Darby	371
▪ Influences Upon Darby's Gospel and Grace	376
▪ Darby's Conceptual Distortions	381
▪ Darby's Lack of Integrity	384
▪ A Practical Application of Darby	384
▪ Darbyite Deception in Evangelicalism	387
▪ The Hebraic Repentance at the Jordan	389
▪ The Impact of an Idea	391
▪ Christendom's Flawed Self-Identity	393
▪ Speaking by God's <i>Chen, Charis</i> , or Grace	399
▪ Darby's Rapture	410
▪ End Times Motivated Hoarding	418
▪ The Scofield Study Bible	419
▪ Hebraic Grace vs. Second Temple <i>Takkanot</i>	423
▪ Personal Aside—Dismissing the Rapture	425
Section Four	
▪ Whore of Babylon—Abomination of Desolation	436
▪ Debate Identifying " <i>Eis Ton Aion</i> "	462
▪ Personal Thoughts on Spirituality	489
▪ The Significance of Pentecost	500
▪ Origin of the Messiah	516
▪ Moses—God's Deliver	519
▪ David—God's Deliver	521
▪ The Qumran— <i>Zadokite</i> Connection	522
Contact	536

Sections Five-Seven, the Epilogue, Index and the Selected Bibliography are contained in TLFSAI Book Two.

Section Five	
▪ The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom	545
▪ Messianic Expectation—Second Temple Judaism	549
▪ Hebraic Background Understandings	552
▪ The Second Power of Heaven	567
▪ Lost and Forgotten Motifs of Hebraic Eschatology	570
▪ Significance Above the Water—With the Spirit	596
▪ The Three-Day Journey	609

▪ The Introduction of Jesus' Three-Day Journey	620
▪ The <i>Midbar</i> of the Wilderness	624
▪ Bread and Encounter with the Word	627
▪ Re-entry Into the Reign of God	635
▪ The Gospel According to Ezekiel	662
▪ The Gospel According to Micah	670
▪ Bread, the Word, and the Works of God	676
▪ Washings— <i>Taher</i>	710
Section Six	
▪ Special Thanks	714
▪ Maturity in Scholarship	717
▪ The Lost and Forgotten Keys to John	721
▪ The Miracles of Jesus	732
▪ The Performance of Miracles by the Faithful.	746
▪ A Few Recommendations.	769
Section Seven	
▪ The Backdrop of Jesus' Instruction.	772
▪ Hebraic John and the Miracles of Jesus	818
▪ Josephus on the Essenes	831
▪ Jesus' Words and John's Three-Day Journey	835
▪ Consecration for Divine-Human Encounter	844
▪ Plato's Understanding of the <i>Aiona</i>	847
▪ Synonyms for <i>Aionios</i>	849
▪ The <i>Ish-raah-el-ite</i> Perspective	897
▪ Moving Forward in John	907
▪ Abiding in the Vine	934
▪ The House of <i>Ish-raah-el</i>	938
Epilogue	1012
Index	1024
Selected Bibliography	1044

Description

According to Jesus, His followers would perform greater miracles. There are a number of reasons why this is not the case today. The Deuteronomists, Second Temple Judaism, early Christian Orthodoxy, the Reform Movement, and Protestant Evangelicalism are all culpable for nefarious agendas throughout history attempting to remove divine-human subjectivity from faith in an attempt to intellectualize the Judeo-Christian Religion. Counterfeit substitute spiritualities have replaced the powerful legacy of the Israelite heritage which was the treasure of Jacob. He entered into the spiritual realm of the *aion*, as did many others who were empowered to perform the works of God. This life living under the grace of God, which began with Noah, that characterized the life of Abraham, and that was celebrated by King David was the ancient life of Eden that Jesus came to restore. Although the example and direction in Scripture has been obscured, we are going to elucidate how it was that Jesus performed miracles and how this was taught to His Jewish disciples. Our goal herein, is to restore the lost and forgotten spirituality of ancient Israel.

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I am indebted to several researchers whose scholarship enriched my work on *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom* and *The Lost and Forgotten Spirituality of Ancient Israel*. These include R. Travers Herford (*Christianity in Talmud and Midrash*), Alan F. Segal (*Two Powers in Heaven*), Margaret Barker (King of the Jews: Temple Theology in John's Gospel, The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God, and The Mother of the Lord. Vol. 1, The Lady in the Temple), and Michael Heiser (*The Unseen Realm*). Finally, I express my sincere appreciation to Peter E. Prosser (Dispensationalist Eschatology and its Influence on American and British Religious Movements) for his mentorship during my graduate studies.

I fondly remember Dr. Prosser for a paper he let me write. I had been working on a commentary of the book of John and asked another professor whose class revolved around the life and teachings of Christ, if I could use this as the basis for our semester paper. Surprisingly, he rejected the idea.

Somehow Dr. Prosser and I ended up conversing about John's Gospel and the concept of being birthed through water. The church historian was also the first individual to call my attention to the concept of remembrance pertaining to the use of *zachar* in the Scriptures having to do with re-enlivening the presence of God.

I decided to take a chance on the basis of our mutual interest, and made an appeal to Dr. Prosser to allow me to complete the commentary on John. Of course, the elucidation of an extant Hebraic perspective, which predated the Orthodox construct, would have tremendous importance in the development of Christian History, especially with respect to making sense of spiritual experience over the last 2,000 years or so. When Dr. Prosser approved my proposal, I was elated and off to the races.

I am grateful for Prosser's insights and for the allowance to move that project further along. Ultimately, his course work revolving around the historical development of dispensationalism gave rise to several important ideas that help us to recapture the essence of Hebraic spirituality. May all of Dr. Prosser's family and continuing generations always be blessed!

Reading and Listening Notes

In instances where passages of Scripture are quoted or referenced without offering a copyrighted Bible version, typically, I have used the public domain American Standard Version and have updated this with revisions to make these more readable with contemporary terms.

In some instances, Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic terms are inserted into the biblical quotes in order to highlight information that has been hidden from readers by the work of translators. These few terms have been well defined and it is not necessary for anyone to know how to read the biblical languages to make sense of what is offered here. These terms have been italicized in the quotations making them fairly easy to identify.

These changes have been made to elucidate what the original authors taught in their own languages—teachings that ultimately have been hidden from the purview of English readers. Our goal is to elucidate facets of the knowledge base which existed long ago, but which have been lost and forgotten.

At times, I have used popular versions such as the New English Translation or the New American Standard Bible, but have rendered “the LORD” as “*Yehovah*” or “eternal” as “*aionios*,” etc. Once again, the goal is to enhance the understanding of readers. In such cases I have included the respective note “modified NET,” or “modified NASB,” etc.

In many instances I quote Philo in order to demonstrate that the lost and forgotten understandings presented here were very much known in the first century A.D. Although there are more recent translations of Philo, I intentionally used the public domain version translated by C. D. Yonge. Some individuals may desire to check my work and this version is readily available from several sources online. I did this for the sake of readers who might not be able to obtain more recent works. The more widely used academic translation is: *Philo: In Ten Volumes (and Two Supplements)*. Translated by F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929–1962.

At the time of the publication of this book, a beta companion version was posted online for listening at YouTube.com @hebraicspirituality. For the most part, I have endeavored to make the audio version match the printed text so that audiences could

listen and read at the same time. For those who may be less familiar, note that the speed of YouTube videos can be adjusted in the settings.

Finally, I also want to thank readers in advance for their interest and pursuit of the Hebraic spirituality by which Jesus performed miracles. In ancient times, these works reshaped the lives of those who sought *Yehovah* with all of their being and turned the world upside down. By the time we are finished, readers will understand very precisely not only how Jesus performed miracles, but more importantly, how He was teaching His disciples and posterity to perform even greater works with the continuance of signs and wonders.

We are going to cover a great deal of ground in understanding the Scriptures on the way to unveiling the spirituality of Jesus.

If we had been able to read the Bible plainly, without a great deal of baggage comprised of incorrect religious knowledge that has been added throughout history and that now misleads our thoughts, what is presented herein would have been self-evident.

Therefore, much of our work will be focused upon calling out historical error with respect to misinterpretation of biblical concepts. Concerning several topics, we are going to confront documentable religio-political agendas in history wherein Jewish and Christian leaders attempted not only to hide information from posterity, but also examine how they intentionally set out to destroy practices that revolved around divine-human encounter. Our goal is to identify a multitude of errors so that we are eventually able to dismiss these invalid guideposts of biblical interpretation that have kept us from reading the Bible in the same manner as those in long ages past. We have to regain the Hebraic background knowledge that has been lost and forgotten so that we can understand the sacred writings in the same way as those who were alive between the time of Abraham and Jesus.

Much has been lost, and the restoration of these understandings will take some time.

Section Five

The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom

In *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*, we learned that the Word of God would become manifest in the world to provide God's help or salvation by many diverse means; including angelic visitation, dreams, visions, and by other miraculous signs and wonders. The declaration bless is comprised of two Greek terms "*eu*" and "*logeō*," which in the verb form literally mean to "good-Word."

In Hebrew, bless comes from the term *barak*, which also means to kneel. Herein we may apprehend that blessing comes from kneeling before the Lord in prayer and worship.

Abraham was given the commission to good-Word the nations. In order to bless the nations, one became the servant and vehicle of God's mysterious miraculous good-Word; tangibly manifesting the divine guiding, healing, provisionary, or delivering presence of the Word. Accordingly, the Word of God, which was His manifest presence in the world, was always compared figuratively

to bread throughout the Scriptures. Conveying the same interest with respect to the commission given to the Patriarch, Moses taught and Jesus reiterated that humankind should not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeded from God. Those hearts having been prepared by their mutually faithful relationship with the Lord received the Word due to their standing before God in the *aiona*. The Word was understood both as God's voice and the gateway into His presence.

Moses admonished ancient Israel to choose life by cherishing and protecting their loyal commitment and faithful relationship with the Lord in order that they would always walk in His blessing or good-Word.

It is noteworthy to mention that neither Abraham, nor Israel were ever given a set of doctrines to believe. Instead, they were called to walk in a personal divine-human relationship. They were to care for and to good-Word their neighbors; and even strangers who crossed their paths.

Nevertheless, Moses foresaw a future day of calamity and curse when Israel would forsake the Lord, by trusting in their own strength and ability to provide for themselves; apart from the help or *soteria* of God. When this happened in the days of the Latter Prophets, God pronounced a famine of the Word. God's *soteria*, which in Hebrew was *yeshuah*, that had formerly provided Israel's faithful protective standing places in the presence of God in the *aiona*, was removed. God had always been the Protector of His people, but now this protection was lost. When they forsook the Word, the now divided nations of Israel and Judah were conquered and taken as slaves into Assyria and Babylon. Over time, the Latter Prophets held on to the promise that the good-Word or the *tov davar* would return, once again providing *yeshuah* for those who would confess their sins, be cleansed with water, and who would turn away from the wickedness practiced by other nations.

The prophet Jeremiah pronounced:

For thus says *Yehovah*, When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good Word to you, to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans that I have for you, declares *Yehovah*, plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. And I will be found by you, declares *Yehovah*, and I will restore your fortunes and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, declares *Yehovah*, and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.¹

Ish-rah-el-ites would be kneeling before *Yehovah* once again.

In Hebrews 6, the author affirmed that individuals were pressing on to maturity in their faith. They had seen the light and had tasted the heavenly gift of the good Word of God of the *aion*; and therein had been made partakers of the Holy Spirit.

The Gospel was the restoration of the Word of God by which *yeshuah*, or God's help and deliverance were once again availed to Israel. The way into the *aion* was reopened by the coming of the Word so that the Lord's faithful people could once again experience the *aionios zoe* or ancient life. All of this took place in accordance with the reestablishment of *Melchizedek's* priesthood.

There is no part of the Hebraic practice of faith and spirituality that had anything to do with extracting supposed doctrinal truths out of Scripture, that were to be confessed and intellectually believed in order to provide religious adherents a means to get into heaven after death. To have inferred or to have deduced that Jesus had come teaching something completely different than what had been explicated in the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Old Testaments was Orthodoxy's grand mistake. Jesus had come to revive the faith of Abraham and had strongly affirmed

¹ Jeremiah 29:10-14 modified NASB

the instruction of Moses. The Hebraic-minded participants in the faith of ancient Israel had little if any concern for doctrinal information. None of these individuals were theologians. They were participants in the treasure of a divine-human relationship. They lived as carpenters, laborers, farmers, merchants, traders, shepherds, and sojourners scattered throughout the land who had faithfully pledged their lives to God Most High. They walked with the Lord in Truth as they were intended to have been bearers of the image of God from the foundation of the world.

As the good-Word spread through Israel and into the Mediterranean world in the first century through the Jewish followers of Jesus, there was a split between those who embraced the Lord in a renewed matrimonial relationship and those who remained as steadfast adherents of the corrupt religio-politically motivated Second Temple Judaism.

When Jewish captives were released from Assyria and Babylon, the religion they brought back to Jerusalem was largely comprised of legalistic religious practices revolving around strict adherence to the two *t/Torahs*. The first was the Ten Commandments, which Jesus very much supported and asserted would always be in effect so long as heaven and Earth remained. The second *torah* was comprised of more than 600 daily rules and regulations in the traditions of the Jewish elders, which Jesus dismissed as being irrelevant.

Quite early in the first century, the rift grew between Second Temple Jewish adherents and those who pursued the more ancient faith of Abraham which was practiced according to the Priestly Order of *Melchizedek*. Relations between both contingencies only worsened as harsh arguments arose regarding embrace of the traditions of the Jewish elders; which did not allow for Jews to maintain their good standing in the community if they involved themselves with Gentiles.

After the first century A.D., Hebraic faith and spirituality spread into the western world as the living Word of God, acting on

His own initiative, moved forward to embrace those who had hearts to receive Him in the Gentile world. And gradually, there was a transition of the spirituality that had been celebrated by ancient Israel passing from the Jewish community into the Gentile nations. The Word, or the earthly manifestation of the Being of God, spread throughout the Mediterranean and beyond; bringing help and sustenance to all of the peoples of the Earth.

Abraham had been commissioned to good-Word or to bless the surrounding Gentile nations. By contrast, the dominant form of Second Temple Judaism in the first century had completely lost sight of the Lord's initiative to passionately embrace other people groups in the world. Instead of reaching out to their neighbors compassionately, first-century Jews became egotistical separatists who had completely forgotten about the legacy of their ancient ancestors' birth into the spiritual realm. God Most High desired for all to inherit their rightful standing places before His throne and to become the recipients of His *yeshuah*. Second Temple Judaism had supplanted all of this with an imposturous lifeless religion that was practiced by rote.

Jesus opened and refocused the eyes, ears, and minds of His disciples on relational faithfulness and loyal communion with their heavenly Father. He offered the prophetic *aionios* life and taught those who had eyes to see and ears to hear how to enter into the *aion* or the kingdom of God in order to call forth His divine reign from heaven into the realm of Earth. He offered humankind restoration into the ancient life of their spiritual ancestors of faith who had formerly walked with the Lord.

Messianic Expectation—Second Temple Judaism

In the first century, Jewish individuals were not looking for a messiah who would offer life after death. Predominantly, they were looking for a leader—one who would provide Israel with military dominance. In their shortsightedness, they missed the point that it was only through the nation's return to a faithful matrimonial

relationship with *Yehovah* that they could ever hope to prevail against their enemies.²

The invasions of Israel and Judah were the result of their rejection of *Yehovah's* Word. Instead, they abandoned the Lordship of God's voice, departed from grace, and began to chase after the idols of the world around them. Ostensibly, they had embraced the Law; however, they had changed the Law and had become slaves to worldly rules thinking that this new growing list of regulations would please God. They changed the times, meaning the Sabbath was no longer understood as a gift of time within which to enter into the *qodesh* realm. Instead, it was used to measure one's commitment to the *takkanot* and to the authority of the Jewish ruling elders. And so, the progenitors of Deuteronomistic religion and the adherents of Second Temple Judaism lost focus on God's plan for them through Abraham, or else the grace of the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace would have continued to spread throughout the world.

By choosing the pursuit of the lusts of the world, the lusts of the flesh, and the boastful pride of life, they forfeited the treasure of Jacob.

Furthermore, worldwide military dominance was not *Yehovah's* end goal. His mission, which was given to the patriarch, was that he and his spiritual descendants would bless or good-Word the nations so that all would return to the ancient life of Eden as His children.

In so doing, participants in God's kingdom would humble themselves and turn away from hatred and wickedness. They would prove their new identities by confession of their sinful secrets and by forsaking malice toward their neighbors. In the same way that the Aaronic priests cleansed themselves in the laver before entry into the holy of holies, this is what took place at the Jordan with John the Baptist. Hardened hearts were crushed, and the contrite

² 4Q285 and 11Q14 of the Dead Sea Scrolls explain Jewish Messianic Expectations around the time of Jesus.

were renewed to the likenesses of innocent children so that they too could enter into the kingdom of God.

Ultimately, it was never Israel's kings and armies who defeated their enemies, but instead it was the Lord acting on behalf of His faithful children, who had put their wellbeing in His hands. Such ones as these became more than conquerors by the miraculous kingdom of heaven.

Abraham defeated a powerful army with only 318 men who were probably little more than shepherds and farmers. Gideon attained victory over an immense military force with only 300 warriors. It was always *Yehovah* Who faithfully provided deliverance for those who had pledged their loyalty and faithfulness to Him.

Second Temple Judaism's Messianic expectation revealed their blindness. Although *Yehovah* had given them time to consider their mistakes during the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, slavery and oppression in foreign lands had not been enough to turn them away from their forefathers' adoption of their enemies' wickedness and worldly idolatry.

Because they hated knowledge, And did not choose the fear of *Yehovah*. They would not accept my counsel, They spurned all my reproof. So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way, And be satiated with their own devices. For the waywardness of the naive shall kill them, And the complacency of fools shall destroy them. But he who listens to me shall live securely, And shall be at ease from the dread of evil.³

There are six things which *Yehovah* hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, And hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that run rapidly to evil, A false witness

³ Proverbs 1:29-33 NASB

who utters lies, And one who spreads strife among brothers.⁴

Had the leaders of Second Temple Judaism chosen humility and righteousness rather than their fancy vestments, these simple garments of reshaped character would have saved them.

They needed to walk in a reverent fear of *Yehovah*. They should have been known for their eyes of compassion, mouths that spoke truth, hands that served the needs of the poor, hearts that made good plans for others, and feet that ran rapidly to do good. The eyes of the Lord that searched throughout the Earth would have taken notice, and the Holy One would have come to their aid. They would have recognized the second power of heaven in their midst.

Hebraic Background Understandings

Those spiritually minded among the descendants of Abraham and Israel were hoping to obtain the *aionios* prophetic life. It was through this miraculous rulership that God Himself could defeat Israel's enemies and level the mountains standing in His children's way. The miraculous ancient life of the prophets was Jesus' focus.

With this in mind, our first and foremost desire is to help seekers of God's reign to learn how to enter into God's prophetic miraculous rulership; which was His intention for all of us from the foundation of the world. We want to discuss how those who relate to *Yehovah*, in a marriage relationship of faith can enter behind the veil and experience the living presence of God in order to change the world around them. Our hope is that each of us would begin to walk in a lifestyle where we hear the Lord's voice, and where we become immersed into His Word; known of in the Hebrew language as the *davar*. Anyone and everyone who participated in a living spirituality with the Father need not worry about what came after

⁴ Proverbs 6:16-19 NASB

death. As with the Prophet Samuel, they were destined to be joined with the *Elohim* of heaven.

As an aside, I should make reference to Michael Heiser's book on the Divine Council. Whereas we commonly read the singular term God in the English Bible, the underlying term in the Septuagint is actually the plural form of El, which is Elohim. When desperate King Saul conjured Samuel from the dead for advice, the ancient Greek texts indicated that the prophet had become one of the Elohim. Heiser helps readers to understand that Samuel did not become a god; but instead conveys the perspective that the term Elohim was used as a place of residence term. Samuel had been called back from the holy heavenly realm, and as this had become his place of dwelling, as a child of God Most High, he was understood to have become counted among the Elohim.

Today, many Jews believe in life after death, however, as a whole, Judaism neither presently nor in antiquity has ever articulated or held to an official perspective on life after death. This point was clarified in the Gospels as disciples of Jesus were subsumed into the spiritual realm or the *aion*; in what has been remembered by Christianity as the Transfiguration. The prophetic visionary experience involved Moses and Elijah who had passed from earthly life thousands of years earlier; but had remained very much alive in the spiritual realm. From this witness and with respect to Jesus' response to one of the thieves dying on a cross next to Him, "Today you will be with me in paradise," the faithful in the Hebraic tradition understand that their earthly sojourn ends with permanent entry into the holy realm.

As they had been restored to life in the *aion* during their sojourn on Earth, so also their angelic being or soul, underscored by the Hebrew concept *nephesh*, would continue in heaven.

Although the Hebrew Bible records that the *davar* or the Word of God first came to Noah, predominant attention was given to Abraham's ongoing encounters with the Word. The man whose name was initially, Abram was changed by the Lord to Abraham

after he pledged his faithful loyalty to God Most High. This was accounted to him as righteousness by the Lord. In so doing, he became the Patriarch, or the father of many nations, and was renowned as the father of the Hebraic faith. Just as his life had revolved around encounter with the *davar*, he was remembered for his reception of God's *soteria* or *yeshuah*; manifest as divine help, guidance, provision of needs, and deliverance. As Abraham and his children passed on this legacy, all of the nations would be restored to *Yehovah*. As Heiser observed, this would reverse what took place at Babel.⁵

Signs and wonders characterized the lives of those who became faithful to the Lord. After Abraham had been victorious in battle due to the Lord's intervention, he encountered the divine priest *Melchizedek*, which translates as King of Righteousness. He was also identified as the King of Salem, which translates as King of Peace. Allusions or connections are often made to Jerusalem, which can be translated, "you will see peace." One can infer reception of a divine promise of peace in the name of the One Abraham encountered.

Melchizedek blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by the Most High God, Creator of heaven and Earth. Worthy of praise is the Most High God, who delivered your enemies into your hand." Abram gave *Melchizedek* a tenth of the spoils of war.

Although many individuals read Genesis assuming that *Melchizedek* was a man, continuing references bring about the realization that the Priest was a divine manifestation of the second power of heaven to Whom Abram offered sacrifices.

The Priesthood of the Order of *Melchizedek* predated the establishment of the human Aaronic Priesthood by more than a thousand years. King David identified *Melchizedek's* Priesthood as existing in the *aion*; in Psalm 110. What has confused our understanding, has brought about non sequiturs, and has caused

⁵ Note; Michael S. Heiser, *Reversing Hermon: Enoch, the Watchers, and the Forgotten Mission of Jesus Christ* (Crane, MO: Defender Publishing, 2017).

misinterpretation of the Scriptures is that English translators of the phrase *eis ton aiona*, rendered this as “eternal,” conveying a perpetual timeframe of existence rather than as a holy location in heaven.

If we stop to think about it, however, even in English, eternity is another way of describing the setting of the hereafter. Nevertheless, as we will engage in the study of the *aiona* later in much greater detail, it is important that we not relegate this as a place of interest following earthly physical death. We are going to find that many among the Lord’s faithful discovered participation in God’s reign or kingdom over the Earth by visitation into the realm of the *aiona*. And similarly, some of those mentioned in the Old Testament were banned from a standing place in the *aiona* because of their wanton character or lack of faithfulness.

Perhaps one of the most notable signs and wonders that occurred in Abraham’s life was the miraculous ability for his wife to conceive a son; long after she was past her childbearing years. Not only would the Patriarch receive a physical heir, but moreover, those who followed in his commitment to the Lord would be counted as his spiritual progeny.

Although the religious leaders of Second Temple Judaism in the first century A.D. claimed to have been the children of Abraham, they did not do the deeds of their ancient ancestor and progenitor of faith. Instead, they pursued lustful lives of worldly elegance while neglectfully letting their poor neighbors starve and die. They had lost all sense of Abraham’s commission to bless those among the Gentile nations. Furthermore, just as their fathers had forsaken the *davar*, a sanctuary in God’s presence, these ones, moreover, used the rules and regulations of the traditions of the elders of the second *torah* to justify their separation from a world filled with pain. Second Temple Judaism not only rejected God’s directive to the Patriarch, but moreover, fashioned rules and regulations asserted to have been inspired by *Yehovah*; which relieved the Jews of all responsibility to care for or to bless their neighbors.

By contrast, Job proved his identity as a son of Abraham being renowned as one who covered his eyes so that he would not

look lustfully upon the young virgins, and the poor among his neighbors were clothed by the wool from his sheep. Job served as an example of the kind of spirituality that *Yehovah* hoped to find in His earthly children.

Throughout the narratives of the Old Testament, according to the author of Hebrews, the Word or the *davar* came to the prophets of ancient Israel in many different forms and in many diverse ways. This is observable from the time of Noah onward. Along with this, the Priestly Order of *Melchizedek*, which we first learn about with Abraham, seemed to have continued peacefully alongside the Aaronic priesthood until the time of the child King Josiah.

Israel had become a divided nation following the life of King Solomon, around 928 B.C. and later was conquered and led away into captivity around 732 B.C. Josiah became king at the age of eight around 640 B.C. He reigned for 31 years in Jerusalem. After his death, around 597 B.C., Jerusalem was attacked and the remainder of the nation was taken into captivity by Babylon. The precise dates are not important but it is helpful to understand that with the larger portion of Israel having been removed as slaves in the 700's, Jerusalem was perhaps left with a much smaller homogenized and polarized ruling authority. A select few, who favored the Aaronic Priesthood and who desired to reform and institutionalize Israel's faith practices, manipulated the child king and targeted adherents and priests who revered the Order of *Melchizedek*.

Those who controlled young King Josiah's rulership insisted that Israel's faithfulness to God most importantly revolved around temple worship conducted on behalf of the nation; solely by the Aaronic Priesthood. Josiah was led to condemn those who would not abandon their allegiance to the Priesthood of *Melchizedek* and bring themselves under the religious rulership of those who controlled the Jerusalem temple. Ones who refused and who could not escape were mercilessly slaughtered.

Divine apparitions of the Word of God in the Aramaic Bible, were discussed as *Memra*. What is fascinating is that *Memra* was personified as God dwelling among His people on the Earth.

Whereas God Most High dwelt in the highest part of heaven, *Memra*, whose dwelling was in a lower part of the heavens repeatedly identified as the clouds, could become manifest in the Earth. *Memra* was like a Son of God Most High. Details that shaped the Targums were taken from the Hebraic oral tradition which predated the first written Scriptures of the Old Testament.

The basis for understanding that the Word of God was the Son of God in the New Testament was an ancient understanding that predated the coming of Jesus; perhaps by thousands of years. Therefore, contemporary Jewish students of the Bible who, inherently tend to reject the concept that God had a divine Son Who came to Earth to help members of humankind, should understand that this heritage belonged to their ancient ancestors of faith, long before the Gospels were written. The only change made by the Gospel authors was perhaps their understanding that for the first time, the Word had become manifest in human flesh through birth by a woman. And in actuality, this was not a change made by New Testament writers. This had been prophesied by Isaiah, centuries earlier before it happened. Because King Ahaz had forsaken faith in *Yehovah* and his responsibility to rule properly, instead a king of righteousness would one day be born to a virgin.

Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."⁶

The Aramaic Scriptures contain the narrative of Abram's escape from persecution in the land of the Chaldee and his encounter with the Word of God, known as *Memra*; in a high-place thereafter remembered as the plain of the vision.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, Jacob was remembered as having encountered the Word Who appeared in the form of an angel; Who

⁶ Isaiah 7:13 NIV

much later was remembered as a manifestation of the *davar*. The Aramaic Bible, explained that Jacob encountered *Memra*. This is just one example among many from which we gain the understanding that the Word of God appeared at times in the form of the Angel of the Lord. After Jacob's wrestling match, he called the place *Peniel* which means presence of God. Jacob's name was changed to *Ish-rah-el*, which means the man who sees God. Later in life he similarly encountered God at a different location which he named "Beth-el," meaning house of God. These high places of divine-human encounter with the Word of heaven were identified and remembered as sacred locations, and over time, the number of these shrines increased.

We have to keep in mind that the Bible only follows the lineage of a relatively small number of individuals in the world. In ancient Israel, there were much greater numbers of people who were encountering the Holy One of Israel. And the places where this happened became revered.

Generation after generation, these celebrated locations were revisited by the seekers of God Most High. Local priests, like Jethro, who had given refuge to Moses when he fled from Egypt, arose to tend to these sites.

Along with the destruction of the local priests by Josiah's armies, the high places they tended, such as the Plain of the Vision, *Peniel*, and Beth-el, where adherents of Abraham's faith tradition had continued to gather in order to seek and to worship God Most High for many generations, were destroyed and erased from the cartographic record. In the massacre, innumerable numbers of Israelites were remorselessly put to the sword. There would no longer be any sanctioned priesthood except that of Aaron. There would no longer be any other allowable places of worship other than Jerusalem.

Josiah continued the devastation for which King Hezekiah had been condemned by *Yehovah* roughly 40 years earlier.

Although, those who controlled and perhaps manipulated the child King Josiah had attempted to eradicate the Priestly Order of *Melchizedek*, many of its adherents fled to Arabia. Because of this the spirituality of Abraham that revolved around divine-human encounter before the throne of God was preserved. Dr. Margaret Barker has unveiled the historical record behind all of this that was preserved in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

In my own writing in *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*, I discussed the text of the Essene worship document known of today as “Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice.” We understand that these copyists of the Dead Sea Scrolls were convinced that the Jerusalem Temple had become defiled by generations of a corrupt priesthood dating back to the ancient kings of Israel. Therefore, in worship, over a period of celebration, during the first 13 weeks of the year, they rebuilt the temple in visionary worship. As they did so, they also understood that as they worshiped, they were transformed into angelic beings who moved toward the holy of holies each week. During the first 12 weeks, this was perhaps understood as a time of consecration while the ancient ruins of the temple were being set back in place. On the thirteenth week, which happened to be Pentecost, they entered into the holy of holies, which they also understood to be the *davar* or the Word of God.

Although this may strike us as being odd, if we consider the texts of Zechariah and Revelation, is not this very similar to the testimonies we have read? Although we may think in terms of human cognitive effort in imagining the rebuilding of each section of the temple, which possibly did happen by following along with Moses’ instructions for physical construction of the Tabernacle, the possibility exists that in such worship, God was unveiling His revelation to them. In other terms, as they worshiped, the Tabernacle or temple appeared, proceeding forth from heaven to surround each of them in revelatory experience; so that they saw the altar and the lampstands, etc. This is what happened with other prophets such as Isaiah and Ezekiel. Those never having

experienced a divine vision may think the suggestion is preposterous, but only based upon their inexperience and skepticism. The fact of the matter may be that those who do not become witnesses of such manifestations can move progressively forward in their understanding of worship as they pray for eyes to see and ears to hear.

This legacy of the Essenes, and their concern to keep alive the Order of *Melchizedek*, may provide some insight into spiritual understandings of worship dating back to the practices of ancient Israel. This certainly lines up with the simple model we realize with David. He worshiped *Yehovah*, and the presence of the second power of heaven was opened to him.

In Psalm 110, David wrote,

Yehovah says to my Lord [speaking of the second power of heaven], "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet." The Lord [the second power of heaven] will stretch out Your powerful scepter from Zion, commanding, "Rule in the midst of Your enemies!" Your troops will be ready and willing on your day of battle. Arrayed in holy splendor, your young men will appear before you like dew being birthed from the womb of the morning on the sacred hills. The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, "You are a priest in the *aion*a according to the Order of *Melchizedek*." The Lord [the second power of heaven] is at Your right hand. He will utterly destroy kings in the day of His wrath. He will judge those among the nations, piling up the dead bodies and crushing the wicked rulers of the Earth. Then He will drink from a stream along the way, be renewed in strength, and He will lift His head high.⁷

The Psalm places the worship practices that David prescribed firmly in the Order of *Melchizedek*.

⁷ Paraphrased from Psalm 110.

As one who visited the *aiona*, referenced here as Zion, David witnessed and acknowledged a divine chain of command, *Yehovah* directed His Lord Who was the second power of heaven over King David to show Himself strong on David's behalf. Figuratively speaking, going before David to defeat the wicked kings of the world would be comparable to child's play for the Holy One from Zion. And when He was finished, he would casually stop to rest and get a drink of water, stretch out His arms; all the while continuing to hold His head up high.

Because David knew where to turn for help, which was the realm of heaven in the *aiona* according to the Order of *Melchizedek*, the Holy One of Israel went before him in battle. By contrast, after his destruction of the high places and genocide of those he judged as being evil, Josiah later entered into battle being backed by his own strength and wisdom and was slaughtered. It would seem that *Yehovah* attempted to warn Josiah through the mouth of his adversary, but he refused to listen and stand down.

Looking between the lines of the narrative, readers might perceive that Josiah was recompensed for the murderous evil he had committed in the land of Israel.

Before Josiah's death, the foundation had been firmly set toward a non-personal legalistic shift in the faith system. Leaders of the Jerusalem Temple mandated that the people of Israel simply practice Moses' *Torah* by rote and that they bring their offerings to Jerusalem. Thereafter, the secret mysterious apparitions of the Word were reserved for the Aaronic Priests who entered the Holy of Holies, which was also known of in ancient Israel as the *davar*.

Interestingly, in ancient times and still today, the holy of holies continues to be referenced as the *davar*. It was and is still understood that the priests were transformed into angelic beings as they entered into the throne room of heaven in the *Word*. It was understood that flesh and blood could not inherit the kingdom of God. Accordingly, humankind who were physically alive on Earth, and who entered into God's presence, were presumed to have

taken on new spiritual identities. This is perhaps why Abram became Abraham, Jacob became Israel, and why Saul became Paul; after each of them had surrendered themselves to the Word.

Roughly twenty years or so after Josiah completed his violent extermination, *Yehovah* removed His protective hand of *yeshuah* or deliverance. A short time after Josiah's death in an ill-fated battle, the remainder of Judah was led away as slaves into Babylon. The time of their captivity was prophesied by the prophet Amos as the famine of the Word. The sustenance of *Yehovah* was the *davar*; frequently mentioned as the bread of heaven. This spiritual food that had provided *yeshuah* for centuries to the nation was lost.

The same editors of the Hebrew Scriptures that eventually established Second Temple Judaism remembered Josiah as a good king; although the details of his untimely death make it clear that he was led neither by common sense, nor by the prophetic Word of God. Examining the time of his death in relationship to the nation being taken into captivity shortly thereafter, Josiah's genocidal actions seem to have been the last straw in the eyes of the Lord.

After the Assyrian and Babylonian exile, what we know of historically as Second Temple Judaism arose based upon strict legalistic adherence to the second *torah*.

Were it not for historical documents preserved among the Dead Sea Scrolls that were discovered in the early to mid-1900s, we would not know the fuller dark side of Josiah's reign.

Those who are interested in pursuing the details of Josiah's murderous actions are referred to the research of Dr. Margaret Barker.

Interestingly, Saul of Tarsus in the New Testament, who was trained by the famous Pharisee Gamaliel, and who was very much a part of Second Temple Jewish leadership during the life of Jesus, even to the point of killing Jesus' Jewish followers, claimed to have had a life-changing visionary encounter with the Word as he traveled to Damascus. Qualitatively speaking, the divine-human

encounter was exactly like the kinds of experiences that his ancient ancestors of faith had with *Memra* in the Targums. In the visionary occurrence, Saul asserted to have been confronted by Jesus, Who some time earlier had been crucified. Whereas Jacob suffered a broken hip in his encounter with the Word, Saul was struck blind. Later after his miraculous healing by a man named Ananias, who was asserted by Luke as having been an eyewitness and servant of the Word, Saul whose name was changed to Paul, ran away to Arabia. Presumably, he fled to discover whatever he could from the descendants of those who had escaped the genocide of Josiah and who continued in the faith and spirituality of Abraham.

The Essene copyists of the Dead Sea Scrolls who had established a settlement in *Qumran* and who lived prior to the birth of Jesus, had been waiting for the return of *Melchizedek's* ancient priestly order. They too understood that Second Temple Jerusalem was corrupt and that the temple had been defiled.

The commonality between those who fled from Josiah's reign and the Essenes was that both understood that they could enter into the spiritual presence of God Most High. Essene disciples learned how to become immersed into the realm of the Holy of Holies or the *davar*, through worshipful visionary reconstruction of the temple as was recorded in their liturgical document known of today as Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice.

In keeping with these practices, Jesus compelled seekers who inquired regarding His ability to perform signs and wonders that they had to be born again into the realm of the spirit. They had to become born of God Who is Truth, in order to walk in the ancient life of God's miraculous reign. Such ones would be proven as the children of Abraham by their deeds; whether they were Jewish or not. After returning from Arabia, Paul revisited the road to Damascus, like his ancient ancestors of faith who had traveled to the high places of *Peniel* or Beth-el. In his letters, Paul reminded local assemblies of the faithful, who sought the Word and who were receiving *yeshuah*, that Abraham also was a Gentile. Just as

God Most High had called the Patriarch to be a father and a blessing to the nations, so also the calling belonged to those who pledged their faith to *Yeshuah*.

At the risk of being redundant, we want to recap some of the discussion: Moses had instructed the nation using the metaphor that man should not attempt to live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God. In a dangerous world, it was only because of their communal relationship with the Lord that was proven by walking in His ways that Israel had received *yeshuah*; or God's help and protection. Later, this also was the identical teaching of Jesus.

Because the nation abandoned the Lord's kind Fatherly instruction in *Torah* of the Ten Commandments and rejected God's help through the multifaceted manifestations of His Word, having chosen instead to pursue worldly riches and selfish gain at the expense of others, the bread of heaven ceased to rain down upon Israel and Judah. Accordingly, the Latter Prophets who continued in celebration of the faith of Abraham and David accused Israel of infidelity, whoredom, and adultery because the nation had forsaken its matrimonial faithfulness to *Yehovah*, God Most High. The Latter Prophets spoke of the future horrific punishment of the guilty among the divided nation of Judah and Israel because of their false worship of *Yehovah*. Nevertheless, they also spoke of the restoration of the Word in a future day of redemption.

Note Isaiah 55; especially verses 10-12 quoted herein:

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and return not thither but water the Earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my Word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out in joy, and be led forth in peace; the mountains

and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.⁸

You will say on that day, I will give thanks to You, *Yehovah*. Although you were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and now you comfort me. Therefore, I declare, God is my *yeshuah*, I will trust and not be afraid; For *Yehovah* God is my strength and song, And He has become my *yeshuah*. Therefore, you will joyously draw water from the springs of *yeshuah*. And in that day you will say, "Give thanks to *Yehovah*, call on His name. Make known His deeds among the peoples; make remembrance so that His name is exalted. Praise *Yehovah* in song, for He has done excellent things. Let this be known throughout the Earth. Cry aloud and shout for joy, O inhabitant of Zion; for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel."⁹

In Isaiah's Hebraic paradigm, *Yehovah* was in heaven whereas the Holy One of Israel was understood to have come from heaven and to have dwelt with humankind in the physical realm of Earth in order to accomplish the desires and the works of *Yehovah*. Isaiah identified the Holy One in keeping with His activity. He was called *Yeshuah*.

When Joseph encountered the *davar* in the form of a dream, he was instructed to name his son *Yeshuah*. And so it happened that *Yeshuah* was born in Bethlehem which from Hebrew is translated house of bread.

Without going too deeply into the New Testament, suffice to say that there is a vast connection between the prophetic pronouncements of the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures with what can be identified as fulfillment in the Gospels. As we mentioned, Isaiah foretold, in messianic terms, the coming of a son who would be born of a virgin and whose government would rest upon His shoulders. The Jewish writers of the Gospels contended

⁸ Isaiah 55:10-12 RSV

⁹ Isaiah 12:1-6 modified NASB

that Mary, the mother of Jesus, conceived as a virgin when the Holy Spirit came upon her. Even the Jewish Pharisees understood that Joseph was not the biological father of Jesus. The New Testament authors, Luke and John, both introduced their texts with the clear understanding that *Yeshuah* was the Word of God; Who had now become incarnate.

In accordance with the faith practices of the Patriarch and all of his descendants, the gateway was reopened into the Word, the *davar*, *Peniel*, or the presence of God. In accordance with the aforementioned prophecy of Isaiah, Jesus re-explained how those pledging their faithfulness to His Father could become born of the Truth, enter, be raised up, or be resurrected into the kingdom of God; where the Lord's miraculous governance would guide and protect each of them by His abiding Word and through His *Yeshuah*. Because they were seated in heavenly places while they yet dwelt upon the Earth, signs and wonders were a part of their daily lives. This is the very heart of Hebraic spirituality. This was, and is, what the authors of the Gospels called the ancient life. The Gospel was the restoration of the mysterious, miraculous Word along with His *yeshuah*.

If anyone invests the time to study and research the Aramaic Old Testament Targums, they will discover the ancient remembrances of *Memra*, Who was the Word and Who was recognized as the second power of heaven. There is very little difference between the divine-human fellowship that took place in the era before Christ and that which still is asserted to be continuing today by some of the followers of Jesus. Liturgical Press offers invaluable English translations of the Aramaic Bible. Some PDF files of these books may be located online.

As a personal aside, I have often wondered if there are Jews who continue sharing in the understanding that they tangibly walk with *Memra* today. Perhaps they address Him as Adonai, Lord, or with some other title or name, but are there Jewish brothers and sisters who still lay claim to a miraculous relationship with God and

who participate in His signs and wonders as He moves among them? Or, might it be that just as this spiritual tradition began with Abraham, the Gentile, and just as he was given the commission to good-Word or to bless the other Gentile nations, has this spiritual practice passed out of Judaism into some other spiritual movement? Despite having any evidence to prove as much, I am convinced that perhaps in some marginalized facet of Judaism, what I am discussing here still exists.

The Second Power of Heaven

In 54:5, Isaiah explained, “Your husband is your Maker, Whose name is *Yehovah* of hosts; And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, Who is called the God of all the Earth.”

While we are counting, how many divine entities did the prophet understand to exist?

If you answered, “two,” you get a gold star!

The fear of *Yehovah* is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.¹⁰

Yehovah possessed me at the beginning of His way, Before His works of old. From everlasting I was established, From the beginning, from the earliest times of the Earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, When there were no springs abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, Before the hills I was brought forth; While He had not yet made the Earth and the fields, Nor the first dust of the world. When He established the heavens, I was there, When He inscribed a circle on the face of the deep, When He made firm the skies above, When the springs of the deep became fixed, When He set for the sea its boundary, So that the water should not transgress His command, When He marked out the foundations of the Earth; Then I was beside

¹⁰ Proverbs 9-10

Him, *as* a master workman; And I was daily *His* delight, Rejoicing always before Him.¹¹

The second power was personified as wisdom. However these are not merely poetic verses. In the Targum of Genesis, *Memra* was also at work in creation as was stated in Proverbs. Targum *Neofiti* in Genesis 1:1 reads: "From the beginning with wisdom, the *Memra* of the Lord created and perfected the heavens and the Earth. Verses in this chapter described the second power's rulership over the kings of the Earth.

I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, And I find knowledge *and* discretion. The fear of *Yehovah* is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way, And the perverted mouth, I hate. Counsel is mine and sound wisdom; I am understanding, power is mine. By me kings reign, And rulers decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, All who judge rightly. I love those who love me; And those who diligently seek me will find me....I walk in the way of righteousness, In the midst of the paths of justice.¹²

The Hebrew word *Yeshuah*, which means "deliverance," was also the name given to Jesus. Most notably, according to Luke, the author of Hebrews, and John (the disciple of Jesus), Jesus was the Word of God who took on human flesh."

Yeshuah, Who was identified both as the Word and the Son of God by first century Jews was asserted to have restored the Priestly Order of *Melchizedek*. He provided the means whereby individuals could enter into a personal divine-human relationship with *Yehovah*. This was identical to Abram's experience, who thereafter became known as Abraham. In both Abraham's era and in the first century A.D., Jews witnessed to the fact that they had found places of standing before the throne of God. Abraham's faith was not founded upon intellectual agreement with doctrines which

¹¹ Proverbs 8:22-30 NASB

¹² Proverbs 9:12-17 and 20 NASB

were supposedly true, but instead revolved around new birth into the family of God Most High, Who Himself exists as the Truth.

Despite what Christianity looks like today, the Rabbi Jesus never taught doctrines which might have been intellectually believed in order to gain entry into heaven after death. If we accept numerous testimonies from the first century, *Yehovah's* desire to gather his children like chicks under their mother's wings was more than a metaphor. Just as Abraham, Jacob, Isaiah, and many others remembered in the Hebrew and Aramaic Scriptures had found entry into the spiritual realm, so also the same experience was that of many who understood and followed the teachings of the Rabbi Jesus. Jesus provided Himself as the gateway into the holy presence of God.

Jesus was also referenced as the son of God or as God's unique son. Many New Testament translations describe Jesus as God's only begotten Son. With further study of the Greek Scriptures, scholars now understand that the same term underscoring Isaac as the son of Abraham is not accurately translated using the phrase "only begotten" because Abraham was also the father of Ishmael. Those who keep abreast of lexical developments and realizations in the original languages are aware, but it is likely to be years before some of the present-day realizations about terminologies make their way into widely marketed versions of the Bible. Dr. Michael Heiser has offered discussions on this particular topic which are available online or have been published in print form.

The concept of God having a Son Who manifested Himself by the *davar* in Whom faithful individuals found refuge was understood many centuries and perhaps more than a thousand years prior to the birth of Jesus. Agur, the son of Jakeh, of Massa testified of this extant knowledge in Proverbs 30.

The tradition surrounding personification of the Word of God as *Memra* in the Aramaic Bible also includes discussion of this second power Who was manifest in the Earth being a Son of God.

It may sound completely foreign to some of my Jewish friends, who may be less familiar with the Targums, to think that

God was ever known to have had a Son who provided *yeshuah*. It is pertinent to realize that this widespread understanding, which long predated the life of Jesus by thousands of years was squelched and labeled as heresy after 90 A.D. by influential Jewish leaders. Simply put, this understanding made it far too easy to convince Jews that Jesus was the Messiah.

The Jewish scholar Alan F. Segal provided extensive research on this topic in an attempt to determine the exact date this took place and was published in his book, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism*. The historical background knowledge of the second power in heaven, also known as the Word of God, was intentionally erased from the annals of history.

And here we find ourselves reviving that which was lost and forgotten along with concepts and understandings that were intentionally discarded due to arrogant religio-political bias of men who thought their ideas and agendas were better than those of God Most High.

There is a way, that leads to life. The few that find it never die. Past mountain peaks graced white with snow, the way grows brighter as it goes. There is a road inside of you, inside of me there is one too.

No stumbling pilgrim in the dark, the road to Zion's in your heart.

*The road to Zion's in your heart.*¹³

The Lost and Forgotten Motifs of Hebraic Eschatology

Many Christians read the Bible through in a year and yet it is amazing what goes unnoticed. Peculiar events take place, but we never stop reading long enough to ask the question, "Why was this significant?"

For example, why did Jesus walk on the water?

What purpose did it serve when He asked Peter to join Him there?

¹³ Quote from: *Road to Zion*, from "More Power to Ya" by Petra, Star Song Records, 1982.

Why did Jesus claim that seekers must eat His flesh and drink His blood in order to enter into life?

How was it that Jesus, Whose death marked the end of the B.C. era, could validly say “Abraham saw my day and rejoiced.”

Why did Jesus refer the Second Temple religious leaders to the sign of Jonah when they came seeking the performance of signs and wonders?

Incredulously, Jesus contended that if anyone destroyed the temple, He would raise it up in three-days.

The religious leaders of the Second Temple, and even Jesus’ own disciples, questioned the Rabbi’s sanity because of these and other assertions.

For centuries and still today, interpreters have labeled some of these as the “difficult sayings of Jesus.” Much of what we have presented thus far have been simple interpretive keys that theologians have missed throughout the ages—revolving around the mistakes of early Orthodoxy.

Due to ingrained guiding Aristotelian influences rooted in the upbringing and formative education of the Greek bishops, there were philosophical factors that caused incorrect interpretation of the concepts of belief, grace, and other concerns of the Bible. These errors were further multiplied over the years by well-intended systematic theologians of the Reformation and Evangelicalism, because they remained completely ignorant of the Hebraic roots of biblical faith and spirituality.

Today, many Christians tend to idolize the Reformers and assume they were highly educated. However, according to the church historian, Dr. Peter E. Prosser, during the lifetime of Martin Luther, only 5 percent of seminary graduates could recite the Lord’s prayer.

Because the early Orthodox bishops hated the Jews and rejected all things Jewish, including Hebrew and Aramaic Biblical texts, they were ignorant of long-standing Hebraic concepts.

The early Greek theologian Origen argued that it was necessary to study the Old Testament in order to make sense of concepts in the New Testament. For this, the bishops hated him and his followers. After his death they gathered and burned the Hexapla

which contained at least 4 invaluable differing Greek translations of the Old Testament.

Furthermore, the bishops were motivated by religio-political agendas. They were open about this fact in the writing of the *Panarion*. They desired to remove human subjective divine-human experience from Christianity. And therefore, they engaged in a destructive pogrom to destroy other Christian movements who practiced the gifts of grace or the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, combining many facets of this error, they moved forward in a mission to provide humankind with deliverance from hell, using this to re-define the biblical concept of salvation.

Due to their blindness, they translated the phrase *aionios zoe* as “eternal life” instead of in a contextually proper manner as the “ancient life”—a concept that pointed back to life in Eden.

Jesus had repeatedly directed those seeking the *aionios zoe* to reverence and to obey the teachings of Moses in the Ten Commandments.

Both the fact that He pointed them back in time and especially to *Torah* elucidated error in the common rendering of “eternal life.”

As a backdrop we understand that *aionios* is also commonly translated in the Scriptures as old or as ancient. Jesus pointed those seeking the *aionios* life to something that was given by Moses many centuries back in time. Therefore, chronological context does not support the rendition of “eternal.” Second, Moses never taught that keeping the Ten Commandments would result in obtaining life after death.

Furthermore, the Jews did not, and still today do not, have any dominant concept of an afterlife.

And here is the litmus test of interpretation of this concept and translation of Jesus’ response. If you ask any Orthodox, Catholic, or Protestant Evangelical alive today how it is that you might receive eternal life, you’re going to get some slightly different responses. But nobody, and I mean absolutely nobody, is going to tell you that you need to keep the Ten Commandments.

And yet, in every instance when individuals asked Jesus how to obtain the *aionios* life, He pointed them back to Moses' teachings in *Torah* which were given in the Word encounter on Mount Sinai.

Remarkably, those same devoted and well-intended constituents among these streams of Christendom will all tell you that they are "believers" in Jesus.

This proves that there is a very serious problem.

How can anyone possibly be a believer in Jesus if they do not accept His repeated instruction that the *aionios zoe* is the inheritance of those who respect *Torah*? This logical incongruity indicates that well-intended Bible translators have followed the religious tradition of Orthodoxy instead of studying and remaining faithful to the context in which biblical statements occurred.

Therefore, it should be abundantly clear to those examining the phrase by means of several different contexts that "eternal life" cannot possibly be an accurate rendering of "*aionios zoe*."

Because translators of many popular Bible versions render instances of *aionios* as ancient, it is only fair and honest to make the same interpretive decision with regard to those who approach Jesus seeking this life.

Moses promised a life of blessing to those who sought after and obeyed God's Word and to those who observed *Yehovah's* kind Fatherly instruction in the Ten Commandments. This was understood as entry into the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace.

In Deuteronomy 30:19-20, Moses exhorted the Israelites to "choose life." In particular, this was the life of blessing.

If we dissect the term for bless in the Greek Septuagint, this life of blessing was more literally the life of good-Wording. In other terms, God's good-Word would abide with those who respected His instructions for life. And this was the beginning of the prophetic life of divine-human encounter which had been celebrated in Eden.

The Aramaic Bible records that humankind dwelt in the Garden with *Memra*, the Word of God.

To have chosen the ancient life, therefore, was to have made the decision to have walked in fellowship with the Word. Of course, this meant that celebrants of the Hebraic tradition would live life, in keeping with the will of the Father, as was stated in the

Ten Commandments. Having forsaken treachery and malice, they would love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength and were to have proven such loyalty by caring for their neighbors as they would have cared for themselves.

The ancient life of Eden, or gateway into the holy realm, was accessible through the breaking of bread in the celebration of the *kiddush*. Jesus' torn flesh had opened the veil into the holy realm for ardent seekers—just as innumerable offerings at altars spread throughout ancient Israel had provided the same entry for the faithful.

In all of this it should be noted that direct divine-human encounter had taken place when the *Torah* was given from Mount Sinai. *Yehovah* was desiring to raise up a nation of priests, but the Israelites were too afraid and instead asked for Moses to be their go-between,

Jews celebrate Pentecost today, which was the giving of the Law, and have forgotten about God's desire to raise up a nation of priests in that historic event. By contrast, Christians celebrate Pentecost today, which was divine-human encounter in the outpouring of the Spirit, but they have forgotten the vital significance of *Torah*. It appears that both sides of the Judeo-Christian movement have lost their way.

What Orthodoxy eventually presented to the world were monolithic immutable creeds and doctrines which were to have been believed intellectually and confessed verbally in order to ensure one's ability to get into heaven after death.

Essentially, the Greek bishops of Orthodoxy ignored the context of the Bible to determine terminological meanings. They were ignorant that all through the Scriptures the Hebrew and *Koine* Greek terms *yasha*, *yeshuah*, *sodzo*, and *soteria* had always referenced the reception of God's guidance, practical help, and deliverance from their enemies. This was the Hebraic significance of the concept that today we call "salvation." We stress that never, did these terms pertain to getting into heaven after death.

The bishops were intellectually, spiritually, culturally, sociologically and philosophically separated from the disciples'

understanding of Jesus' teachings. Hundreds of years had passed since Jesus had walked the Earth.

And they were on a mission of their own. They were in pursuit of several religious agendas. For those who have read Bishop Epiphanius' *Panarion* or the summary in *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*, it is plainly evident that early Orthodoxy was on a mission to rid Christianity of subjective experiences of the gifts of grace. Because Epiphanius was a friend of Athanasius, nobody can blame this on a single bishop; it is plainly evident that early Orthodoxy was on a mission to rid Christianity of subjective experiences of the gifts of grace. And they destroyed other Christian movements with vicious animosity.

Figuratively speaking, there was only room for one king at the top of the hill. Much was at stake. Whoever it was that ultimately defined Christianity for Emperor Constantine would have gained influential control over the ruler of the earthly kingdom.

The bishops let their agendas determine how to translate *aionios zoe* rather than remaining faithful to the study of the biblical context that provided the means to properly define terms.

And so, by its Orthodox definition, Christianity became the means of getting into heaven after death.

And make no mistake, it was with absoluteness that Orthodoxy considered itself to be the only means of getting into heaven after death.

In their perspective, everyone else was going to be lost.

Considering the demographic of the Mediterranean world, there were very few highly educated people. Literacy was probably in the single digits. Therefore, although there were those who tried to argue against Orthodoxy, their voices were too little and too late.

With this program in mind, while attempting to present arguments to Constantine that he would accept as being valid, Orthodoxy intellectualized the concept of salvation.

Constantine's faith had begun with a vision of Jesus. Other than this, he only understood the religion of Paganism. When he followed the instructions he had received from the Christian God and painted the *Chi Rho* symbol (☩) on his armies' shields and

thereafter had prevailed in battle, the matter was settled in his mind that Christianity was a valid religion.

The problem was that there were perhaps a dozen different kinds of Christianity. He called the church councils to try to define the religion and the battle between factions began with great vigor.

Nevertheless, the first council was remembered as a giant shouting match. The fighting arena was open and there was mayhem and cacophony.

And so the councils continued to be scheduled. And the war to define the religion in order to influence the Emperor continued. And the fight went back and forth and back and forth until Athanasius and his crew eventually prevailed.

Adolf Von Harnack and others have pointed out the great irony that the group Constantine chose to define and to run the church actually demonized the very kind of divine-human experiential vision through which the Emperor had come to Jesus.

The bishops faced the responsibility of carving out an existence amidst Paganism and Judaism. To be certain, they had to strongly differentiate themselves, not only from these movements, but also from every other extant form of Christianity.

Among these, there was a more ancient Christian movement known as Marcionism which also thrived on hatred for the Jews—and more than a century earlier had already spread throughout the Mediterranean world. The early Orthodox bishops shared Marcion's hatred of the Jews. Although it seems highly unlikely that anyone in Orthodoxy would be happy to admit as much, the bishops took some of Marcion's ideas and ran with them.

Accordingly, they pitted the Gospel against the Law. The Law became the proverbial straw man which was easy to attack because several New Testament passages stated that those having embraced the way of Jesus were under grace instead of under the law.

We have to keep in mind that the early bishops knew nothing of the fact that Judaism had two laws—which were the inspired *Torah* and the humanly contrived *takkanot*. And they had no idea about the history of the rise of Second Temple Judaism and its eventual agendized destruction of the Hebraic tradition that

worshiped *Yehovah* according to the priesthood of Melchizedek. Early Orthodoxy had no understanding whatsoever of Daniel's vision of religious leaders who would rise to power and who would change the Law and the times that had been appointed by God through Moses' leadership—who would later be destroyed. They did not know that Jesus had come to restore the faith of Abraham that had been celebrated by King David. And they did not have any clue whatsoever that Noah was under the grace of God which in its most rudimentary definition meant that he heard and obeyed the voice of God thereby walking in righteousness.

Instead of following the advice of Origen that individuals should study the Old Testament in order to make sense of the New Testament, the bishops traveled the Mediterranean gathering and burning just about everything that Origen and his students had ever written.

As early Orthodoxy interpreted the New Testament, they redefined all of the major concepts according to their own opinions and under the influence of the Classical Greek education in which they had been raised.

Salvation was intellectualized with the misunderstanding that the *Koine* Greek term *pisteuo* should predominantly be understood as cognitive belief of information that was true—rather than as faith or pertaining to faithful obedience to God Who existed as Truth.

And so the bishops hurried themselves and went to work harvesting doctrines from the Bible—which were to have been believed in order to avoid going to hell.

With the eradication of subjective divine-human experience, the bishops substituted Christendom with controlled forms of sacramental worship.

While we may agree and affirm that God can work through anything, the point is that participation in the emerging religion of sanctioned Orthodox Christianity and its institutionalized sacraments, which were regulated and managed by ordained priests, was nothing like the spirituality celebrated by Jesus or His disciples. All of the remnants of first century spirituality were being erased from the record as quickly as possible. The bishops avidly

sought to eliminate competing expressions of faith that revolved around anything other than what they themselves had explicitly prescribed.

And so, Christian Orthodoxy proved itself as an intolerant control structure that grew in dominion—overshadowing, marginalizing, and eliminating alternate, more ancient expressions of faith.

Moreover, because they hated Judaism, and due to the fact that the bishops' minds were steered by the agendas of Marcion, they most assuredly did not want Christianity to resemble the spiritual practices of the Old Testament—in any way, shape, or form.

If we are serious, straightforward, and honest, Jesus never taught any form of intellectual salvation or that gnostic agreement with religious facts could get anyone into heaven after death. Jesus was a Jew Who loved His people and desired for each of them to humble themselves and to walk in the calling of Abraham. He desired for them to call forth the kingdom reign of heaven into the Earth and to experience the messianic Holy One of Israel by hallowing the name of the Father. A heavenly dwelling place awaited the faithful who would enter into the *aion* or the Word and become His loyal faithful servants. Such ones as these who discovered the presence of God did not need another intermediary priesthood. And there was no need for any of them to have become theologians who agreed with a man-made religious order in order to get into heaven after death.

Furthermore, Jesus did not hate the Jews. Even as they crucified Him, He interceded for the Father to forgive those committing the atrocity.

It is evident that the bishops hated the Jews—as was the case also with Marcion. Nevertheless, their departure from Marcionism was inevitable due to the leader's belief that the wrathful God of the Old Testament was different from the merciful God of Jesus. The departure did not occur, however, until Orthodoxy had already mirrored its worship after that of the ubiquitous Marcionite church.

This emerging Orthodox intellectual religion had nothing to do with the divine-human participatory faithfulness which was the foundation of Abraham's life, that was made alive in the lives of the *Ish-raah-el-ites*, that was celebrated by King David, that was abolished and destroyed by the evil kings, and that was foretold to one day return with the coming of the King of Righteousness.

This life of grace, which was foundational in Noah's life, was the ancient life that Jesus sought to restore. Adam and Eve, who were born in original innocence, had also walked in obedience to the voice of the Word of God Most High.

This ancient life, or the *aionios* life, was a call back to divine-human loyalty. In its most rudimentary form, embrace of the benevolence of *Torah* was a start in the right direction. Reverence for instruction that had come from the mouth of God established a beginning. Faithfulness was the basis of a matrimonial relationship with *Yehovah*. This also included seeking and living by His protective guiding voice and His miraculous intervention in ones' lives. And the fourth commandment—to re-enliven the seventh day of the Sabbath and keep it holy—was a means of entry into God's presence. Just as God rested on the seventh day, so also would He be found there waiting for His children.

This was grace. The Hebrew Scriptures taught that Noah was under grace. This grace continued to become manifest when the faithful righteous called upon the name of *Yehovah* in devotional worship throughout all of the Old Testament. Accordingly, Jesus taught His disciples to hallow or to extol the name of the Father when they prayed—seeking His heavenly intervention in their earthly lives.

Those who followed in the way of Jesus that had been celebrated by David, and that had been firmly established by Abraham, encountered the Word of *Yehovah* or the Word of God. He manifested Himself in Word apparitions to the *Ish-raah-el-ites* in the forms of dreams, visions, by angelic visitation, and through miracles, signs, and wonders. *Yehovah's* ultimate goal was and remains to draw all nations to Himself.

Furthermore, and an important point to understand, the divine messianic presence of the second power of heaven Himself

provided seekers with a sanctuary in the Holy realm of the spirit. He longed to gather His chicks under His wings.

Those who lived by His loving voice and walked in His ways were understood to have made their abode in the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace—which had been established with Noah. Each one found a protected place of rest in God’s presence. Their entry into the *aionios* heavenly realm of the clouds was explained with the term “ascension;” and coterminously the coming of the kingdom would descend upon and envelop them. In these instances of encounter, they were called upon to carry out the mission of God in the world, He would draw the faithful to Himself in order to reveal and empower them for His works.

As the ignorance, errors, and wrongdoing of Orthodox Christianity or Judaism are pointed out in the Lost and Forgotten Series, it is not our goal to breed hatred or to anathematize Orthodoxy within these movements. Instead it is our goal to call both sides forward to maturity of faith. It is in the humble acknowledgment of ignorance, error, and wrongdoing that healing takes place and that the blessing of God falls upon humankind.

In fact, we understand from Psalm 133, that when brethren walk in unity that God commands the blessing of the ancient life to come upon them. This we receive today through the ancient understandings and experiences of King David.

So therefore, let us do everything possible to walk in peace with our neighbors.

Moving along in our mission of explaining how it was that Jesus performed miracles, we have a few more concepts to *present*.

Many of these ancient understandings revolve around learning exactly how our Hebraic ancestors comprehended the Hebrew term *davar* or the Word of God—properly aligning *pistueo* with the embrace of a life of faithfulness, and furthermore, connecting *chen*, *charis*, or grace with a life of obedience in mysterious divine-human matrimonial encounter.

As we have already demonstrated, the concept of grace was understood from the time of Noah onward, as hearing and obeying the voice of God. This life was characterized by daily encountering His presence in order to receive *yeshuah*—which was understood to

have been God's help and deliverance. The life of faith was a walk in the constant salvation or guidance and help from the second power of heaven. The life of grace was the calling forth of the manifest presence of God, which happened as the faithful passionately worshiped the very name of *Yehovah*.

The LORD was jealous for His holy name and would rush forth from the holy realm to surround His children in the cloud of His presence. By worshiping *Yehovah*, the faithful called forth grace, and the holy realm settled upon each of them.

Just as the promise of the abiding presence of the Bow in the cloud was made known to Noah and later became real to ancient Israel, as they witnessed Moses abiding with the manifest presence of God, Who appeared as light in the cloud or as fire amidst smoke, and just as the prophets of the Old Testament also entered into the cloud testifying of the radiant glory of the Holy One—*Adonai Yehovah* or *Yehovah Elohim*—abiding before His throne and hearing His voice, so also Jesus gathered Peter, James, and John together with Moses and Elijah in the cloud. From the time of Noah, the cloud had been understood as an abiding place in the spiritual realm of the *aiona* reserved for those who would walk in loyal faithful matrimony with the Creator of heaven and Earth. During all of the history of ancient Israel, the cloud had been known to have been inhabited by the Holy One of Israel.

Much later in time, following a great rebellion, both in heaven and by the nation of Israel when Jesus was put on trial by the Second Temple leaders who demanded to know His purposes and identity, He asserted Himself as having been the One abiding next to God Most High—manifesting His appearance throughout history in the cloud.

For this very statement, that has been vastly misunderstood today by both sides of the Judeo-Christian movement, Jesus was accused of blasphemy and condemned to death.

As Jesus was witnessed ascending back into the clouds, the angels surrounding Him testified that this was where the faithful would once again seek, find, and abide in the presence of the Holy One of Israel.

Accordingly, Jesus had restored the *chen, charis*, or grace of God to humankind.

From our previous discussion, we also understand that there were several ways of speaking about the holy realm. This was understood as the Word of God being the holy of holies, the *olam*, or the *aiona*. Ancient Hebrew priests understood that when they entered into the holy of holies that they were transformed into spiritual angelic beings and that they stood in the presence of God before His throne. Flesh and blood did not inherit or rather inhabit the kingdom, but just as Jesus had taught, each one's angel beheld the face or the presence of God.

Moreover, we learned of an ancient understanding spoken of as "the second power of heaven." God Most High called forth the heavenly host on Day-One of creation. When we translate Hebrew literally, we read that Adam and Eve walked in "the spirit of day." In other terms, they abode in the presence of the heavenly host who were described as the light—all of whom seemingly had been brought into existence, or were called forth into our universe, on Day-One.

Throughout the Scriptures, the second power of heaven was spoken of with many titles, such as the Angel of *Yehovah*, the Holy One of Israel, or even as *Yehovah*, Himself. In the Ancient Aramaic Bible of the Targums, He was known as *Memra*. Although it was not stated explicitly, His existence and role could be conceptually interpreted as the supreme ruling Son of God Most High. Following the instructions of the Father of both the angelic realm and humankind, *Memra* continually came from the heavens into the Earth to help those who had pledged their lives to loyal matrimonial faithfulness to *Yehovah*.

However, as the scholars, Robert Travers Herford and Alan F. Segal pointed out, Judaism banned all discussion of two heavenly divine powers in 90 A.D., at the Council of *Yavneh* (Jamnia)—which was intolerantly enforced thereafter. Nevertheless, individuals refused to let go of the longstanding concept that had endured from the first pages of Genesis for more than a thousand years. Many were declared to be heretics and were even cursed by the continuing religious leaders of Judaism. The concept of the second

power had become far too convenient for use in converting Jews to Christianity. The trajectory of historical understanding was changed. Invaluable interpretive background knowledge was abandoned. And much that could have better shaped Christendom and Judaism's enduring identities as *Ish-rah-el-ites* was lost and forgotten.

Long before that time, people who worshiped *Yehovah* under the order of the King of Righteousness—such as Jethro, the *Midianite* priest and descendant of *Keturah*—personally experienced divine manifestations like the *Memra*, the Holy One, or the Angel of the Lord. In both Hebrew and Aramaic Scriptures. These heavenly appearances were collectively known of as the Word of God.

It was only through the interpretive lens of Orthodoxy, hundreds of years after the life of Jesus, when the Greek bishops labeled the Bible as the “Word of God,” that the ancient understanding of the concept of the divine Word was erased. This happened when the term Word was identified with the writings of Scripture.

Following the path of intuition, deducting that the Scriptures had been divinely inspired, Orthodoxy labeled the writings of the New Testament authors as “the Word of God.” With this, sacred writings took on definition as the word. In a short progression of time following canonization, the concept of the divine Word was replaced with the new concept of the written word. Whereas Hebrew and Greek biblical terms clearly differentiated the Word from various kinds of sacred written texts, this ancient dichotomy was lost and forgotten.

With this alteration in understanding, the way back to defining the term “Gospel” as the restoration of the Word of God was lost. This topic was the focus of *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*.

Nevertheless, in both Hebrew and Greek, an entirely different set of terms and synonyms were used to denote Words and to understand that these divine-human encounters were completely different from the written texts of the Bible.

In the Ancient era of Hebraic faith from the first or second century A.D. and moving back in time, Words were never writings,

and writings were never Words. Instead, it was understood that the divine-human Word encounters of the prophets were written down for posterity so that their children would learn how to walk in faith with *Yehovah*.

Furthermore, under the unseen influence of Aristotle, the early Greek Orthodox bishops reframed *pisteuo* as belief and *charis* was construed as the unmerited favor of God. And with several other twists and turns of Platonic influence, Christianity has been forever turned away from Hebraic understandings of the Bible and has come to settle for a lifeless doctrinal sociocultural religion largely centered upon the collection and acceptance of intellectual facts regarding God. Very few any longer recognize that the authors of Scripture desired for listeners to enter into the dynamic living miraculous grace of hearing the voice of *Yehovah* and by walking in the manifestation of His signs and wonders on the Earth. By and large, the seductive pursuit of the American dream has replaced seeking of the kingdom—which was the emphasis of Jesus.

On the matter of calling forth grace, we take note of the particular term *eucharisteo*. In the Greek New Testament, English translators have always rendered this as “giving thanks.” However, in light of the Old Testament understanding of *chen*, *charis*, or grace from our earlier discussion, we better understand that God’s grace was the manifestation of His voice and His wonder-working presence. Accordingly, in several of the instances where the verb *eucharisteo* occurred in the Greek New Testament, a miracle followed the assumed event of “giving thanks.” We say “assumed,” because in these instances, *eucharisteo* should have been more accurately translated as “calling forth grace.” In fact, if we more thoroughly examine the exact etymology of the term, *eucharisteo* was the calling forth of “the good grace” of God.

Note the root term *charis* which is situated directly in the center of *eucharisteo*.¹⁴

Although English translators have mistakenly asserted for centuries that Paul taught the faithful to give thanks in every circumstance in 1 Thessalonians 5:18, common sense tells us that

¹⁴ εὐχαριστέω, which is *charis*. 𐤇𐤌—*chen*.

we should not give thanks for rape, murder, molestation or other crimes against humanity. Such actions are abhorrent to God Most High, and it would be an abomination of the concept of morality to give thanks in tragic situations when these have occurred.

Instead, the Apostle was teaching his audiences to “call forth grace,” or to “speak forth God’s grace.”

In every circumstance. Pray without ceasing. In everything, call forth grace! This is the will of God for those of you who are in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit.

But rather instead, the faithful were to have expected spiritual *aionios* manifestations of the presence and empowerment of God. These were the signs and wonders of grace that characterized the lives of the first century faithful who turned the world upside down.

The disciples were not encumbered by intellectual doctrines and creeds.

Yehovah’s kind instruction, the leading of His voice and signs and wonders were the inheritance and the treasure of *Ish-rah-el*, or literally those who would see God. They firmly understood that worship of the name of *Yehovah* was the means by which His presence rushed forth like a mighty wind from the heavens into the Earth to meet the needs of His faithful children and to provide deliverance.

Such ones as these worshipers were renowned as having seen the second power of heaven abiding with them. And in some cases, they were raised up into His Presence as the *chen, charis*, or grace of God descended upon them—baptizing them into the realm of the spirit.

Jesus called forth grace, and the fish and loaves were multiplied so that these fed thousands. And Jesus called forth grace into the cup of wine and into the bread at the last supper. He instructed His disciples to continue the practice in order to re-enliven the manifestation of His miraculous grace from that time onward.

When Paul was on the ill-fated journey aboard a ship about to face ruin, he called forth the good grace of God into food. He

promised that if every one of them should eat this enlivened bread that not a single soul would die. And although the ship was smashed upon the rocks and destroyed before reaching landfall, every man miraculously made it to shore alive.

Recall the discussion of the *kiddush* earlier, that this had for centuries been understood as entry into the *qodesh* holy realm at the start of each Sabbath as the bread was broken.

Unlike the polite ceremonial *kiddush* prayer commonly used today, according to Jesus' own instruction for prayer, there can be little doubt that He held up the bread and broke it apart while passionately extolling the name of *Yehovah*, His Father. And He called forth God's grace, saying "give us today the bread of heaven so that Your will may be accomplished on Earth as You have desired in heaven!"

Hebrews' author remembered that Jesus cried out with loud prayers and tears before His Father.

It is evident from the Scriptures that Jesus was not formal or reserved in His prayers. By contrast, He prayed desperately, vehemently, and prophetically. Perhaps it was by passing through the baptismal water of His own tears that Jesus entered into the realm of the *aiona* as He called forth grace—while the bread was being broken.

Jesus understood something that today we have forgotten. Prayer was the means by which ones traveled to the destination of heaven. And worshipping *Yehovah's* name was the same as pounding on the door to the throne room until it was opened. This was not vain repetitious ceremonial prayer. Instead, it was the fervent extolling of God Most High that rose up into the heavens and gained His attention.

James, the brother of Jesus reminded posterity that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man would avail much."

God condemned those who were lukewarm saying He desired for the faithful to be burning hot in their passion for Him, lest he spit them out of His mouth.

In continuity, the author of Hebrews exhorted those who walked in the way of Jesus that His broken flesh was nothing less than the tearing of the veil—so that each one could enter boldly

into the holy of holies. In the text of Matthew, no doubt having Jacob who wrestled with the Angel of *Yehovah* in mind, the biographer of Jesus exclaimed that “from the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence,” as those determined to embrace and see God were gaining entry by force.

We understand from *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom* that in ancient times, and still today, the holy of holies continues to be referenced as the *davar* or as the Word of God. It was by entry into the spiritual realm by passage through the ravaged veil of Jesus flesh, that devoted seekers discovered the kingdom of God.

We no longer have any idea of this spiritual practice of ancient Israel, but instead churchianity celebrate a ceremonial rite known as communion. They argue and divide themselves over the intellectual concept of whether or not the bread or wafer actually becomes the body of Christ—never realizing that both sides of the debate have long since forsaken walking in the power and authority of the Holy One of *Ish-rah-el* and His Father, God Most High. They have sought after and have settled for church membership on Earth instead of the miraculous grace of Christ in heaven.

They have forgotten that in breaking and good-Wording of the bread, we are calling forth the powerful wonder-working name of *Yehovah* into the divine meal.

Churchianity has lost sight that communion re-enlivens God in each of us to carry out His mission in the world in ways that are greater than the sum of our own abilities and resources. By partaking in the divine meal, we once again begin to walk out our purpose to become bearers of the image of God—as was His will at creation.

Earlier, we also learned of the demise of the Order of Melchizedek. Although the Aaronic and far more ancient priesthood were equally acknowledged as valid means of seeking *Yehovah*, over the span of thousands of years, the kings of Israel began to despise the Prophets who were raised up according to the unrestrainable priesthood of Melchizedek. They did not want to be controlled by the Word of *Yehovah*, but instead desired to exercise

their own flawed judgment. Lust and greed consumed the kings who fell away from God Most High.

The evil kings became deceived thinking that it had been by their might alone that Israel had gained dominance over the surrounding nations. Eventually, the Aaronic Priests no longer held authority or influence over the wicked kings. After attempting to marginalize and to dismiss the prophets, Hezekiah tore down the altars to *Yehovah* that had been set up throughout the land. Because this was not enough, Josiah, while destroying what may have been a few altars set up to Baal throughout the land, destroyed the sacred worship places of the Priestly Order of Melchizedek, killed its priests, and burned their flesh upon their altars.

Many fled as refugees to Arabia where the ancient Hebraic faith tradition continued to thrive. moving forward under the reign of Josiah, the Jerusalem temple and the Aaronic priests were understood to be the only location and priesthood whereby the secret things of *Yehovah* might be revealed. From the time of Josiah's rulership onward, seeking of dreams, visions, or divine manifestations were thereby banned and the people were subjugated to the Deuteronomist dead legalistic tradition.

Although God had given *Ish-rah-el*, or those who would fight to see God, His kind instruction for their lives in the divinely inspired *Torah* of the Ten Commandments, the Deuteronomists invented a second *torah* known as the *takkanot*. Israelites became enslaved to more than 600 demanding daily rules and regulations. They were told by the oppressive theocracy how to wash, eat, and dress. They were forced to comply in all manner of life with the precepts of the second man-made *torah*. Rejection of the *takkanot* was synonymous with becoming an outcast from the Jewish community in a world where it was not simply possible to move away to Egypt, Babylon, or Assyria. The neighbors of Israel were their enemies. And continued disregard for the traditions of the elders could result in beatings, stoning, imprisonment or even crucifixion.

When *Yehovah's* faithful ones persisted in the mysterious practice of invoking His presence by worship of His name, Second

Temple Judaism finally banned worship of God's name. They went to the extreme ruling, asserting that not even the Hebrew phrase *ha-shem*, which meant "the name," should ever be spoken—in cases where this referenced God.

By stark contrast, *Yehovah* had instructed Israel under the leadership of Moses that worship of His name would endure for all generations. He explained that worship of His name would be the means by which *Ish-rah-el-ites* would be able to call forth His abiding presence to find help in time of need.

God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you': this is my name for-ever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations."¹⁵

In this exact understanding, David had passionately worshiped *Yehovah* with all of his heart and strength. We understand from Psalm 110 that he did so in accordance with the Priestly order of Melchizedek in the *aion* and called the nation to do the same. However, Second Temple leaders asserted their make-believe authority over God Most High—coercing Israel into silence, duplicitously fabricating the notion that His name was too holy for anyone to pronounce. In fact, this man-made law contradicted *Yehovah's* own instructions given to all of the people by Moses.

Through its legislation on religious matters and its harsh imposition of punishment for violation by stoning transgressors to death, the religious leaders attempted to maintain the upper-hand in changing the course and controlling the spirituality of ancient Israel.

This mandate, forbidding worship of the name of *Yehovah*, continues to be enforced today by Judaism—despite the clear inspired instruction of Moses and the passionate example set by King David. To break this rule would result in being anathematized by Judaism.

¹⁵ Genesis 3:15 RSV

Jesus warned that those who followed His instructions, which were the teachings of Moses, would be hated and put out of the temple. Some would be beaten, lose their families, and would be imprisoned.

Nevertheless, today a minority sect of Jews who practice what is known as Karaite Judaism do stress the importance of worshiping the name of *Yehovah*. They have also rejected the second *torah* of the *takkanot* containing the legalistic traditions of the elders and only consider that the *Torah* of the Ten Commandments were inspired. Ones such as these have begun rebuilding the ancient ruins of the *Ish-rah-el-ite* faith tradition.

Perhaps two decades after Josiah's murderous pogrom, the nation of Judah was led away into captivity by Babylon. Although Josiah became renowned as one of the good kings in the history of the Old Testament, it was made clear by his premature death that he was not known to have consulted the prophets for Words of wisdom that might have seasoned his actions and saved his life.

It would appear from the timing of the final captivity that began shortly after Josiah's life that God Most High may not have been so pleased with the king. Josiah had eradicated the priesthood and means by which countless generations dating back to Abraham and Jacob had worshiped God in sacred locations such as *Peniel* and *Bethel*.

The kings had forsaken the matrimonial *Aionios* Covenant of Peace, first established with Noah, and that was continued by the Patriarch, his family and later by Israel beyond the time of David. The Aaronic Temple and the Wicked kings of the divided nations of Israel and Judah were adulterers, having forsaken marriage with *Yehovah* and instead having chosen to pursue, lust, greed, and worldly power. They sought after and served the lesser gods and idols of the nations.

Just as they were led away into Babylon, they were pejoratively labeled "the whore of Babylon." Because they had made the spiritual realm of the *aion* before the throne of God desolate, they were also mocked as "the abomination of desolation." Such ones had abolished the year of Jubilee wherein every 50 years the debts of every individual in Israel would have

been forgiven. Furthermore, it was probable that under their rulership, that the Sabbath which had provided mystical entry into the holy realm, became understood in more sterile terms as a ceremonial day of rest. Only Aaron's priests were permitted to entertain the secret matters of subjective spirituality.

Centuries earlier, Daniel had been greatly disturbed by a vision wherein he foresaw Israel changing *Torah* and the times that had been inspired, ordained, and consecrated by God Most High—the Ancient of Days. Daniel had foreseen that the new arising religious power would make war on the saints, or rather literally, the ones who had entered the holy realm. These seekers of the Holy One of Israel would be mercilessly slaughtered.

Although the wicked order would be allowed to persist for a time, times and half a time, they would eventually be obliterated in divine retribution. And so Daniel had foreseen the eventual destruction of the religious order which would commit these crimes.

Those who have been reading *The Lost and Forgotten Spirituality of Ancient Israel* will understand its vast importance elucidating and underscoring exactly how Protestant Evangelical influences blinded students of the Scriptures from making sense of the prophetic vision of Daniel and prevented the church from understanding the text of Revelation.

Although the history of the tradition of the Priestly Order of Melchizedek was eradicated from the pages of the Hebrew Bible, and what remains of this is only obvious when it is read in Hebrew, it was expected that in a future eschatological day, that the ancient priesthood would be restored. From earlier discussions, we recall that the Essenes of *Qumran*, who arose from the tradition of those who had fled from Josiah into Arabia, had preserved the prophetic expectation for the reappearance of Melchizedek. The One known as the King of Righteousness and the King of Peace would return. Hebrews' author identified this one as Jesus. In the Ancient Hebraic tradition, He had been given many titles but was understood as the second power of heaven or as the supreme Son of God.

And so we understand in keeping with Daniel's vision that Jesus came to restore the Ancient faith of Abraham that had been

celebrated by King David—whose worship of *Yehovah* was preserved in the Psalms.

Jesus ignored the Second Temple rulership and defied its burdensome worthless *takkanot*. He testified of the more ancient faith of David and Abraham boldly announcing that the temple would be torn down and not one stone would remain in its place upon another.

All of this took place with the destruction unleashed by Rome in 70 A.D.

It was by following the course of a three-day journey that Jesus would restore the authentic ancient temple—wherein worship would again take place all throughout the land. The temple of the New Jerusalem would descend from the heavens. Worshipers throughout the world who approached the throne of grace in spirit and in truth would find *Yehovah* once again.

The prophet Amos had announced the bad news of the famine of the *davar*, in 8:11. However, in 9:11, he held out hope for a future eschatological day when God would restore the tent of David; wherein he fellowshiped with God saying, I will “repair its gaps, restore its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old.” Luke referenced Amos in Acts 15:16, noting that this had already taken place. The fallen tent of David had been made inhabitable once again by the torn flesh of Jesus.

As was the case in Eden, these righteous ones would once again be raised up as bearers of the image of God. They would live in the spirit of day in the *aiona* with the host of heaven. These ones were to receive the ancient life or the *aionios* life of the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace.

English translations of the Scriptures translated the concept of the *aionios* life, looking forward to a time after death—and errantly labeled this as “eternal life.” The confusion of concepts was caused by Orthodoxy’s historical redefinition of the term *soteria*—which was defined as deliverance from hell after the third century A.D. Many of these concerns were explained in depth earlier and in the much wider historical context of the rise of early Orthodox Christianity in *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*.

As has been discussed throughout the Lost and Forgotten Series, tremendous historical error and religio-political agendas, many of these having been rooted in hatred, have led to a present-day inability to make sense of the message of the Gospels and the apostles.

In the creative whimsical world of Hobbits and amidst the dark destruction of the Orcs, the narrator of the Lord of the Rings reflected in *The Fellowship of the Rings*,

*The world is changed...Much that once was is lost. For none now live who remember it... And some things that should not have been forgotten were lost. History became legend. Legend became myth. And for two and a half thousand years the ring passed out of all knowledge.*¹⁶

Conspiratorial, doomsday, Evangelical sensationalists—who have not a clue in the world how to translate and interpret Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek—have set our minds far off course from what the authors of the Bible were rather instead intending for their audiences to comprehend.

The day of the Lord is at hand. His reign manifested through *chen*, *charis*, or grace is here today. The new Jerusalem in the *aiona* is already inhabitable. The places of habitation for His loyal faithful children in the mansion of God are ready now. We enter his gates, by the calling forth of grace in the worship of *Yehovah's* holy name. The only reason so many do not walk in the empowerment and authority of the Holy One of *Ish-raah-el* is that they do not know that entry way into His presence was intended and very possible. Some Jews await the coming of messiah, not realizing that the way has been made for them to stand before the throne of the King of Righteousness—Melchizedek. The means by which Jesus performed miracles has been forgotten along with the location of the *aiona*—and to a large degree, has remained desolate until today.

¹⁶ The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring, New Line Productions Inc., WingNut Films, Directed by Peter Walsh, Screenplay by Fran Walsh. 2001 ISBN 0-7806-3893-X, based on the novel by J.R.R. Tolkien.

However, we can change that if we can allow ourselves to see beyond the religio-political bubbles in which we were raised.

As we learn to walk in the genius of Einstein, who was not afraid to call into question the scientific doctrines of his contemporaries, our eyes can be opened once again to behold the treasure of Jacob. For it is when we divorce our minds from ridiculous nonsense of Evangelicalism's supposed last days, and extract the virulent poison of end times theories that are never going to happen, we can become free to witness the kingdom of God. And when we experience first-hand the peace of the *aiona* that defies explanation and that surpasses all understanding, we will know that our feet have tread upon holy ground. Hallowed be the name of *Yehovah* in the *aiona* of the *aiona* now and forever more.

Be forewarned however, as individuals in the Scriptures and throughout history have moved forward in what we are about to discuss, they were put out of the synagogues and churches. They were disfellowshipped, ostracized, mocked, ridiculed, and hated. While churches slammed doors in the faces of those walking in the *aionios* life of Day-One in Eden, they were welcomed into the gates of the household of the True and living God.

And just remember when this happens to you, nobody ever regretted forsaking the darkened bondage of the Orc in order to embrace the peaceful freedom and joy of the Hobbit.

In the Hebraic paradigm of understanding, these were the mainstays of experiencing the ancient life—which English translations of the Gospels commonly referenced as “eternal life.”

The authors of the Gospels wrote with several purposes in regard to establishing the identity of Jesus. They desired to show that He was the legitimate heir to the throne of King David, hence Matthew's title “son of David,” and a priest, hence the title “*Christos*” which meant “one who was anointed with oil.” Also, they wanted to prove that He was the Word of God. After long ages of Israel's exile in the lands of the Babylonians and Assyrians, the Holy One was once again visiting His people to re-establish the marriage relationship they had formerly enjoyed. Furthermore, He was the manifestation of *Yeshuah*, the Ancient of Days, Melchizedek, the

Holy One of Israel, Emmanuel, all otherwise known as the second power of heaven Who would restore the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace.

Additionally, He was the “son of man,” a title that sometimes had been given to those who had visited the visionary, spiritual realm of the Word of God. Moreover, Jesus was referenced as the “Son of God,” emphasizing the Father-Son relationship between *Yehovah* and *Yeshuah* or God Most High and *Memra*. When interpreters recognize how each of these identities was related historically to encounters with the *davar* or the Word of God, the writings of the New Testament take on new significance. These were Jewish writings intended for Jews who awaited the messianic restoration of God’s reign.

In light of the multifaceted identity of Jesus, each of His miracles, parables, and teachings were intentionally used by authors of the Gospels to prove that the various aspects of the tradition’s future expectations had come to pass. It mattered Who Jesus was—and furthermore, how He fit into the Hebraic eschatology as the “Expected One.” These firmly established connections authenticated the spirituality and destination toward which the Rabbi was leading His followers.

Although a significant number of titles were used to identify Jesus and the Expected One Who would restore peace with the Father, there were more complex eschatological fulfillments that were demonstrated by Jesus’ actions. These were connected to several lost Hebraic motifs.

Two remaining prominent concepts that recurred in the writings of the Old Testament we have yet to discuss are significance above the water and the three-day journey. These practices connected the ancient spirituality of *Ish-rah-el* with the prophetic tradition. Recall that when the spirit was poured out on the seventy elders of ancient Israel, Moses asserted his desire that all would become prophets. The new beginning of his hope took place at the first celebration of Pentecost in the Christian Era.

Abraham, Moses, Jonah and others engaged in “three-day journeys” that eventuated in encounters with the Word, otherwise

understood in its ancient context to have been the manifest presence of God.

Gospel authors situated Jesus similarly in the context of His own three-day journey, and the motif served prophetically to affirm His connection with expectations of His predecessors in the Scriptures.

As we proceed, keep in mind that basic motifs were referenced, reused, and amended through time by later biblical authors. Readers who are able to identify the motifs are able to follow the emerging eschatological trail in order to recognize the greater significance of teachings contained throughout the Scriptures. These help us to better understand the spirituality practiced by first century believers. We realize slightly different aspects of spirituality through the narratives of individuals who were being called into and who chose to embark on the three-day journey.

The motifs presented herein as interpretive tools were once the stepping stones into the kingdom or reign of God. May they become recognized as such once again!

Significance Above the Water—With the Spirit

The voice of *Yehovah* is upon the waters; The God of glory thunders, *Yehovah* is over many waters.¹⁷

With respect to locations, there was a Garden called “Eden” where Adam and Eve abode on dry land with a boundary not permitting water to encroach upon their dwelling. “And God said, ‘Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water.’”¹⁸

From the Scriptures we understand that:

The Earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit or the *ruach* of God was moving over the face of the waters.¹⁹

¹⁸ Genesis 1:6 NIV

¹⁹ Genesis 1:2 RSV

In a relative sense, since the Spirit of God fellowshiped with humankind, it follows reasonably that their divine-human interactions took place over the water. This habitation was also a dwelling of light. Gaining an understanding of the place they abode together allows other statements and passages in Scripture to be understood as they were in the most ancient times.

And they heard the sound of *Yehovah* God walking in the garden in the Spirit of Day. And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of *Yehovah* God among the trees of the garden.²⁰

At creation, the character of humankind was pure, because they had been created in the image of God. As they fellowshiped with the Spirit, they also increasingly became more like God, by listening to and obeying His voice.

As we attempt to trace the motif of their position above the water, we recall that Job's comforters queried his opinion as to why suffering existed in the world. Herein there are some connections to Genesis. Using the same metonymy of light representing the lordship of the Spirit of God that became the foundation of the Scriptures, Job explained:

There are those who rebel against the light, who do not know its ways or stay in its paths. When daylight is gone, the murderer rises up and kills the poor and needy; in the night he steals forth like a thief. The eye of the adulterer watches for dusk; he thinks, "No eye will see me," and he keeps his face concealed. In the dark, men break into houses, but by day they shut themselves in; they want nothing to do with the light. For all of them, deep darkness is their morning; they make friends with the terrors of darkness.²¹

Job went on to offer three conclusive observations about ones such as these: "They are insignificant on the surface of the water. Their portion is cursed on the Earth. They do not turn toward

²⁰ Genesis 3:8a Paraphrase.

²¹ Job 24:13-17 NIV

the vineyards.”²² Considering authorial use of the term *kerem*, translated as “vineyards,” as it was presented alongside the other facets of information in the statement, it appears that Job was attributing the concept of suffering to the events of the fall in the Garden.²³

Use of the term “*kerem*,” which was etymologically related to *karmel*, which meant “a garden-like place,”²⁴ probably alerted the readers who were situated in the ancient context of the Hebraic tradition to glean several layers of meaning from the text.²⁵ Considering that Eden was the *first* habitation *where* rebellion against the *Spirit of Day* occurred, Job’s coterminous comment that *their portion upon the Earth became cursed* connected his remark to the account of the fall in Genesis in the Garden of Eden.

To Adam he said, ‘Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, “You must not eat of it,” ‘Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life...’²⁶

The first part of his statement, in 24:18, was of particular importance in that the dwelling place and dominion of the Spirit had been *above the water*. In terms of both Genesis and Job’s text, such ones who had divorced themselves from the ways of the Lord had *fallen*. As they rebelled, they fell away from the presence and empowerment of the Spirit. Comparatively with the opening text of Genesis, Job referenced another place of dominion called Sheol or Abaddon. “The departed spirits²⁷ tremble under the waters...”²⁸ The

²² Job 24: 18 NASB

²³ כֶּרֶם—*kerem*

²⁴ כַּרְמֶל—*karmel*

²⁵ Francis Brown, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament: (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press. 1952), p. 502. The term in scripture is figurative of profound beauty (Song of Solomon 7:5), as well as a place where ones should expect to encounter the glory of the Lord (Isaiah 35:2).

²⁶ Genesis 3:17 NIV

²⁷ רָפָא—*rapha*

New English Translation reads “darkness was over the surface of the watery deep, but the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the water.”²⁹

The underlined phrase, “watery deep,” in the print version is rendered from the Hebrew term “*tehom*,” which can be translated as “deep,” “pit,” “abyss” or “below the water.”³⁰

The reign of God by His Spirit was consistently depicted in the Hebraic paradigm, from the start of Genesis through the end of Revelation, as taking place logistically above the surface of the water. By contrast, sin and disobedience found their abode beneath the water’s surface in the pit or the abyss of darkness.

In the beginning, the Spirit of God was moving with dynamic reverberant power over the surface of the water. In the days of Noah, when God destroyed the inhabitants of the Earth because of their self-destructive wickedness, the unrighteous found their end under the fountains of the deep. Noah and his family, by contrast, were raised to a place of life and breath over the surface of the water.

When God delivered Moses and Israel from Egypt, the enemies of God’s people were destroyed by the crushing seas, while His people were led up to safety on the dry ground. Ones raised above the waters had been cleansed. Indeed, the Hebrew name “Moses” was not without its own significance: “And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh’s daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses, and said, ‘Because I drew him out of the water.’”³¹

Illustrating the point further, and possibly revealing a dimension of lost irony in the text of Jonah, was use of the Hebrew

²⁸ Job 26:5 NASB

²⁹ Genesis 1:2b NET

³⁰ Verses in the NASB where the term has been translated include: Genesis 1:2, 7:11, 8:2, 49:25, Exodus 15:5; 8, Deuteronomy 8:7, 33:13, Job 28:14, 38:16; 30, 41:32, Psalms 33:7, 36:6, 42:7, 71:20, 77:16, 78:15, 104:6, 106:9, 107:26, 135:6, 148:7, Proverbs 3:20, 8:24; 27f, Isaiah 51:10, 63:13, Ezekiel 26:19, 31:4; 15, Amos 7:4, Jonah 2:5 & Habakkuk 3:10.

³¹ Exodus 2:10 NASB

term “*shalak*.”³² Jonah had rebelled against the Word and spent three-days in the belly of a great sea creature under the water.³³ Due to his rebellion, the prophet ended up in the opposite location. “For Thou hadst cast³⁴ or *shalak* me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the current engulfed me. All Your breakers and billows passed over me.”³⁵

Jonah’s name meant “dove,” implying the connotation of his identity with that of a bird. The similar Hebrew term “*shaylake*,” meant “bird of prey.”³⁶ Jonah, by nature of his name, should have been a bird of prey—*shaylake*—a creature who was able to fly above the water. Nevertheless, his refusal to participate in the reign of God by disobedience to the *davar*, resulted in his becoming *shalak*, as one having been cast away to the realm of darkness below the waves. He repented, however, and God restored him to a place above the water on the dry land.³⁷ The dove once again became “the Lord’s bird of prey” or *shaylake*, as he continued in

³² *shalak*—שָׁלַךְ

³³ In the story of Jonah two Hebraic motifs merged together: significance above the water and the three-day-journey. The third day (to be discussed ahead) was a day for encounter with the manifest presence of God.

³⁴ *shālāk*—שָׁלַךְ

³⁵ Jonah 2:3 NASB, Note that in the Hebrew text, this verse is Jonah 2:4.

³⁶ שָׁלַךְ—*shālāk* Note references to Deuteronomy 14:17 & Leviticus 11:17, where the NASB translates *shālāk* as “cormorant.” TWOT renders the term “bird of prey.” R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., Bruce K. Waltke, The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, (Chicago: Moody Press of Chicago, Illinois, 1980), annotated from BibleWorks 7.0.

³⁷ Jonah alluded to the two dominions that were extant from the foundation of the world, even as he identified his connection to the Hebraic Tradition: “And he said to them, ‘I am a Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land’” (Jonah 1:9; RSV).

obedience to the Word on his way to Nineveh. Jonah found life and breath above the surface of the water.³⁸

According to the prophet Micah, the place God cast sin was into the depth of the sea.³⁹ As wisdom was an endowment of the Spirit, Job observed that this could not be found below the surface of the water. “The deep says, ‘It is not in me’; And the sea says, ‘It is not with me.’”⁴⁰

David spoke of those who were delivered from their enemies and captivity metaphorically, as having been brought out of the depths of the sea.⁴¹ He sang of his own rescue having come from on high while he was being drawn out of many waters in his days as a fugitive when Saul was trying to kill him.⁴² He went on to tell of the high place of refuge God gave him. He encouraged others through his songs:

Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found; Surely in a flood of great waters they shall not reach him. Thou art my hiding place; Thou dost preserve me from trouble; Thou dost surround me with songs of deliverance. *Selah*.⁴³

Isaiah figuratively referenced ones who would mount up on wings of eagles with renewed strength as they waited on *Yehovah*.⁴⁴ Like God’s intention for Jonah, they would become birds of prey in the heavenly spiritual realm. Zechariah saw *Yehovah* cast the adversarial city of Tyre into the sea, which then was burned with fire.⁴⁵

³⁸ Note that both concepts of “breath” and “spirit” or “Spirit” are identically conveyed with the Hebrew term “*ruach*.”

³⁹ Note Micah 7:19.

⁴⁰ Job 28:14 NASB

⁴¹ Note Psalm 68:22.

⁴² Note 2 Samuel 22:17 and following.

⁴³ Psalm 32:6-7 NASB

⁴⁴ Isaiah 40

⁴⁵ Zechariah 9:4

While more Old Testament examples could be cited, these should suffice to illuminate the portrayal of the reign of God above the water in contrast to the adversarial reign—the final place of sin and sinners—beneath the depths.

In the New Testament, there was a continuance of the motif as Jesus explained to Nicodemus that in order to both see and receive the reign of God, a person needed to be born *out* of the water and *into the realm* of the Spirit.⁴⁶ Jesus Himself did not encounter the Spirit in baptism until He was raised above the water.⁴⁷ He later displayed His own spiritual authority, in synonymy with the activity of the Spirit at creation, by walking on the water. As it had been God's intention for humankind from the foundation of the world to live as ones in fellowship with the Spirit, so also, Jesus called Peter to join Him in the same place of standing on the sea.⁴⁸ By contrast, the Rabbi warned that whoever caused, "one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea."⁴⁹ He also determined that by faith His disciples would cast adversarial mountainous obstacles into the sea.⁵⁰ In Revelation, the angels were standing on the sea of glass with the saints joining them in that place, in contrast to Babylon, which was cast into the sea. The devil, death, Hades, the cowardly and unbelieving, the abominable, murderers, immoral persons, sorcerers, idolaters and all liars along with those whose

⁴⁶ Note John 3:1-7.

⁴⁷ Interestingly, the text reads that the Spirit descended upon Jesus like a dove. Have you ever heard the peculiar sound of a dove when it takes off into flight or when it hovers? The unique noise actually is created by the beating of the wings. Ezekiel mentioned the sound of the angels' wings that he heard when having word encounters in three instances (1:24, 3:13 & 10:5). Might not the references in Matthew 3:16, Mark 1:10, Luke 3:22 & John 1:32 have pertained to the accompanying sound, which was heard?

⁴⁸ Note Matthew 14:23-29.

⁴⁹ Matthew 18:6

⁵⁰ Note Matthew 21:21 & Mark 11:23.

names were not found written in the book of life, discovered their final abode in the depths of the lake of fire. The beast and the false prophet, more specifically, were described as being “thrown alive into the lake of fire which burned with brimstone.”⁵¹ At the end of the apocalypse, John described what he saw when the Word came to him, when he was in the Spirit with implications bearing upon the motif: “And I saw a new heaven and a new Earth; for the first heaven and the first Earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea.”⁵² The inference, in light of the canonical explication, was that since all adversarial dominion would already have been removed from the habitation of humankind, the time and need for anything beyond the dwellings of the heavens and Earth would have passed. Therefore the sea was gone.

As a pervasive motif, spanning the texts of the Bible, the concept of being raised above the water was a figurative reminder of humankind’s embrace by the Spirit of God in their intended dominion of the heavenly realm over the Earth. Water baptism served metaphorically, not only implying spiritual cleansing through the drowning death of the old Adam, but more significantly, it was the portal whereby the contrite who had fled from the darkness by confession and the forsaking of wickedness, found re-entry into an anointing, which had been intended for them at the foundation of the world. Baptism was the means back to significance above the water.

Jesus explained to Nicodemus that unless individuals saw and entered the kingdom of God, they could not do the kinds of signs and wonders that He and the disciples were performing. They had to become present with God. Such ones had to be born “out of the Spirit.”⁵³ It was only by receiving instruction and empowerment in the realm of the Spirit that faithful servants of the Word could perform His works in the world. The Pharisee had trouble understanding, even as interpreters do today. Nicodemus was not

⁵¹ Note Revelation 10:1-8, 15:2, 18:21, 19:20; 20:10; 14-15 & 21:8.

⁵² Revelation 21:1 NASB

⁵³ Personal Translation

making sense of the motif associating water with the Spirit.⁵⁴ Therefore he connected Jesus' statement to natural childbirth. Because of his lack of familiarity with miraculous occurrences in the Hebraic Tradition, he superimposed his own misunderstandings over the Rabbi's explanation. This further occluded what should have been straightforward.

Jesus wasn't being elusive regarding how He and the disciples were becoming empowered to perform signs and wonders. The Rabbi had shown His disciples the way and had given them the means to "*enter into the kingdom*."⁵⁵ They were given life in the Spirit. Birth out of cleansing water into the mysterious realm of the Spirit or the Word was possible for those made alive in the name of *Yeshuah*, their Rescuer. Those who were born of the Spirit, saw and heard the intentions of God for their daily lives. Like the wind blowing over the surface of the water, He came mysteriously to perform the works of God. Bystanders like the religious leader marveled and asked questions. Therefore, in answer to Nicodemus' inquiry regarding the ability to perform miracles, Jesus replied, "Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen."⁵⁶

Bearing witness to that which they had seen was another way of describing their performance of signs and wonders. Bearing

⁵⁴ Note several passages comparing water to God's Spirit:

You also gave Your good Spirit to instruct them, and did not withhold Your manna from their mouth, and gave them water for their thirst. Yes, forty years you sustained them in the wilderness, *and* they lacked nothing; their clothes did not wear out, and their feet did not swell. (Nehemiah 9:20-21.) For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and streams upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your seed, and my blessing upon your offspring and they shall spring up among the grass, as willows by the watercourses. One shall say, I am *Yehovah's*...(modified Isaiah 44:3-5a; note the concept of birth in the mention of *Yehovah's* offspring.). I indeed baptize you in water to repentance: but he that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire (Matthew 3:11).

⁵⁵ Note John 3:5.

⁵⁶ John 3:11a NASB

witness was not merely describing what happened, it was the actual rendering of the miracle. In other terms, the disciples became something new and were newly empowered individuals in the *aion*. Upon their return, what they had become became manifest miraculously in the lives of others. They were vehicles of God's healing and deliverance. The caveat was that entry into the spiritual realm was necessary to receive divine authority in order to render these actions or to bear witness of these in the realm of Earth.

The Rabbi's followers could call into being on the Earth God's will as they had seen this in heaven. They had witnessed these Words personally, while in the realm of the Spirit or the Word. If Nicodemus had been more aware of ongoing spiritual visionary encounters in the lives of the Jewish prophets, Jesus' instructions would have made sense. The focus of Nicodemus' concern was firmly established in his fundamentalist religious tradition of the *torah* as a Pharisee, rather than in the prophetic heritage of the *davar*. Hence John's negative estimation that stigmatized Nicodemus' introduction in the narrative.⁵⁷ Recalling that the verse and chapter divisions found in Scripture were not inspired,⁵⁸ realize what John was saying about this one who came to speak with Jesus under the cover of darkness:

But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man. Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Note John 2:23-3:1 where Nicodemus was set forth as an example of one who did not "believe in His name," when he saw the signs and wonders.

⁵⁸ The scriptures, as they were written in their original languages, did not include, periods, commas, hyphens, semicolons or any other punctuation. Credit is often given to Stephen Langton, who served as the Archbishop of Canterbury, for adding the New Testament chapter divisions in the early 13th century. These facilitated the citation of biblical quotes. Contemporary translations vary in how verses have been numbered.

⁵⁹ John 2:24-3:1a NIV

Jesus upbraided him “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you don’t understand these things?”⁶⁰

And so it was necessary to instruct him, and to lead him back into an understanding of his intended inheritance in the Hebraic Tradition, as one would a child.

If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how shall you believe if I tell you heavenly things? And no one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven, *even the Son of Man*.⁶¹

Jesus’ assertion, which John wanted his readers to understand, was that the disciples had in fact seen into the realm of heaven. Their sojourn in the presence of God was the means by which they were empowered to perform the miracles.

The disciples were permitted entry into the realm of the spirit, the Word, or the *aion* because they had become faithful to God. They worshiped His name and entered. They received instruction in the Word and were born of the Spirit back into the world where they performed the Word or the works of the Lord they had seen.

Ones who lifted up the Son of Man, by turning to the Lord in faithfulness that was proven by their deeds having been wrought in God, could expect these sorts of signs and wonders to follow. Such were the inheritance of the sons of Light. The apostle Paul put it in similar terms: “the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap the ancient life.”

The Second Temple pharisaical sect, to which Nicodemus belonged, was criticized for their concern with judging other people. In large part, their religious identity revolved around keeping the outward regulations of the *takkanot*—comprised of the traditions of the elders.

Although it may be admirable that they lived lives of focused dedication studying the Scriptures, they were not a people who were familiar with the Word of God:

⁶⁰ John 3:10 NET

⁶¹ John 3:12 -13 NASB

And you do not have His Word abiding in you, for you do not uphold faith in Him whom He sent. You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have the ancient life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life.⁶²

In accordance with the Hebraic perspective, “eternal life” was modified in the passage to read “the ancient life,” and the term “believe” was changed to read “uphold faith in.”

Jesus differentiated His mission from what theirs had become. “God sent the Son into the world that the world should be saved through Him.” John had already identified Jesus as the Word. Adherents of the tradition understood that the Word could either be a visitation from God that came in many different forms or that the Word could be a portal into the realm of heaven. Jesus announced that He came to save, which in the Hebraic context, most immediately meant to “help,” “deliver,” or “rescue” people from whatever afflicted them. Hence He performed the miracles, about which the Pharisee had come to inquire. Jesus explained that the signs had to come “through Him.” As John identified Him at the start of his Gospel, He was the “‘Word’ of God.” Several forgotten motifs converged at this very point. The Word was understood to have been a “portal,” or “doorway” into the presence of God. It was opened by ones who “upheld faith,” which meant that they “became faithful to Jesus,” as was demonstrated by their deeds. John emphasized the point emphatically: “Jesus declared, ‘I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; nobody comes to the Father, but through Me.’”⁶³

Perhaps the most important interpretive key for understanding Jesus’ teachings in the Gospels is one’s ability to identify Him as the Word of God. And so we ask an interpretive question. If it is not reasonably possible for Jesus existing as a human being to be a pathway, how might He be so if we identify

⁶² John 5:38-40 NASB: The word abiding in a people speaks of the oneness that occurs in the fulfillment of the covenant of marriage. The two become as one, each having pledged mutual faithfulness.

⁶³ John 14:6

Him as the Word of God? In numerous biblical contexts the Word was a visionary habitation. When the Word of God was understood as a dwelling, those who might enter into the Word could find a divine-human place of meeting. Therefore, interpreting John 14:6 as Jesus being more than the sum of His human limitations, and instead as the Word, the statement makes complete sense. For thousands of years the sacred writings of the Hebraic Tradition recounted the lives of individuals who had dreams, visions and otherworldly experiences of the Word whereby they met with God.

John's own goal in writing to show the way was explicit:

Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written that you may uphold the faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that by upholding faith you may have life in His name.⁶⁴

Recall Moses' admonition to ancient Israel and their descendants in Deuteronomy 30:19-20 to choose life by loving the Lord their God, obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him.

Every authentic faithful daughter or son had an inheritance in heaven, a dwelling place in the presence of God, whereby they could be reborn into the Word, Spirit, and life of God—which was also understood as the ancient life. Just as had been the case all through time and was especially evidenced with the many Psalms left to posterity by King David, worship of the divine name, by ones who were faithful to Him, was the means by which the door into the realm of the Spirit was opened. Reciprocally, Light came into the world, whenever the portal was opened.

Note 3:19. Ones who practiced truth were seekers of this Light (note 3:21). Those who committed themselves to loyal faithfulness to *Yehovah* would not perish, but instead, would have the "ancient life"—the same quality of life whereby the prophets of old had discovered God's help and performed signs and wonders (note 3:16). In order to have found this life, seekers were to have put their trust "...in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

⁶⁴ John 20:30-31 NASB

Note 3:18. In Hebrew, “Jesus” name was “*Yeshuah*.” Of course, “believers” were known, not by their embrace of any particular theology, but by their deeds. People who loved the Light were ones whose deeds were not evil and who did not fear their deeds being exposed. They were ones who practiced the truth and their deeds were manifest to all as having been wrought in God (note 3:21).

Ones dwelling in significance above the water then were later understood in New Testament terms to have been *in Christ*.⁶⁵ The repentant made their spiritual pilgrimages of immersion back into the presence of the second power of heaven and had been renewed to the abiding place of the ancient life that had been the treasure of their spiritual ancestors. Having realized the reality of the heavenly realm by what he had seen and heard during his own life, John the disciple of Jesus did not want his readers to miss out on this treasured existence. And so he exhorted his audience regarding the importance of obedience and of the availability of so much more than we touch and see on Earth: “There are many dwelling places in my Father’s house. Otherwise, I would have told you, because I am going away to make ready a place for you.”⁶⁶

The Three-Day Journey

The test of God’s beloved children appeared in Scripture in the context of the long lost motif of the “three-day journey.”

“Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” Then he put faith in *Yehovah*; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. And He said to him, “I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it.”⁶⁷

It is valuable to note the precise “land” where Abraham was standing as *Yehovah* addressed him. Abraham was in the spiritual

⁶⁵ ἐν Χριστῷ/|—*in Christ*

⁶⁶ John 14:2 NET

⁶⁷ Genesis 15:5-7 NASB

realm of the *davar* or in the *aiona*! Note verse 1. He was meeting with God in a vision.

Abraham embraced the pledge of his allegiance to the Word of God, and God counted this as the right thing for him to have done. Moreover, the Lord gave him the desire of his heart. His aged wife Sarah was made able to bear a son. Encounter with the Word came with this miraculous sign. Nevertheless, their story did not end with the fulfillment of the couple's most cherished earthly desire.

After these *davarim* God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar.⁶⁸

However unacceptable God's request may have seemed, Abraham proved that he was faithful by his immediate action.

When they arrived at the place that God had told him about, Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood. He bound his son Isaac and placed him on the altar on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the Angel of *Yehovah* called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" He replied, "Here I am." Then He said, "Do not lay a hand on the boy or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your only son from Me." Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught in the thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it as a burnt offering in place of his son. And Abraham named that place *Yehovah* Will Provide, so today it is said: "It will be provided

⁶⁸ Genesis 22:1-4 ESV

on *Yehovah's* mountain." Then the Angel of *Yehovah* called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, "By Myself I have sworn," this is *Yehovah's* declaration: "Because you have done this thing [*davar*] and have not withheld your only son, I will indeed bless you and make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your offspring will possess the gates of their enemies. And all the nations of the Earth will be blessed by your offspring because you have obeyed My command."⁶⁹

Whatever part of loyalty sin may have clouded was revealed through the choice of personal sacrifice. Abraham proved his authentic identity as God's servant by his deeds—in faithful trusting loyalty and obedience to God. The severity of his vow of faithfulness to *Yehovah* had been tested. He valued pleasing God more than his most treasured possession in all the Earth. His heart was unveiled before God by his choice. His "three-day journey" ended by miraculous encounter with the manifest presence of God and with reception of God's help and provision.

The biblical motif was not so much about arrival at a particular destination within the literal chronological timeframe, but instead, the journey concerned proving the loyalty of God's servants. It involved sacrifice often wherein a feast would be divinely provided on the third day—otherwise understood as the "last" or "final" day of the journey.

Recall John's reiteration of Jesus' teaching, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad."⁷⁰

Just as Adam and Eve had fellowshiped with the Spirit of Day in the Garden, so also Abraham had witnessed the Day of Jesus. The Aramaic texts speak of his encounter with *Memra*.

Nevertheless, the incredulous Pharisees challenged Jesus, "You are not yet 50 years old and you have seen Abraham?" They interpreted the Rabbi's statement in human chronological terms,

⁶⁹ Genesis 22:9-18 HCSB; Note that references to "the LORD" were restored to read: "*Yehovah*" as these appeared in the original Hebrew text.

⁷⁰ John 8:56 ASV

without considering their ancient forefathers' *aiōnios* encounters in the Word. Of course, it was impossible for Jesus to have known Abraham during Jesus' lifespan as a human being. However, in His identity as the Word of God, He had encountered the Patriarch repeatedly.

Examining the Aramaic Scriptures, wherein *Memra* was personified, He and Abraham fellowshiped together. God's provision of a ram in place of Isaac as a sacrifice gave the Patriarch great reason to rejoice.

The Targums are more explicit regarding the joy of the Patriarch:

And Abraham gave thanks and prayed there, in that place, and said, I pray through the mercies that are before Thee, O Lord, before whom it is manifest that it was not in the depth of my heart to turn away from doing Thy decree with joy, that when the children of Izhak my son shall offer in the hour of affliction, this may be a memorial for them; and Thou mayest hear them and deliver them, and that all generations to come may say, In this mountain Abraham bound Izhak his son, and there the *shekinah* of the Lord was revealed unto him. And the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham the second time from the heavens, and said, By My *Memra*⁷¹ have I sworn, saith the Lord, forasmuch as thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thy only begotten, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy sons as the stars of the heavens, and they shall be as the sand which is upon the shore of the sea, and thy sons shall inherit the cities before their enemies. And all the peoples of the Earth shall be blessed through the righteousness of thy son, because thou hast obeyed My Word [which in Aramaic was *Memra*].⁷²

⁷¹ The spelling of "*Memra*" sometimes varies מִימְרָא/מִימְרֵי/מִימְרָ etc.

⁷² Genesis 22:14-18; Etheridge Targum *Onkelos* J. W. Etheridge, *The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch: with the fragments of the Jerusalem Targum* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1862-1865).

God's provision for the sacrificial meal came on the third day with his proven fealty. Note that the Second Temple religious leaders of Jesus' time, thousands of years later had lost sight of the motif, as was demonstrated by the ensuing argument in John's text. Neither did they understand His statement "Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three-days I will raise it up."⁷³

Jesus Himself would provide a divine meal on the third day.

On the *third day*, which was the *last day* of His journey, Abraham entered into the manifest presence of God. The implication of his sacrifice was also that he partook in the feast. Linking the synonymous descriptive adjectives, "third" and "last" becomes an important interpretive element in later understanding John's Gospel. Hebraic-minded thinkers would have associated either term with encounter with the Word of God and the experience of some form of His miraculous presence.

Philo, a contemporary Jewish theologian who lived and wrote prolifically about Hebraic spirituality during Jesus' lifetime, was perplexed by a seeming paradox in mention of the third day:

On this account too, Abraham, when he had come unto the place which God had told him of, "On the third day, looking up, saw the place afar off." [Genesis 22:4.] What kind of place? Was it the place to which he came? And how was it still afar off, if he had already come to it?⁷⁴

Prior to discovering Philo's question regarding the location into which the Patriarch was looking, I had asked the same question when reading the account in the Targum:

And Abraham arose in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and cut the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to

⁷³ John 2:19

⁷⁴ Philo, *On the Posterity of Cain and His Exile*, in *The Works of Philo Judæus, the Contemporary of Josephus*, trans. C. D. Yonge, vol. 1 (London: H. G. Bohn, 1854), 17-18.

the place of which the Lord had spoken to him. And in the third day Abraham lifted, up his eyes, and saw the place from afar.⁷⁵

My similar thought, in connection with the motif of the third day, was that Abraham was seeing into the spiritual realm of the *davar* or the *aion*. Philo continued his commentary, perhaps with some humor, but following the same line of thought:

...But perhaps the meaning which is intended under this expression may be something like this: The wise man, being always desirous to comprehend the nature of the Ruler of the universe, when he is proceeding along the road which leads by knowledge and wisdom, previously meets with words of God, among which he rests for a while...⁷⁶

Philo confronted the third day paradox of the Patriarch's seeming distance from his destination while having arrived at its location. Isaiah spoke similarly regarding those who would behold the Lord:

He who walks righteously, and speaks with sincerity, He who rejects unjust gain, And shakes his hands so that they hold no bribe; He who stops his ears from hearing about bloodshed, And shuts his eyes from looking upon evil; He will dwell on the heights; His refuge will be the impregnable rock; His bread will be given *him*; His water will be sure. Your eyes will see the King in His beauty; They will behold a far-distant land"⁷⁷

Intuitively, Philo also connected the paradox to meeting and abiding with the Word. His first century A.D. interpretation is important because it testified of an extant understanding regarding the Hebraic nature of the Word—providing a place of sojourn

⁷⁵. Genesis 22:3-4; modified Etheridge Translation

⁷⁶ Philo, *Posterity of Cain*, 1:18: note that the antiquated term "clave" was changed to "cut."

⁷⁷ Isaiah 33:15-17 NASB

wherein fellowship with God took place. Moreover, he provided an ongoing witness to the otherworldly concept of the third day.

As one who was “raised up from the water,” Moses also faced the refiners fire as he became the deliverer of the nation and was called into his own three-day journey. He could not become *Ish-raah-el’s* leader apart from embracing a new identity. His commitment would be tested.

Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, “*Yehovah*, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, ‘I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt, and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey.’” And they will listen to your voice, and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, “*Yehovah*, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a three-days’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to *Yehovah* our God.’ But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go.”⁷⁸

It was perhaps the last thing on Earth that Moses wanted to do, nevertheless, God sent him to confront Pharaoh repeatedly.

Afterward Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, “Thus says *Yehovah*, the God of Israel, ‘Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.’” But Pharaoh said, “Who is *Yehovah*, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know *Yehovah*, and moreover, I will not let Israel go.” Then they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go a three-days’ journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to

⁷⁸ Exodus 3:16-20 ESV

Yehovah our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.”⁷⁹

Eventually, under the duress of plagues, Pharaoh relented.

Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and said, Go, sacrifice to your God within the land.” But Moses said, “It would not be right to do so, for the offerings we shall sacrifice to *Yehovah* our God are an abomination to the Egyptians. If we sacrifice offerings abominable to the Egyptians before their eyes, will they not stone us? We must go three-days’ journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to *Yehovah* our God as he tells us.” So Pharaoh said, “I will let you go to sacrifice to *Yehovah* your God in the wilderness; only you must not go very far away. Plead for me.”⁸⁰

Often in the Scriptures, convergences of the Hebraic motifs occurred.

The nation of Israel was raised above the water as ones living in Moses’ namesake while Pharaoh’s armies perished beneath the waves.

The three-day journey was a time of preparation necessary for purification before encounter with God’s Word. The time allowed for individuals to be humbled and to become something different in being than they were previously. Note the motif of significance above the water at the start of the following quote:

“‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Me. Now if you will listen to Me and carefully keep My covenant, you will be My own possession out of all the peoples, although all the Earth is Mine, and you will be My kingdom of priests and My holy nation.’ These are the words that you are to say to the Israelites.” After Moses came back, he summoned the elders of the people and set before them all these words that *Yehovah* had commanded him. Then all the people

⁷⁹ Exodus 5:1-3 ESV

⁸⁰ Exodus 8:25-28 ESV

responded together, “We will do all that *Yehovah* has spoken.” So Moses brought the people’s words back to *Yehovah*. [And] *Yehovah* said to Moses, “I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear when I speak with you and will always believe you.” Then Moses reported the people’s words to *Yehovah*. And *Yehovah* told Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. They must wash their clothes and be prepared by the third day, for on the third day *Yehovah* will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. Put boundaries for the people all around the mountain and say: Be careful that you don’t go up on the mountain or touch its base. Anyone who touches the mountain will be put to death. No hand may touch him; instead he will be stoned or shot with arrows. No animal or man will live. When the ram’s horn sounds a long blast, they may go up the mountain. Then Moses came down from the mountain to the people and consecrated them, and they washed their clothes. He said to the people, “Be prepared by the third day. Do not have sexual relations with women.” On the third day, when morning came, there was thunder and lightning, a thick cloud on the mountain, and a loud trumpet sound, so that all the people in the camp shuddered.⁸¹

Ultimately, the journey was one of moving toward authentic trust in God, serving several purposes: This was a test of loyalty, faithfulness, and allegiance. It brought about humble contrition—refining the character of individuals.

Jesus explained: “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.”⁸²

The three-day journey prepared the faithful for greater works or to perform signs and wonders. This also brought

⁸¹ Exodus 19:4-16 HCSB

⁸² John 15, 1-2 ESV

deliverance from slavery providing a pathway into freedom. Moreover, the journey also confirmed one's identity and faithfulness in God. Typically, it often involved both personal and blood sacrifices. Abraham was willing to sacrifice his most prized gift—his son. Moses risked his life repeatedly confronting Pharaoh. Finally, their journeys culminated in personal encounter with the manifest presence of God. For those who chose disobedience and did not consecrate themselves, encounter with the Word would prove to be detrimental. The unwritten question of the three-day journey was “Will the one who calls herself or himself by My name prove his or her claim of faithfulness to Me and obey My voice?”

The Word of *Yehovah* came to Jonah son of Amittai: “Get up! Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because their wickedness has confronted Me.” However, Jonah got up to flee to Tarshish from *Yehovah's* presence. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish.⁸³

According to Jonah's testimony, he was a Hebrew worshiper of *Yehovah*, the God of the heavens who made the sea and the dry land.⁸⁴ All of this proved to be hypocritical lip service however, as he ran from the *panim* or the presence of the Lord—Whom his forefather Jacob by contrast, had fought to embrace. Jonah was unfaithful to the Lord. Despite his reputation as a prophet, living rebellion within him proved who and what he actually was. By not heeding the Word, Jonah risked peril to others.

Demonstrating that they were more reverent than him, the sailors who served other gods sought for divine mercy and threw Jonah into the sea—lest all of them perish. “Now *Yehovah* had appointed a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the fish three-days and three nights.”⁸⁵

After three-days and nights Jonah repented and called out to the Lord for help. With his sacrifice of praise, vow to obey, and acknowledgment that “*yeshuah* is from the Lord,” *Yehovah*

⁸³ Jonah 1:1-3a HCSB

⁸⁴ Note Jonah 1:9

⁸⁵ Jonah 1:17 HCSB

commanded the fish and it vomited Jonah up on the dry land.⁸⁶ Once again He encountered the benevolent Word of God. His test continued. “So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the Word of Jehovah. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city, of three-days’ journey.”⁸⁷⁸⁸

Jonah had not desired for Nineveh to repent. They were the enemies of Israel. He wanted to see them destroyed. Nevertheless, to his chagrin, the Ninevites heeded the Word of God, called upon *Yehovah* for His forgiveness and turned from their wickedness. What could have proven to have been a tremendous blessing to Jonah eventually ended with his shame.

Note that Saul was on a three-day journey when he went out to find the missing donkey. He visited the prophet Samuel, partook in the sacrifice, was anointed as king, and encountered the manifest presence of God. “And it came to pass, when all that knew him beforetime saw that, behold, he prophesied among the prophets, then the people said one to another, What *is* this *that* is come unto the son of Kish? *Is* Saul also among the prophets?”⁸⁹

The term “beforetime,” rendered from the Hebrew term *shilshom*, literally meant “three-days ago.”⁹⁰

Emphasis of this extant term reminds us of the significance of the three-day journey, which in Saul’s case resulted in anointing on the last or the third day.

Jonah and Saul ultimately serve as negative examples, as we consider the ends of their lives. God used them despite their unfaithfulness to His Word. Nevertheless, we can only imagine how

⁸⁶ Note Jonah 2.

⁸⁷ There is some question among scholars regarding whether or not the statement here actually pertained to the size of Nineveh. See: Landes, G. M., Cook, S. L., & Winter, S. C. (1999). *On the way to Nineveh: studies in honor of George M. Landes*: Scholars Press.

⁸⁸ Jonah 3:3 ASV

⁸⁹ 1 Samuel 10:11 KJV

⁹⁰ שלשום—*shilshom*

they might have participated more enduringly in God's kingdom had they humbled themselves before *Yehovah*.

Introduction of Jesus' Three-Day Journey

The concept of the three-day journey was referenced several times by different New Testament authors. Use of the motif served to validate Gospel writers' conveyances that Jesus' identity fit well in the Hebraic tradition.

The multitudes seeking Jesus had been with Him 3 days. On the last day of their sojourn with Him He manifested the glory of God and multiplied fish and loaves to miraculously feed them.⁹¹ Saul was on a journey to Damascus to capture those who were followers of Jesus and was struck with physical blindness by God. After three-days Ananias visited and healed him.⁹²

At the start of John's Gospel, three-days were repeatedly referenced. The verse placement of the first occurrence, however, may need to be adjusted in order to be properly understood.

Recall the previous discussion regarding Nicodemus' introduction in John 3, which was inconveniently divided by the chapter division from 2:24-25.⁹³

Here again the division separating chapter 1 from chapter 2 leads to an interpretive problem that may hide the significance of the author's intentions.

In the Hebraic motif of the three-day journey, miraculous divine-human encounter had consistently taken place on the third day. With the understanding that chapter and verse divisions did

⁹¹ Note Matthew 15:32ff & Mark 8:1ff.

⁹² Note Acts 9:1-19.

⁹³ This was a repeating problem in the book of John: "...Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all *men*, and did not need that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man. There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews..." (John 2:24-3:1 modified KJV). The context of the discussion would have been better preserved if the chapter break had been made in a different place in order to preserve the idea that Nicodemus, the Pharisee, was numbered among men who could not be trusted.

not occur in the original texts of the New Testament, the first phrase in John 2 makes much more sense if it is moved to the last part of chapter 1.

Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man on the third day."⁹⁴

The big deal which would be of far greater significance than Jesus' prophetic Word regarding having seen Nathanael under the fig tree, presumably when he had been praying, would have been the actuality of seeing angels ascending and descending on the Son of man on the third day.

This concept set the introductory stage for further use of the three-day motif throughout the book of John. From this point forward, the mention of hours and days held significant meaning for the audience.

I need to interject that mention of significance of the third day can fit both with the narrative at the end of chapter 2 and also with the start of chapter 3. I have often wondered if in an ancient text, the phrase "third day" might have been mentioned twice, but then later might have been reduced to a single statement.

The Greek term "*kai*" is an intervening term in the text. As a preposition, "*kai*" can be translated with a variety of transitional prepositions. Therefore, I have also speculated that the insertion of "*kai*" might have been used to convey the thought of "even," or "for example" or "consider"—so that the third day referencing wherein Nathanael would see angels or the miraculous realm would

⁹⁴ John 1:47-2:1 ESV

also have served as an introduction to the miracle at Cana. This is one of those unresolved textual questions that are difficult to answer. And if we decide that the chapter division represented a clean break between two ideas and that the third day specifically pertained to the events at Cana, we haven't really lost anything. Nathanael was still going to witness the angelic realm and the miracle of Jesus still took place on the third day of a three-day journey. Therefore, I figuratively play my hand affirming the acceptability of both possibilities.

At Cana, when Mary indicated Jesus' need to take action because they had run out of wine at the wedding, He replied that His hour had not yet come. In other terms, He was close to completing three-days of fasting and prayer, but not quite at that moment. Nevertheless, with the ensuing time, the journey had been completed and the miraculous power of *Yehovah* was called forth into the water, and it became wine. In the pages ahead, we will look more significantly at the timing of Jesus' miracles in accordance with the last day of the three-day journey.

Jesus intended to lead His followers into the spiritual realm where they would hear God's voice, receive vision, and become empowered to perform signs and wonders. This became the very point of Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus in John 3.

In the Hebraic tradition, the "third day" was understood as the eschatological day for being raised up into these kinds of otherworldly encounters.⁹⁵ Therefore, the chronological connective "on the third day" could make sense either way. The "third day" was also an eschatological phrase that set the stage within the text for the expectation of signs, wonders and miracles.

This description was followed by Jesus confronting the pharisaical religious leaders telling them that the temple would be destroyed and then be raised up again in three-days. Although they thought He was referencing the ornate temple their forefathers had taken several decades to build, Jesus had been speaking of the

⁹⁵ Note each of the aforementioned references from the Hebrew scriptures.

temple of His body.⁹⁶ Jesus acknowledged His own embrace of the sacrificial three-day journey in other instances:

At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.” And he [Jesus] said to them, “Go and tell that fox, ‘Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course. Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.’”⁹⁷

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, “Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.” But he answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three-days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three-days and three nights in the heart of the Earth.”⁹⁸

Again there was a convergence of motifs. Jesus’ self-sacrificing three-day journey, ending in His crucifixion, would eventuate with His resurrection into the heavens. Even as Abraham’s three-day journey had culminated in a feast, so also would a sacrifice be provided for the followers of Jesus—whereby they would experience the ancient life.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Note John 2:19-20.

⁹⁷ Luke 13:31-33 ESV

⁹⁸ Matthew 12:38-40 ESV; note the parallel discussion in Luke 11.

⁹⁹ Note Matthew 26:26, Mark 14:22, Luke 22:19 & 1 Corinthians 11:24.

Midbar of the Wilderness

Compare the Hebrew terms for “wilderness”¹⁰⁰ and “Word,”¹⁰¹ which respectively are *midbar* and *davar*. They share a similar etymological relationship. In Hebrew, wilderness is the term *davar*, with a prefixed letter *mem*. Ancient Hebrew terms are essentially comprised of three consonants. These terms undergo spelling changes depending upon how the term is used due to tense, mood, and voice, etc. The prefixed *mem* can be understood as a preposition denoting the concept of being by or in. Therefore, the term *midbar* can be understood as literally being “in the Word.”

Now we understand that all throughout the pages of Scripture, the Word came in the form of visionary experiences.

After Jesus was baptized, the text of the Bible states that He went into the wilderness. What, then, actually occurred?

Jesus had a visionary experience wherein Satan tested Him.

The nuances of how these terms may have been related to one another in the minds of ancient biblical authors are unknown. Nevertheless, contextually we realize from many passages in Scripture that individuals went into the “wilderness” and encountered the “Word.” Each term shares the functionality of being a dwelling place.

Where did Israel go after passing through the Red Sea and arriving above the water on dry ground? They went “into” and “out of” an encounter with the “Word”—following three-days of purification and preparation that included washing with water. Could a journey that included passage through water and into the wilderness or the *midbar*, a miraculous place where bread fell from heaven and their clothing and sandals never wore out, have somehow been comparable to sojourn in the Word?

Interestingly, Hagar encountered the Angel of the Lord by a spring of water in the wilderness located on the way to Shur.¹⁰² Jacob was in a deserted place near the waters of the Jabbok when

¹⁰⁰ *midbar*—מִדְבָּר

¹⁰¹ “מִדְבָּר” vs. “דָּבָר.”

¹⁰² Note Genesis 16:7.

he encountered the Lord. Ezekiel was either in or by the River *Chebar* when the heavenly realm was opened to him and he stood before the throne of God.

How might the parallel between these terms—and the idea of passage through water as a baptismal cleansing experience—help readers interpret the writings of the New Testament? An intriguing detail emerges in the Gospel of Matthew.

Papias, a disciple of John recorded that Matthew's Gospel was originally composed in Hebrew.¹⁰³ Having been translated from the extant Greek translation we read:

After Jesus was baptized, just as he was coming up out of the water, the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my one dear Son; in him I take great delight." Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.¹⁰⁴

Where did Jesus really go after being raised above the water? Reading of the English text makes it appear as if He went into the Judean Desert. Nevertheless, we also take note that Jesus went into a visionary word encounter. Was Matthew actually attempting to convey something regarding John's baptism related to the spiritual praxis of confession of sin, cleansing with water, partaking in a spiritual meal, and perhaps other matters we have not recognized with regard to the *midbar* or the *davar*? We read about Jesus that:

After he fasted forty days and forty nights he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become bread." But he answered, "It is written, 'Man does not live by bread alone, but by every Word that comes from the mouth of God.'"¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Peter Kirby, ed., "Fragments of Papias," *Early Christian Writings*, last modified 2024, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/papias.html>.

¹⁰⁴ Matthew 3:16-4:1 NET

¹⁰⁵ Matthew 4:2-4 NET

Later in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus challenged those who had gone out into the "wilderness" to experience John's baptism regarding their intent. Had they gone out to see a reed shaken by the wind? No. They had made the journey to see someone who had become greater than any other who had been born of women. Why did Jesus use a comparative metaphor about birth? Was He drawing a correlation between the burst of water that prepared the way for the newborn to enter into the world and cleansing that allowed individuals to be birthed into the ancient life or into the *aionios* life of the Word?

Furthermore, did John's baptismal activity, birthing children into the spiritual realm, contribute to his endorsement by Jesus as the greatest among the prophets? John had encountered the Word which prompted his ministry—providing the means for Jesus' entry into the Word—which the New Testament identified with the term "wilderness." It seems from the text that John's baptismal journey through the water was a necessary component that permitted the faithful to see into the realm of heaven. This was a necessary preparatory step for entry into the *aionia*, as had been the case with Noah, Moses, and Israel—all of whom had been raised up to life above the water.

Although we traditionally have associated water baptism with cleansing, there may be far more to many of these biblical texts involving water than we have realized.

Part of Christendom's ongoing ignorance has been caused by Christian Orthodoxy's emphasis on seeking to derive theology from study of the biblical texts rather than seeking to understand spirituality. Although for many decades scholars have pointed out that Judaism was all about Orthopraxy, this realization has not brought about much change in how the Bible has been studied by Christians.

Jesus went on to conclude the discussion explaining that from the days of John the Baptist's ministry until that moment, the kingdom of heaven had been suffering violence, and that violent people were laying hold of the kingdom by force. Referenced from Matthew 11:12. It seems apparent that some of the people who went out to see John the Baptist, confessing their sins and being

washed in the Jordan did so seeking birth into the spiritual realm in order to obtain tangible spiritual treasure. Perhaps there is greater wisdom in the proverb than has been realized: "It is the glory of God to conceal a *davar*; to search out a *davar* is the glory of kings."¹⁰⁶

When Jesus acclaimed John as a "prophet" and announced his activity hearing confessions and baptizing at the Jordan, some of His Hebraic-minded audience would have understood the rite of passage into the Word and the *aionios* life. Only a few verses earlier, in Matthew 10:41, Jesus was discussing how those who received a prophet in the name of a prophet would also receive a prophet's reward. Was not the reward of the prophet the prophetic Word of the *davar*? Those who had been waiting for the restoration of the Word proclaimed this as the "Gospel." The same was preached by John at the Jordan as the prophet led seekers into the *aionios* or the ancient life.

Bread and Encounter with the Word

A central feature of Hebraic eschatology revolved around a sacred meal, which was often associated with the Word. There were two sources for life in Eden. The members of humankind were made alive by the breath of the Spirit, and then they were sustained physically by the food God provided. They were furthermore nourished intellectually, emotionally and spiritually through ongoing fellowship with the Word.

Whereas the Masoretic Hebrew texts of Genesis 3:8 is translatable as, "And they heard the voice of *Yehovah* God as He was walking in the garden in the Spirit of day," the Aramaic has been rendered "And they heard the voice of the Word of the Lord God walking in the garden..."¹⁰⁷

Herein, *Memra* in the Aramaic Text was identified with *Yehovah* in the Hebrew Bible.

The diversity in translation being conveyed helps us to see that in ancient times the terms "Word" and "spirit" were

¹⁰⁶ Proverbs 25:2

¹⁰⁷ Genesis 3:8 Etheridge Translation, p. 40.

understood as pointing to the same concept—which was the presence of God.

Although a variety of terms—such as “Spirit” versus “Word”—were used in the biblical texts to convey the divine Source of the input received by Adam and Eve, their bodies, minds, and every part of their being were initially created and shaped by only what they received from God. Accordingly, as the Edenic family related to one another and ruled over the Earth, the only attitudes and actions or words they could possibly convey to one another were good and loving.

Even as they were created in the state of original innocence to bear the image of God, all that they could become was a product of the provision of their Creator. They knew nothing of evil and so their purity was preserved. This state of being allowed them to fellowship freely with God. Even as they were made alive intellectually and spiritually by the voice or the Word or the Spirit of the Lord, so also they were provided with food to give them physical sustenance. The fruit of the trees that they consumed was metaphoric of the Spirit, Who filled all of their being with the Essence of God’s character.

In this sense, what they ate was also a portal to what Adam and Eve might become. There was a cause-effect relationship between how they continued to exist in the presence of God and obedience to God’s voice. Their holy place of standing in the paradisiacal garden was afforded to them by both eating the fruit of the permissible trees and by obedience to the Word. A limitation was set on what they ate, because the forbidden food was also a portal for evil to enter into them. Whereas they lived in a place where they enjoyed life in the presence of the Spirit, above the water, the adversarial meal would cause them to lose their rights to the high place of dwelling. To have been cast out of the garden and away from God’s immanent presence would have been synonymous with death.

And *Yehovah* God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of

the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.”¹⁰⁸

They were warned because God intended for it to have remained that way. Nevertheless, they were also created to live in a world where choice was possible. “Without the freedom to choose rebellious betrayal, the concept of devotional obedience would have meant nothing.” One of my professors in seminary, Dr. J. Rodman Williams, helped me to understand this point.

There is a popular doctrinal position today embraced by some who say that it was actually God’s will for humankind to sin. Extremists among them actually assert that God has created certain individuals for the purpose of condemning them to hell for all of eternity. Conveniently, in this paradigm, the way for one to prove that any individual had not been predestined to the fiery grave by God was through cognitive acceptance of Calvinistic religious doctrines.

What we see in this form of reasoning is a logical fallacy wherein an unfalsifiable premise is made. The argument has been structured in such a way that it cannot be proven wrong, because any attempt to disprove it or any standard of evidence is predetermined by the logic itself. By defining election or theoretical salvation through the acceptance of their specific doctrine, maniacal interpreters create a closed loop: if anyone accepts the doctrine, they are saved. However, if anyone rejects or questions it, their very rejection is treated as proof that God created them for damnation. The claim is completely unfalsifiable.

Historically, this dynamic has been described as “begging the question” (*Petitio Principii*). The supposed facticity of the conclusion has been assumed in the premise itself. Calvinist argue that Calvinist doctrine is true because it explains who is saved, and everyone should then know just exactly who is saved because such ones have accepted Calvinist doctrine. By linking salvation directly to intellectual assent, the system disingenuously treats its own conclusions as proven facts. Self-authenticating loops in theology are a demonstration of religious arrogance because they are

¹⁰⁸ Genesis 2:16-17 NASB

intolerant of criticism. If someone claims to be saved or Christian without adopting specific Calvinistic doctrines, the framework automatically redefines them as being “predestined for damnation,” thereby insulating the doctrine from any real-world counterexamples.

In the simplest terms, the Calvinistic doctrine is baseless opinion that is rooted in faulty reasoning. Nevertheless, this provides a powerful control device influencing the minds of the naïve. If anyone chooses to leave the Calvinistic fellowship, thereby demonstrating disagreement with the doctrine, they are left to wrestle with the uncertainty of their eternal salvation. And this observation can be made about any cultic controlling religious group. Many Christian groups throughout history and even today continue imposing control upon the minds and lives of their constituencies by asserting that “If anyone leaves, they are not saved.”

Moreover, those who face indecision regarding whether or not they should leave, are compelled to stay because they are going to become severed from their social support network of friends. Those who are supposedly among the elect typically shun, marginalize, or cut off communication with those who leave the group.

In the Gospels, we see that individuals feared being put out of the synagogue exemplifying this dynamic. Note the parents of the blind man in John 9.

Tragically, the first family strode away from their high place of dwelling and divine sustenance and life in the presence of the Lord as they disobeyed His protective instruction. God did not intend for this to happen, but individuals were created with the ability to choose.

Moses admonished ancient Israel to “Choose life!” What kind of God would exhort His people to choose life without creating within each of them the ability to choose? All throughout the Bible, individuals are continually faced with choices. Of what significance are the narratives of Scripture if nobody’s ultimate choice was their own? How can there be divine-human accountability for actions taken in this world if those making harmful decisions did not make

these of their own volition? The overarching reality in scripture from start to finish is that there are two voices, which are God's and the adversary's. The question is whether or not individuals will choose to reject the luring suggestions of the adversary. Those who as an act of their own will decide to embrace God's voice and walk in obedience prove that they are His children.

As the Edenic family embraced the voice of the adversary instead of God's, they became not only part of the accusation that their Creator was keeping something of value from them, but also, coterminously, the children of Satan. Instead of being born of and shaped only by the Word of God, when they ate both the adversary's food and acted according to his words instead of God's, they became his adversarial progeny.

It is vital to understand the intermingled Hebraic concept of food and Words. Adam and Eve could only become representations of God's image so long as they ate His food and listened to His voice. They abode with the Word intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. Likewise the Word abode in them. They were the product of the Word and all that He provided for them. To have sought after the adversary's suggestions and his food, alternatively made them products of his rebellious being. As they consumed his words by listening to and obeying his voice, and also ate his food, they became like him in being. Satan's proposal, idea, or voice found its way into Adam and Eve's being and they lost their childlike purity. They no longer were solely bearers of the image of God. They had forfeited the original state of innocence and life in which they were created.¹⁰⁹

Curiosity and false promises became the divisive tools of the enemy. Eve initially listened to the voice of the adversary, and then Adam fixated himself on the same words of the serpent coming through his wife. They first focused their eyes, then their hearts, their hands, and ultimately wrapped their being around that which was beautiful, forbidden and deadly. As the illicit meal filled them,

¹⁰⁹ In the context of the Hebraic Tradition's understanding, it would have been equally acceptable in this paragraph to have substituted the term "Spirit" or "*Memra*" for "Word."

so also a portal was opened and they became subjected to the rulership of Satan.

Then to Adam He said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it;’ Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you shall eat the plants of the field; By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread¹¹⁰ Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return.”¹¹¹

The indication that God intended for them to continue eating probably came as encouragement because it implied that they would also keep breathing—at least for a while. Might the meal God spoke of be of eschatological significance, eventually leading them back to life and a place of dwelling in His presence? How might God have supplied a divine meal that was also the Word?

The answer was that *Memra*, Who was also known to have performed the actions of *Yeshuah*, daily help, and deliverance, would one day take on human flesh and provide His broken body sacrificially. Repentant faithful seekers of the Word would eat and drink to find their way back into the inheritance intended for them at the foundation of the world—a dwelling place in the presence of the Spirit, *Memra*, or the Word of God. In light of the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace, this would be the *shekinah* dwelling in the *aion* before the throne of God.

For the immediate moment, “death” was not the complete cessation of existence. It did mean, however, that there was going to be a separation from the life of God, His presence, and the voice of the Word or the Spirit. They were going to be removed from the comforting source of their Sustenance. Whereas the Lord had been immanent with them in Eden, members of humankind were cast

¹¹⁰ לֶחֶם—*lechem*

¹¹¹ Genesis 3:17-19 NASB

out of the garden, away from the Word or the Spirit of Life”—Who was their divine Creator and Sustainer.

John’s Hebraic-mindedness included the understanding that the “‘Word’ of Life” was a title for God from the time of creation:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; For the life was manifested, and we have seen *it*, and bear witness, and show to you that *aionios* life,¹¹² which was with the Father, and was manifested to us; That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.¹¹³

Note use of the past tense “which was with,” further justifying translation of *aionios* as “ancient.” Of course John emphasized the point of the “Word” being with God and existing as “God” at creation: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” in John 1:1.

John demonstrated his own literacy and fluency in the Aramaic language. In 20:16, he recorded: “Jesus said to her, ‘Mary.’ She turned and said to him in Aramaic, ‘Rabboni’ (which means ‘Teacher.’)”¹¹⁴ It would be reasonable to draw the conclusion that John’s writings were influenced by what he had read in the Aramaic Scriptures. There can be no doubt that the Targums had served as John’s Bible.

Yehovah God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. And *Yehovah* God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live in the *aion*.” So *Yehovah* God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground

¹¹² αἰώνιος—*aionios*

¹¹³ 1 John 1:1-3

¹¹⁴ John 20:16 NET

from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.¹¹⁵

Note that in this quote, the term “forever,” which was translated the locative phrase *eis ton aiona*, was re-rendered in accordance with its Hebraic significance. The context of the Hebrew pericope revolved around the dwelling place in God’s presence. This did not concern a timeframe.

In the making of coverings for the bodies of humankind, God had also made the first sacrifices. Eventually, the animals would also become food. Throughout the pages of Scripture, the term “bread” was used as a generalization for the Word or *davar* and spiritual encounter—even when the context was evident that they were eating meat or other foods. As had been the case in Eden, within the Hebraic Tradition, the quest for and the tangible consumption of “bread” became more than figurative in the seeking and experiencing of encounter with God.

The same could be observed of baptism or cleansings with water. These were preparatory actions for seeking the manifest presence of God.

Listening to the wrong voice and eating that which was forbidden had led not only to deafness concerning the voice of God and blindness in their ability to see Him, but also to banishment and starvation from His empowering presence.

Even in the very act of pronouncement of the curse, however, there was a ray of hope; for God had not quit speaking. The day of humankind’s abiding apart from the reign of God had been brought about through Satan’s seduction of Eve and by her persuasion of Adam to disobey. Now, instead of ruling over the Earth by empowerment of the Spirit as had originally been intended, the sweat of their faces and mere human strength would have to suffice. And they would eat bread.

Why bread and not starvation? Indeed, God held out His hand to His children and gave them another opportunity to obey,

¹¹⁵ Genesis 3:21-24 NIV

but the plan was going to be costly for everyone. It would require tremendous endurance in pursuit of the intended meal to aid them in their labor on the Earth. God's stern warning, "*In the 'day' you eat of it you shall surely die!*" was not without temporal significance.¹¹⁶ Adam and Eve passed out of an abiding place with the *Spirit of Day*, into a *second day* of death. Oh how humankind would long from this darkened perspective to realize deliverance and life in a distant *third day of renewal!*

Note the discussion of the "Three-Day Journey." The third day was a day of sacrifice wherein people encountered the manifest presence of God and were changed. The concept of the third day becomes an important interpretive tool in understanding the Gospels.

A new day would follow this one of despair when humankind's allegiance to God's Word would be tested, with the eventual hope that they would find restoration to God's high dwelling above the water. It would also be a day when they would eat bread. Once again in that eschatological day, they would be re-recognized as the sons or the children of Light—the spiritual progeny of the Spirit of Day.

Re-entry Into the Reign of God

At the end of Genesis 3, there were no explicit explanations given regarding either the significance of bread or the reason why the slaying of flesh was necessary. In the coming pages of Scripture, however, matters pertaining to both of these, in addition to the importance of the "name of *Yehovah*," became unifying aspects of the sacred writings as individuals sought encounter with God and divine empowerment to reign over the Earth.

Eve's first two male offspring had chosen different occupations; Abel raised livestock and Cain was a farmer. Not having lost the awareness of their divine Creator, each brought an offering to *Yehovah* in accordance with his field of work. However, the one lacking blood became instructive to future generations—perhaps also shedding light on the purpose for God's animal

¹¹⁶ Genesis 2-17 NASB

sacrifice from which their parents' divinely provided covering had been given.

The unfolding biblical narrative emphasized the importance of making blood offerings as preparatory events leading to human encounter with the manifest presence of God. In the narrative of Genesis 4, we realize the effectual nature of the sacrifice of Abel. His presentation consisted of the,

firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And *Yehovah* had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. Then *Yehovah* said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."¹¹⁷

Cain's attitude, tainted by rebellious, wicked jealousy held him in a grip that would not allow him to humbly make a new sacrificial offering like that of Abel's. It was the voice of the adversary living in him that now guided his life more strongly than the Lord's. Cain had become an example of the battleground upon which the war of the ages had begun to be fought. In the psyche of all humankind two subtle voices sought for the allegiance of the individual. Refusing to loose his grip on the pitiful attitude that lived within, he became guided by its adversarial voice. Cain ran after the will and the reign of Satan. He was so deranged by resentment that he would rather have suffered as a victim of the wrath of sin than to do what he had been shown was right and within his reach! He did not master the sin preying upon him with its destructive force of wickedness. Instead, he was further taken captive by it. In accordance with the being of his master, he became just like him: a liar and a murderer. Although some means of avoidance of the reign of Satan had been offered to Cain by God, he unrepentantly walked in the progeny of his spiritual father—the devil. By his actions he embodied the suggestions and the will of Satan. Rather

¹¹⁷ Genesis 4:3-7 NASB

than choosing to partake of the bread of God's Word, Cain's being was filled from a different feast. He had chosen to seat himself at the devil's table. Resultantly, the portal to his being was also opened and interpenetrated by evil. With this, he rose up and murdered his own brother.

Through the story of Abel and Cain, the point was understood that seeking God would be done with the preparation and presentation of the innocent blood of animals.

In an eschatological future day of expectation, the innocent blood of Jesus would be shed and the Word of God would become the final sacrificial meal. Those who consumed the Word of God would be coterminously consumed by the Word of God. They would enter into the Word and the Word would enter into them. And as they would become inhabitants of two worlds, they would bring the good-Word back into the Earth in order to impart divine blessings to a needy world.

Sacrifices became understood as the means of seeking encounter with God's Word. In some cases they were performed after a visitation from the Word took place, as if to pay a debt. As it had been decreed by the Lord that certain parts of the flesh of animals could be used as food, the events surrounding the sacrifice resulted in preparation of a meal. Thus, in two ways, the broken flesh provided sustenance for those seeking God and also the path back into His presence. Standing before Him they became partakers in His Word.

Much later, after Israel had become a nation under the leadership of Moses, God instructed them to build a Tabernacle or the Tent of Meeting—wherein the presence of God would dwell. Inside the tent, sacred loaves were kept. These were known as the "bread of the presence." Later in Solomon's temple, the same bread was provided for the priests who made sacrifices and ministered in the presence of the Lord.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ The following verses from the RSV mention the "bread of the presence." Exodus 25:30, 35:13, 39:36, Numbers 4:7, 1 Samuel 21:6, 1 Kings 7:48, 2 Chronicles 4:19, Matthew 12:4, Mark 2:26, Luke 6:4, Hebrews 9:2, 1 Maccabees 1:22 & 2 Maccabees 10:3.

And so to sustain them, while they wandered through the desert, and in order to cement the connotation of bread with the Word, the Lord rained food from heaven called “*manna*” which wondrously was also called “*davar*.”

Note that Philo, when discussing the bread God had provided, referenced this in Greek as the “*rhema*” of God. Philo quoted Moses from Exodus 16:15 saying: “This is the bread, the food which God has given for the soul—explaining that God has brought it, his own word¹¹⁹ and his own reason; for this bread which he has given us to eat is this word¹²⁰ of his.”¹²¹ Note the similar discussion also in 3:169 and 176 where the use of *rhema* in comparison to the sustenance given by God was repeated.

As a first century follower of *Yehovah*, Philo’s recurring association of bread with the Word proves a very significant point being emphasized in this book that was also a key to understanding the Scriptures in the first century A.D.

Then *Yehovah* said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion [or *davar*] every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction [or *Torah*].”¹²²

Note also Exodus 16:16, “This is the *davar* which *Yehovah* has commanded, “Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, *according to* the number of your persons; every man take for *those* in his tents.” In the Lord’s Prayer of the New Testament, Jesus taught His disciples to call forth their “daily bread” that was the kingdom of God’s reign among them. Referenced from Matthew 6:11. Once again, the *davar* was identified with the *manna*.

¹¹⁹ *rhema*

¹²⁰ *rhema*

¹²¹ Philo, *Legum Allegoriarum* [Allegorical Interpretation], 3.173b in *The Works of Philo Judæus, the Contemporary of Josephus*, trans. C. D. Yonge, vol. 1 (London: H. G. Bohn, 1854).

¹²² Exodus 16:4.

Even as they were to gather the bread or the *lechem* from the land, Moses referred to this as their “*davar*.”¹²³ There was no allowance for mistake in identification of the Word with God’s sustenance. Every day, all of the populace was to have turned to *Yehovah* for their *davarim* so they could find life. The Source and Provision would be of such great enduring significance that God commanded commemoration:

Then Moses said, “This is *davar Yehovah* has commanded, ‘Let an omerful of it be kept throughout your generations, that they may see the bread that I fed you in the wilderness [or in the *midbar*], when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.’” And Moses said to Aaron, “Take a jar and put an omerful of *manna* in it, and place it before *Yehovah*, to be kept throughout your generations.” As *Yehovah* commanded Moses, so Aaron placed it before the Testimony, to be kept. And the sons of Israel ate the *manna* forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate the manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.¹²⁴

Nevertheless, even as they had been grumbling, rejecting Moses’ leadership, and ultimately the Lord’s Word Who worked through him, the children of Jacob had a different meal in mind. Looking back with longing for the food they had in Egypt they cried out for meat. In so doing, they proved by their actions what sort of people they were in character. Accordingly, God sent a massive amount of quail which landed on the ground around them.

And while the flesh *was* yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of *Yehovah* was kindled against the people, and *Yehovah* smote the people with a very great plague. And he called the name of that place *Kibroth-hat-taavah*: because there they buried the people that lusted.¹²⁵

¹²³ לֶחֶם—*lechem*

¹²⁴ Exodus 16:32-35 NASB

¹²⁵ Numbers 11:33-34 KJV

Even as they were being restored to the image of God, in which they had been created at the foundation of the world, Moses instructed the people that there was a day of rest for the righteous when the *manna* would not be given.

“Tomorrow is a Sabbath observance, a holy Sabbath to *Yehovah*. Bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning.” So they put it aside until morning, as Moses had ordered, and it did not become foul, nor was there any worm in it. And Moses said, “Eat it today, for today is a Sabbath to *Yehovah*; today you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it; but on the seventh day, *which is* the Sabbath, in it there shall be none.”¹²⁶

Recall that a “holy Sabbath” observance was a time to enter into the holy realm of *Yehovah’s* presence—through fasting, abstinence, prayer, and worship, and also by ceasing from work. This sacred time of rest to discover God’s immeasurable peace was given to *Ish-raah-el* as a gift.

Note that in the Book of Jubilees, sexual abstinence was necessary on the Sabbath.

There was a point to be understood here which also sheds light on the text of Hebrews. By the sweat of their brow, they had to collect *manna* for 6 days throughout the week. This was probably not an easy task. It required work and then significant preparation (baking, boiling, etc.). Although they had striven all week in order to find their sustenance, on the seventh day, rest was given freely.

The author of Hebrews, whose interest it was to admonish ones to faithfully seek the Word, contended with the first century audience that the Word they were seeking was a place of rest. Although they were sternly warned not to give up in seeking, they were also reminded of the promise concerning the seventh day.

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, “Oh, that today you would listen as he speaks! Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of testing in the wilderness. There your

¹²⁶ Exodus 16-23b-26 NASB

fathers tested me and tried me, and they saw my works for forty years. Therefore, I became provoked at that generation and said, 'Their hearts are always wandering and they have not known my ways.' As I swore in my anger, 'They will never enter my rest!'" See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has an evil, unbelieving heart that forsakes the living God. But exhort one another each day, as long as it is called "Today," that none of you may become hardened by sin's deception. For we have become partners with Christ, if in fact we hold our initial confidence firm until the end. As it says, "Oh, that today you would listen as he speaks! Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." For which ones heard and rebelled? Was it not all who came out of Egypt under Moses' leadership? And against whom was God provoked for forty years? Was it not those who sinned, whose dead bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did he swear they would never enter into his rest, except those who were disobedient? So we see that they could not enter because of unbelief [which is better understood as unfaithfulness or untrustworthiness]. Therefore we must be wary that, while the promise of entering his rest remains open, none of you may seem to have come short of it. For we had good news [or the Gospel wherein they had encountered the Word] proclaimed to us just as they did. But the *logos* Word they heard did them no good, since they did not join in with those who heard it in faith. For we who have upheld faith enter that rest, as he has said, "As I swore in my anger, 'They will never enter my rest!'" And yet God's works were accomplished from the foundation of the world. For he has spoken somewhere about the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works," but to repeat the text cited earlier: "They will never enter my rest!" Therefore it remains for some to enter it, yet those to whom it was previously proclaimed did not enter because of disobedience.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Hebrews 3-7-4-6 NET

Note that in the passage above, *pisteuo* was rendered according to the Hebraic paradigm as “upheld faith” rather than as the concept of Aristotelian belief. Also the term “message” was changed to read *logos* Word in order to correct a pervasive error in many translations. The Israelites had not listened to a message at the foot of Mount Sinai. They had encountered the terrifying supernatural manifestation of God’s presence among them.

Under Moses’ leadership, they acted more like the children of Jacob than the children of Israel. They were unfaithful and so they neither marched forward into the promised land, nor did they embrace the eschatological day of finding rest in God’s presence¹²⁸.

We have to consider the question, “Did the author of Hebrews intend for readers to understand the reference merely as a chronological day like any other—or rather, as an eschatological encounter of hearing God’s voice that would recur many times in the listeners’ lives? It could be that the term “today” was a key word in the Hebraic Tradition that served ongoing generations as an indicator of encounter with the “*ruach yom*,” or the “Spirit of ‘Day.’” The Hebrew Text of Genesis unveils information that is not transmitted accurately into English. Therefore, interpreters do not readily make the connection that Adam and Eve’s existence in the Garden was influenced by the Spirit of Day.

I should comment here that typically, I translate “*ruach yom*,” as the “Spirit of ‘Day’” in the significance of this title referencing the Spirit of God or the Word of God. The Divine entity in Eden was referenced with either term depending upon which ancient text is consulted. Nevertheless, we understand that the Word of God was also a dwelling place. Recall that the holy of holies in the temple, in antiquity and still today, has been referenced as the Word of God—as is translated from the term *davar*. So also the “Spirit of ‘Day’” might also be thought of as a location in the spiritual realm of Day. Therefore, when biblical references make reference to the term “day,” “today,” or to other synonymous terms, they might have been discussing the spiritual realm of Day-One when the spiritual entities were either created or were called

¹²⁸ Hebrews 4-7-9 NET

forth into our universe. Consider that Jesus said, “Abraham saw my day and rejoiced.” In the Lord’s Prayer, the disciples were instructed to ask, “Give us today our daily bread.” In other terms, they were requesting the bread from the realm of the spirit—which was the Word of God.

The important piece of information intended to have been conveyed was not a weather report about the temperature in Eden, which is the case when “*ruach yom*,” is translated as “cool of the day.” There is no support whatsoever in the text that meteorological circumstances in the Garden of Eden were ever a topic of concern.

The point is more conclusive that, just as the heavenly host were created on Day-One as beings of light, that references to the concept of day or today were intended to have steered the minds of readers back to the Edenic life in God’s presence. And this is exactly the context of the discussion in Hebrews as the author spoke of hearing God’s voice.

Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God.¹²⁹

The day of rest was a time to hear God’s voice, or synonymously, we could describe this as a time of fellowship with the spirit of day from Day-One of creation.

Consider that the Sabbath celebration was initiated long before *Torah* had been given to Moses. The Sabbath began when humankind still lived in Eden. According to the book of Jubilees, which had been accepted as Scripture by segments of the early church, the Sabbath was given to the angels before it was offered to humankind. Even as humankind was being restored to an Edenic life in the Spirit, so also they were given rest.

¹²⁹ Hebrews 4:7–9 NIV

Keeping in mind that with the prayer of the *kiddush* at the start of the Sabbath, this day of rest was intended for entry into the angelic kingdom of God. As Jesus restored the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace and was compelling individuals to seek entry into the kingdom, we begin to understand how the breaking of the challah bread was a re-enlivening of the sacrifices, whereby their broken flesh also severed the veil between heaven and Earth.

I should mention that use of the term “re-enlivening” was intentionally used rather than saying “was symbolic of.” This is because ceremonial religion acts out symbolic representations. Hebraic spirituality actually opened the gateway between heaven and Earth. In churchianity today, the worship services are filled with symbolism. As a result, participants have settled for symbolic representations.

Along with the great divorce between Christianity and Judaism, like it or not, Orthodoxy had been undeniably influenced by Marcion as was demonstrated by their indistinguishable worship. We know the difference between the chicken and the egg because the Marcionite church had existed more than a hundred years before Orthodoxy and continued for centuries after the life of Athanasius.

As a result of this influence, along with adoption of the Marcionite hatred for the Jews, early Orthodox leaders never learned the Hebraic background understandings of the Old Testament which would have properly informed translation of the New Testament.

And so the actuality of the Sabbath and keeping a holy day disappeared from Christendom.

Today, some Christians talk about having a Sabbath rest day, and genuinely take a day of rest out of devotion to the Lord. I would be the last person to suggest that just because they did not understand ancient Hebraic spirituality that any of them could not have a divine-human experience on that day. Ultimately, we are held accountable for our knowledge, however, God’s intervention in our lives does not depend upon knowledge. Let’s face it; Jacob was a scoundrel—not a theologian. Yet, the Word of God visited His presence upon him.

Even if the knowledge of entry into the presence of God on the Sabbath had remained as an extant understanding in the fourth century A.D., the Orthodox institution would not allow itself to be managed prophetically by individuals laying claim to personally hearing the voice of God. And to be certain, the bishops were never going to consider that an “additional soul,” known of in Hebrew as the “*neshama yeterah*” (נִשְׁמָה יְתֵרָה), was given on the Sabbath in order for worshipers to see and hear the Lord. The bishops did everything they could to distinguish themselves from the Jews, as well as other Christian movements that practiced any kind of prophetic subjectivity. Sunday was chosen as the day of Christian worship due to the timing of Jesus’ resurrection. And in 321 A.D., Constantine officially decreed this as a day of rest. Therefore, if there had been any significance for entry into the *aion* on the Sabbath, all of this knowledge had long since been lost and forgotten.

The bishops had safely trapped the voice of God inside of the pages of Scripture—which only they were free to interpret. Due to widespread illiteracy and the lack of available copies of the biblical texts, the multitudes were dependent upon what they were taught by the institution of the church. Having done as much, the solid foundation had been laid to move forward with the propagation of objective religion based upon spreading religious knowledge.

Some might ask, does the kingdom of God come through general teaching? As one having invested the time to earn a Master’s degree in elementary education, I would emphatically say, “Yes, God’s reign is manifest through learning!” Jesus seems to have spent a great deal of time offering insight to His disciples. However, the topic of “entry into the kingdom” which He taught, is something different than the general manifestation of God’s kingdom through didactic instruction.

Escape from hell-fire after death, was perhaps the primary goal of Orthodoxy. And this continues to be used as leverage to evangelize the world today. Personally speaking, I have never attended a church service that offered miraculous empowerment

and a return to the Edenic life to anyone who would come to the altar and give their life to the Lord.

Consequently, ignoring the foundational work of Tertullian who had written against the errors of Marcion, the bishops pridefully adopted and pitted their assumption of the Gospel being a preached message about Jesus against *Torah*, which they ignorantly assumed was a single code of Law. They were uninformed regarding the *takkanot* of Second Temple Judaism with its 600+ man-made regulations, that was completely separate from the divinely inspired *Torah* given to Moses on Mount Sinai.

So then by discarding the Ten Commandments, *kiddush* entry into the holy realm on the Sabbath was lost, and reception of the additional soul whereby one might have beheld the holy realm was completely forgotten. From a philosophical standpoint we take note that a disposition of hatred moved through religious movements resulting in destruction of the actual purpose of worship. In the Hebraic tradition, worship was intended to result in the intimacy of tangible divine-human encounter.

Although we may remain tremendously grateful for the foundation of Christianity, Orthodoxy founded its existence upon many combined layers of intellectual, emotional, experiential, and philosophical error, and each of these served to sever humankind from palpable entry into God's reign. Due to these problems, the faith and spirituality Jesus had restored was lost and forgotten with the development of the hierarchical institution of the church in the fourth century.

Fourth century Orthodoxy knew little or nothing regarding ancient Israel's ongoing encounters with the Word of God. And it is clear from their composition of the *Panarion*, which was written to decry the supposed error of those they viewed as competing Christian movements, there was not going to be any respected place or tolerance for dreams, visions, angelic visitation or other kinds of manifestations of Words from God in the hierarchical institution of the Great Church. Instead, to the bishops, the literary text of the inspired Bible became the Word of God, and one concept was changed into another. References to the *logos*, *rhema* or the Word in Scripture thereafter became understood by

Orthodox interpreters either as “messages” or as the sacred writings.” With all of this, ceremony replaced the heavenly feast of the *davar*, and the focus of correctness and formality usurped hearing and seeing the realm of heaven.

As adherents grew in their understanding of religious facts, they were equipped to intellectually inform the world how to avoid hell through knowledgeable belief. The actual experience of *yeshuah* became the exception to the rule that had been replaced by acquisition of the story of Jesus’ life, crucifixion, and resurrection—which ensured eternal life. By confessing doctrines, according to the Aristotelian definition of “truth,” ones were saved. No divine-human interaction was required to ensure the elect status of those who had supposedly been predestined to go to heaven.

And what we see is that apart from divine-human subjective intimacy, all that was necessary was to continue in belief. To have doubted one’s Calvinistic elect status that had been proven by the acceptance of doctrines, as was emphasized by Darby, was the only act of immorality any Christian might have ever committed.

This gnostic paradigm of religious practice stood in stark contrast to becoming an actual *Ish-raah-el-ite* who might regularly see and hear God. Furthermore, although Jesus’ sacrifice had provided the means to enter into the holy realm, understanding how this worked was never a biblical prerequisite for entry.

Once again, Cornelius served as the perfect example. He simply did what he knew was right in his heart to walk in tangible costly obedience to God. As a result, the Roman Centurion encountered the Word.

We should focus our attention on the fact that doctrinal knowledge was of no importance in the Hebraic paradigm. Instead, the historical narrative of divine-human encounter provided practical guidance and was of dominant significance. The stories provided stepping stones toward participation in God’s rulership over the world. On this note, we should understand that the Word of God was at work throughout the world speaking to humankind in their hearts.

It was the response of obedience that God took note of in Cornelius' life which was evidenced by his deeds. In Luke's narrative of Acts, Cornelius' willingness to actively respond to the Word he had heard and seen proved that he had become a servant of the Word. Although the Gentile had not changed nationalities, he had, in fact, become an *Ish-raah-el-ite*. Recall that Luke wrote his narrative explaining at the start that he was informing the Most Excellent Theophilus regarding those who had been eyewitnesses and thereafter had become servants of the word.

The entirety of what Hebrews' author was compellingly arguing for lost its significance amidst the monolithic institution created by Orthodoxy. God's Word required ardent seeking. Jacob was renamed "*Ish-raah-el*," the man who wrestled to see God and prevailed for the purpose of becoming a namesake for those who would seek their rightful places boldly before the throne of God. The fight in which *Ish-raah-el* became engaged in order to hang on to the treasured presence of *Yehovah* was figurative for his spiritual progeny who would seek God in steadfast unrelenting prayer.

Breaking one's way between the veil separating Earth from the realm of heaven was not necessarily an easy task—as was demonstrated by Jacob's broken hip.

In conjunction with their identity as *Ish-raah-el-ites*, following the restoration of the Word, Jesus taught "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force."¹³⁰

Daring seeking of the Word was not in vain, even though seekers worked hard, fighting in prayer to stand before God and to hear His voice. The treasure of Jacob awaited those who remained faithful and continued to seek—even in periods of time when God chose to remain silent. There was a place of peace and rest for the faithful. Eventually, God would unveil the place of rest for those who endured—even to the point of suffering.

For the one who enters God's rest has also rested from his works, just as God did from his own works. Thus we must make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one may fall

¹³⁰ Matthew 11-12 ESV

by following the same pattern of disobedience. For the Word¹³¹ or the *logos* of God is living and active and sharper than any double-edged sword, piercing even to the point of dividing soul from spirit, and joints from marrow; it is able to judge the desires and thoughts of the heart. And no creature is hidden from God, but everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must render an account. Therefore since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest incapable of sympathizing with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace whenever we need help.¹³²

Manna held its significance in the Hebraic Tradition beyond the time of the composition of the book of Revelation, which is dated around 90 A.D.¹³³

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. ‘To him who overcomes, to him I will give *some* of the hidden *manna*, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.’”¹³⁴

This verse fits within the Hebraic Paradigm. The “hidden *manna*” was the *davar* of *Yehovah*, *Memra*, or *Yeshuah*. Depending upon one’s perspective in experience, the *davar* was either poured out upon the recipient or opened up to her or him allowing entry into the expanse of the heavens.

¹³¹ λόγος—*logos*

¹³² Hebrews 4:10-16 NET

¹³³ Note references in scripture: Exodus 16:31; 33; 35, Numbers 11:6f; 9, Deuteronomy 8:3; 16, Joshua 5:12, Nehemiah 9:20, Psalm 78:24, John 6:31; 49, Hebrews 9:4 & Revelation 2:17; NASB.

¹³⁴ Revelation 2:17 NASB

When we consider the transfiguration, some might say that the heavens were opened or others might describe the occurrence explaining that a cloud enveloped Jesus, Peter, James, and John.

The ascension up Jacob's ladder was availed after passing the test of obedience. Fealty sworn was only real when it was enlivened by faithfulness. When the unfaithful or unrepentant sang praise to God, no blessing was to have been expected. By contrast, when ones embodied the innocence and faithful obedience of David, God's good Word of blessing was poured out so that giants before them were slain. The high towering mountain fortresses or strongholds, where they hid themselves from the threats and temptations of the world in order to attend to the divine feast, became the visible citadels of God's angels. Recall the admonition of Proverbs 25:2. "It is the glory of God to conceal a *davar*, but the glory of kings is to search for the *davar*."

Within the *chiastic* structure, we observe that those who sought and found the Word of God were recognized as glorious rulers. Furthermore, entry into participation with God's rulership was reserved for those who sought and embraced the Word.

Even as God had sustained life through the divine impartation of the *manna* that was an expression of His Word, He understood that members of humankind were focused on earthly realities—which might also be turned into idols. Whereas God had set a journey before the nation of people to a new land, ultimately they needed to realize that the actual location He hoped for them to arrive was in His presence. In order that He might fellowship with them, as it had been in the day when they were birthed into Eden through Adam and Eve, Moses' Law would be used as a stepping stone in character, and the *qodesh* Sabbath as a pathway, leading them to the destination of the Word.

You must keep carefully all these commandments I am giving you today so that you may live, increase in number, and go in and occupy the land that *Yehovah* promised to your ancestors. Remember the whole way by which he has brought you these forty years through the desert so that he might, by humbling you, test you to see if you have it within you to keep his commandments or not. So he humbled you

by making you hungry and then feeding you with unfamiliar manna. He did this to teach you that humankind cannot live by bread alone, but also by everything that comes from Yehovah's mouth. Your clothing did not wear out nor did your feet swell all these forty years. Be keenly aware that just as a parent disciplines his child, *Yehovah* your God disciplines you. So you must keep his commandments, live according to his standards, and revere him. For *Yehovah* your God is bringing you to a good land, a land of brooks, springs, and fountains flowing forth in valleys and hills, a land of wheat, barley, vines, fig trees, and pomegranates, of olive trees and honey, a land where you may eat food in plenty and find no lack of anything, a land whose stones are iron and from whose hills you can mine copper.¹³⁵

Having been cast from Eden into death, humankind was in need of life. And so Jesus pointed those seeking life to the Ten Commandments in accordance with Moses' explanation, "You must keep carefully all these commandments I am giving you today so that you may live." This was the ancient life pronounced by Moses.

Even as God was working to give His children a place to live in Canaan, His enduring desire was for the exiles to return to His Edenic presence and the spiritually discerned *chennan*—a spiritual abiding place and state of being where the plentiful feast of the Word of God awaited each of them. It was going to be a process. All of the tangible things He was giving them in the temporal physical world were metaphoric of the lasting realities awaiting them in the spiritual realm. Humankind could only inherit the ancient life of God, by realizing their created purpose for fellowship with the Word.

Although *Torah* had been given to the nation, ultimately they were to have become a people who made loving choices based upon what had been revealed through their seeking of the Word.

But the Word, or the *davar*, is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it. See, I have

¹³⁵ Deuteronomy 8:1-9 NET

set before you this day life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of *Yehovah* your God which I command you this day, by loving *Yehovah* your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his ordinances, then you shall live and multiply, and *Yehovah* your God will bless you in the land which you are entering to take possession of it. But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you this day¹³⁶ that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land which you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. I call heaven and Earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live, loving *Yehovah* your God, obeying his voice, and cleaving to him; for that means life to you and length of days, that you may dwell in the land which *Yehovah* swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them¹³⁷

The term for “day” in this passage was *semeron* and was also interpretable as *the day of beholding*. For example, Jesus used the term *semeron* when He declared to the thief on the cross, “today you will be with me in paradise.” While the term could be used to reference the chronological day, it was also interpretable as speaking of a spiritual place of abode or an eschatological day of revealing. Synonymously, this can be understood as Day-One—the place and time wherewith the spiritual realities were created or called forth into the created universe.

The assertion, “I declare to you this day,” by Moses, in the last quote from Deuteronomy 30, might have been more aptly understood in the context of stating, “As certain as the existence of the realm of heaven,” if you do not obey, you will suffer curse.

¹³⁶ LXX reads σήμερον—*semeron*

¹³⁷ Deuteronomy 30:14-20 NIV

In the book of Jubilees, which was a condensed version of Genesis, the heavenly host or the “light” were created on Day-One. Note that in the creation account of the Hebrew Bible, the luminaries of the sun and moon were not created until later on the fourth day.

Consider the author of Hebrews’ repeated usages “Today, if you hear His voice...” See Hebrews 1:5, 3:7-13 & 15; 4:7, 5:5; and 13:8.

Moreover, in the calling forth of the kingdom, wherein the disciples of Jesus were instructed how it was that they should have prayed, the prayer began, “Give us this day, our daily bread.” This would have been the perfect prayer for the celebration of entry into the *qodesh* realm at the start of the Sabbath—with the breaking of the challah bread and the hallowing of the name of *Yehovah*.

Even as bread went into their mouths to sustain them, so also the Word of God was to have been regarded in the same way. Bread was not merely a symbolic representation for the Word. When grace was called forth into the bread, it was transformed so that the eater might also become raised into the *aionios* life. And Luke understood this dynamic when he recounted how Paul called forth grace into the bread while he and others were destined for shipwreck. So long as they all ate of the transformed bread, none of them would perish. Instead of coming to a dreadful end below, they would be spared to experience new life above the surface of the water.

The animal sacrifices, which were part of the process in seeking God’s presence, became their food. Even so, the Word brought about salvation or *yeshuah* to help them survive the perils of the world. God, Himself, was the table and feast to which He called the faithful. Man could only survive by the means provided by God’s mouth. Even as humankind ate bread, so also the Word would be found in their mouths.

As time progressed in the Hebraic tradition, the connotation for receiving God’s help or daily salvation continued to be associated with satisfying the hungry, and came in conjunction with sacrificial feasts.

Now this man [Elkanah] would go up from his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice to *Yehovah* of hosts in Shiloh...And when the day came that Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and her daughters; but to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, but *Yehovah* had closed her womb. Her rival, however, would provoke her bitterly to irritate her, because *Yehovah* had closed her womb. And it happened year after year, as often as she went up to the house of *Yehovah*, she would provoke her, so she wept and would not eat. Then Elkanah her husband said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep and why do you not eat and why is your heart sad? Am I not better to you than ten sons?" Then Hannah rose after eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the temple of *Yehovah*. And she, greatly distressed, prayed to *Yehovah* and wept bitterly. And she made a vow and said, "O *Yehovah* of hosts, if Thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of Thy maidservant and remember me, and not forget Thy maidservant, but wilt give Thy maidservant a son, then I will give him to *Yehovah* all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head." Now it came about, as she continued praying before *Yehovah*, that Eli was watching her mouth. As for Hannah, she was speaking in her heart, only her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard. So Eli thought she was drunk.¹³⁸ Then Eli said to her, "How long will you make yourself drunk? Put away your wine from you." But Hannah answered and said, "No, my lord, I am a woman oppressed in spirit; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have poured out my soul before *Yehovah*. Do not consider your maidservant as a worthless woman; for I have spoken until now out of my great concern and provocation." Then Eli answered and said, "Go in peace; and may the God of Israel grant your petition that you have

¹³⁸ Note additional discussions in Matthew 9:15-18, 25:1-10, Mark 2, Luke 5 & 2 Corinthians 11:2.

asked of Him.” And she said, “Let your maidservant find favor in your sight.”¹³⁹

Note that the term from which “favor” was translated in Hebrew was *chen*.

Hannah was not looking for God to change His disposition toward her.

The rendering of *chen* as favor in this instance is a demonstration of a Classical Greek influence which was adopted by Orthodoxy. Later, this was reshaped by Reformation thinkers and Evangelicals into the concept of God’s unmerited favor.

From the context of Hannah’s life, and because of her purpose in seeking *Yehovah*’s intervention of *yeshuah*, we understand that the woman was welcoming God’s miraculous manifestation—which would allow her to conceive when she had relations with Elkanah.

The concept of finding *chen*, *charis* or grace was the miraculous answer to prayer for those who had turned toward faithfulness to *Yehovah*.¹⁴⁰

Just as Hannah was in despair, we understand in the Hebraic context from Psalm 34:18, that God was known to be near to the brokenhearted, and that He desired to provide His *yasha* or help to each one.

Yasha or *yeshuah* was an expression of divine-human intimacy.

In continuity with Psalm 34, Jesus taught,

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to them. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the Earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers,

¹³⁹ 1 Samuel 1:3–18 (excerpted verses: 3, 4–8, 9–11, 12–14, 15–16, and 17–18), modified NASB

¹⁴⁰ —*chen*

for they will be called the children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to them. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you and say all kinds of evil things about you falsely on account of me. Rejoice and be glad, because your reward is great in heaven, for they persecuted the prophets before you in the same way.¹⁴¹

And also note within the passage, the point in verse 8, that the pure in heart would follow in the heritage of the treasure of Jacob—becoming *Ish-rah-el-ites*.

So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer *sad*. Then they arose early in the morning and worshiped before *Yehovah*, and returned again to their house in Ramah. And Elkanah had relations with Hannah his wife, and *Yehovah* remembered her.¹⁴²

As we move forward, keep in mind the ever so brief comment in the context of Hannah having partaken in a meal. It was by the blessing of bread and wine that the sacrifices were re-enlivened. Then it was through the breaking of bread that the veil separating heaven from earth was torn back—allowing supplicants into the *aiona* and also allowing the blessing of God to proceed forth into the earth. Just as supplicants offered sacrifices, so also the food that was provided became a plentiful banquet of spiritual blessing. Note also the mention that following the meal, her countenance was lifted up. Something miraculous had taken place and Hannah knew that *Yehovah* had intervened.

Apprehending this connection is of vital significance in making sense of what Jesus taught the disciples at the last supper.

Therefore, consider two more examples. Recall that when Abraham encountered the three divine entities, he prepared a meal. After the breaking of the bread, the angelic beings proclaimed that Sarah would bear a son. Also consider that when it had not rained in Israel for three and a half years, Elijah instructed

¹⁴¹ Matthew 5:5-11 NET

¹⁴² 1 Samuel 1:18-19 NASB

Ahaz to go prepare a meal and to eat. Although posterity has not been given all of the details—which are missing background knowledge—the making of the meal required a sacrifice. In the blessing of the meal, the sacrifice was re-enlivened. And in the breaking of the bread, the heavens were opened. And in the eating of the meal and in the drinking of the wine, the miraculous manifestation of rain falling from the skies of Israel could be released through the open veil from the throne of God.

The ancient spiritual dynamic taking place detailed herein, much later in time, became labeled as the *kiddush*. The ancient spiritual dynamic taking place detailed herein, much later in time, became labeled as the *kiddush*, because it was the spiritual procedure by which the *qodesh* holy realm was understood to have been opened. Keep in mind, that even though the label might have been given much later in time, the practice went back to the sacrifice *Yehovah* had made to cover Adam and Eve's nakedness. And as they were cast out of Eden, this took place with the admonishment "You will eat bread."

Think back to our discussion that use of the Hebrew term *zachar* was not intended to have been interpreted with the significance that God merely recollected or had become mindful of Hannah's need, but that He stepped in with His *yeshuah* to provide and help her. *Yehovah* had responded.

Think back to our discussion that use of the Hebrew term *zachar* was not intended to have been interpreted with the significance that God merely recollected or had become mindful of Hannah's need, but that He stepped in with His *yeshuah* to provide and help her. *Yehovah* had responded.

Many centuries after Hannah was confronted by Eli, the prophet Joel described the outpouring of God's Spirit and compared this to an offering of wine.

Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber...Why should they say among the peoples, "Where is their God?" *Yehovah* answered and said to his people, "Behold, I am sending to you grain, wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied; and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations...You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied,

and praise the name of *Yehovah* your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame. You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am *Yehovah* your God and there is none else. And my people shall never again be put to shame. And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the Earth...And in that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine.”¹⁴³

When Joel’s prophecy was fulfilled at Pentecost, observers made the same assumption as Eli with Hannah—based upon what they saw and heard. Spectators thought those who had encountered the Spirit of God were drunk.

Whereas some theologians separate the spiritual experiences of the Old and New Testaments due to the human contrivance of dispensationalism, in the Hebraic paradigm, the miraculous experience of God’s Word or gifts were qualitatively identical throughout time. The marriage covenant of faith was the same in the era of the writing of both testaments; and the feast of bread provided through the sacrifice had the identical effect—resulting in the release of God’s *yeshuah* or His good-Word. John testified that Jesus was the Bridegroom who returned to restore the marriage: “He that has the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this is the fulfillment of my joy.”¹⁴⁴ So also as the Word of God, Jesus provided the sacrifice and became the meal of blessing.

The Hebrew term *chen* (חֵן), which was translated as “favor” in English, was rendered in the Greek Septuagint as *charis* (χάρις).” Hannah sought a divine gift and she was blessed by the priest. This

¹⁴³ Excerpted from Joel, 2:16b, 17b, 19, and 26-30a, 3:18a; ESV

¹⁴⁴ John 3:29

happened in conjunction with eating the divine meal of the sacrifice and with worship.

Even as she called out to the name of *Yehovah* and was given the ability to conceive, so also she named her son *Shemuel*.”¹⁴⁵ The namesake was derived from the two Hebrew terms *shem* which meant “name” and *El* which meant God. When assembled together, these were literally translated as the “name of God.”¹⁴⁶ As Hannah celebrated before the Lord in song, she worshipped the Lord for *yeshuah*.

Then Hannah prayed and said, “My heart exults in *Yehovah*; My horn is exalted in *Yehovah*, My mouth speaks boldly against my enemies, Because I rejoice in Thy salvation [*yeshuah*]. There is no one holy like *Yehovah*, Indeed, there is no one besides Thee, Nor is there any rock like our God. Boast no more so very proudly, Do not let arrogance come out of your mouth; For *Yehovah* is a God of knowledge, And with Him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty are shattered, But the feeble gird on strength. Those who were full hire themselves out for bread, But those who were hungry cease to *hunger*. Even the barren gives birth to seven, But she who has many children languishes.”¹⁴⁷

Note the *chiastic* comparison at the end of the passage. This literary tool was used to introduce hidden knowledge or a higher significance in the topic at hand. Insiders would have apprehended that Hannah had just referenced divine provision which came through the bread of heaven. The feeble gird on strength because they depend upon *Yehovah’s yeshuah*, while those who are well fed, actually go hungry. The feeble gird on strength because they depend upon *Yehovah’s yeshuah*, while those who are well-fed, actually go hungry. In other terms, the unwise well-fed have

¹⁴⁵ שְׁמוּאֵל

¹⁴⁶ אֵל שֵׁם

¹⁴⁷ 1 Samuel 2:1-5 NASB

depended upon their own strength but have remained ignorant of the means by which to seek the intervention of *Yehovah*.

The satisfaction of Hannah's hunger was the provision of God's Word. The meal she ate was the returned portion of the sacrifice that also brought about divine help. The salvation or *yeshuah* she received was God's *charis* or His divine gift. Accordingly, today, the blessing we receive comes through the re-enlivened sacrifice. We enter to receive the blessing or good-Word through the broken sacrifice. As we partake in "our daily bread," God's will is performed on Earth as it was deemed to be so in heaven.

Later, David compared finding the Lord's presence as a refuge to food:

I will praise *Yehovah* at all times; my mouth will continually praise him. I will boast in *Yehovah*; let the oppressed hear and rejoice! Magnify *Yehovah* with me! Let's praise his name together! I sought *Yehovah's* help and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him for help are happy; their faces are not ashamed. This oppressed man cried out and *Yehovah* heard; he saved him from all his troubles. *Yehovah's* angel camps around *Yehovah's* loyal followers and delivers them. Taste and see that *Yehovah* is good! How blessed is the one who takes shelter in him! Remain loyal to *Yehovah* you chosen people of his, for his loyal followers lack nothing! Even young lions sometimes lack food and are hungry, but those who seek *Yehovah* lack no good thing. Come children! Listen to me! I will teach you what it means to fear *Yehovah*. Do you want to really live? Would you love to live a long, happy life? Then make sure you don't speak evil words or use deceptive speech! Turn away from evil and do what is right! Strive for peace and promote it! *Yehovah* pays attention to the godly and hears their cry for help. But *Yehovah* opposes evildoers and wipes out all memory of them from the Earth. The godly cry out and *Yehovah* hears; he saves them from all their troubles. *Yehovah* is near the brokenhearted; he delivers those who are discouraged. The godly face many dangers, but *Yehovah*

saves them from each one of them. He protects all his bones; not one of them is broken. Evil people self-destruct; those who hate the godly are punished. Yehovah rescues his servants; all who take shelter in him escape punishment.¹⁴⁸

Even as the spiritually minded children among the populace of ancient Israel realized sustenance by the Word, so also they understood God's intention for them to become vehicles for the Word to reach others.

The Lord God has given Me the tongue of disciples, That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a Word. He awakens *Me* morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple.¹⁴⁹

And so, it was through the Word, the spiritual bread of life that came with the sacrificial feast, that ones were empowered to re-enter into the reign of God on the Earth. It was not by the sweat of their brow that they were able to accomplish miraculous feats, but by His Spirit abiding with them. Even as Isaiah found his own sustenance in the Word, he called those who might listen to the same table.

Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David...As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the Earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the

¹⁴⁸ Psalm 34:1-2 NET

¹⁴⁹ Isaiah 50:4 NASB

sower and bread for the eater, so is my *davar* that goes out from my mouth.¹⁵⁰

Isaiah understood the same spiritual dynamic regarding the opening of the *qodesh* heavenly realm in order for the sustaining divine Word to break forth.

Ultimately, after Israel rebelled and turned away from *Yehovah*, and instead embraced lustful worldly idolatry, the Lord removed His *davar* from them.

“The days are coming,” declares Sovereign *Yehovah*, “when I will send a famine through the land—not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the *davarim* of *Yehovah*. Men will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the Word of *Yehovah*, but they will not find it. In that day the lovely young women and strong young men will faint because of thirst.”¹⁵¹

And so it happened: the Word was removed due to the nation’s multiplied transgressions against the Lord. Nevertheless, there was an eschatological hope in a future day that the bread of life would return.

The Gospel According to Ezekiel

Centuries earlier, Moses had prophesied that the evil described previously by Amos would befall Israel should they ever turn away from the Lord:

On that day I will become angry with them and forsake them; I will hide my face from them, and they will be destroyed. Many disasters and difficulties will come upon them, and on that day they will ask, “Have not these disasters come upon us because our God is not with us?”

¹⁵⁰ Isaiah 55:1-4 and 10-11a NASB

¹⁵¹ Amos 8:11-13 NASB

And I will certainly hide my face [or presence]¹⁵² on that day because of all their wickedness in turning to other gods.¹⁵³

Note that the Hebrew term *panim*, which is typically translated into English as “face” or “presence,” was the same spiritual reality with Whom Jacob had fought at the Jabbok River. *Panim* is the plural form of *Peniel*—for which that location became renowned.

As God “hid His face” or as might have been described using similar phrases, “removed His Word,” “withdrew His presence,” “withheld His Spirit,” etc., Israel’s means of obtaining salvation or *yeshuah*, was gone. They became easy prey for their enemies to conquer. And so it happened, as the vulturous enemies invaded the land and laid siege to Jerusalem, God’s people were literally starved within the walls of the city. The *shekinah* glory of *Memra* no longer made His abode with them in order to protect and empower them. It was from this impoverished context that the prophetic Word came to Ezekiel, which further shaped Hebraic eschatology.

The Lord revealed a future day—a time of feasting—when His presence through the Word would return to Israel. His coming would be known by a great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel.

“And as for you, son of man,” thus says the Lord God, “Speak to every kind of bird and to every beast of the field, Assemble and come, gather from every side to My sacrifice which I am going to sacrifice for you, as a great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel, that you may eat flesh and drink blood. You shall eat the flesh of mighty men, and drink the blood of the princes of the Earth, as *though they were* rams, lambs, goats, and bulls, all of them fatlings of Bashan. So you will eat fat until you are gluttoned, and drink blood until you are drunk, from My sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. And you will be gluttoned at My table with horses and

¹⁵² פָּנִים—*panim*; literally “presence.”

¹⁵³ Deuteronomy 31:17-18 NIV

charioteers, with mighty men and all the men of war,” declares the Lord God.¹⁵⁴

We understand two significances from the passage.

Ezekiel foresaw a day of vengeance coming upon their oppressors, as was emphasized by the implausible grotesque repetition of drinking blood.¹⁵⁵ If we read the passage with only a historical lens, we see that the enemies of the nation were going to face retribution for their crimes.

However, if we read the passage instead with an eschatological prophetic lens, these verses pointed to Jesus. God Most High was about to offer the sacrifice of His Son—the second power of heaven. Accordingly, in John 6:53, Jesus told His followers that they needed to eat His flesh and drink His blood in order to receive life.

Ezekiel continued to explain what was about to take place:

And I shall set My glory among the nations; and all the nations will see My judgment which I have executed, and My hand which I have laid on them. And the house of Israel will know that I am *Yehovah* their God from that day onward. And the nations will know that the house of Israel went into exile for their iniquity because they acted treacherously against Me, and I hid My face¹⁵⁶ [or presence] from them; so I gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and all of them fell by the sword.¹⁵⁷

The glory of *Yehovah* was identified with manifestation of the second power of heaven or with apparitions of the Word. Furthermore, the Word was understood to have been God dwelling among the people of Israel.

Consider Leviticus 26:11-12, Etheridge Translation:

¹⁵⁴ Ezekiel 39:17-20 NASB

¹⁵⁵ In the sacrifices of the tabernacle and temple, the blood was drained from the animal and was not consumed.

¹⁵⁶ Once again the term used here is פָּנִים—*panim*; literally “presence.”

¹⁵⁷ Ezekiel 39:21-23 NASB

And I will set the *shekinah* of My Glory among you, and my Word shall not abhor you, but the Glory of My *shekinah* shall dwell among you, and My Word shall be to you for a redeeming God, and you shall be unto My Name for a holy people.¹⁵⁸

This passage serves to underscore the ancient differentiation between God Most High and the divine second power.

For Ezekiel to have explained that God's glory would be set among the nations was synonymous with stating that His Word Who was God, or the second power, was coming to make His abode with humankind. Without the retrospect of the sacrificial crucifixion of Jesus, the next verse would be perplexing. "And all the nations will see My judgment which I have executed and My hand which I have laid on them."

To have become the object of judgment was not typically a happy event. And this is because Jesus, acting as a sacrificial lamb, took upon Himself punishment for the wickedness that was deserved by Israel.

And the nations will know that the house of Israel went into exile for their iniquity because they acted treacherously against Me, and I hid My face or presence from them; so I gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and all of them fell by the sword.

Just as Israel had lost sons, so also God Most High would also sacrifice His Son.

"And the house of Israel will know that I am *Yehovah* their God from that day onward."

Ezekiel continued describing the restoration of God's presence that would take place:

¹⁵⁸ *Targum Jonathan on Genesis 28:20*, in *The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch; with the Fragments of the Jerusalem Targum from the Chaldee*, trans. J.W. Etheridge (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1862).

According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions I dealt with them, and I hid My face [or presence] from them.” Therefore thus says the Lord God, “Now I shall restore the fortunes of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I shall be jealous for My holy name.

It is important to understand the ancient concept of *Yehovah* being jealous for His name. The point was that all throughout the land in the coming eschatological day, *Yehovah* would hear His name being worshiped. Therefore, He would rush to His children to bask in their praise and recognition of His Lordship.

Accordingly, the *panim*, presence, or face of God would be restored once again. God acknowledged that through embrace of the treasure of Jacob, the *Ish-rah-el-ite* nation would be resurrected.

The implication of the ensuing verses was that as a result of the restored reception of *yeshuah* that came to them by glorifying and lifting up the name of *Yehovah*, God’s children would soon forget the horrors of the captivity.

And they shall forget their disgrace and all their treachery which they perpetrated against Me, when they live securely on their own land with no one to make them afraid. When I bring them back from the peoples and gather them from the lands of their enemies, then I shall be sanctified through them in the sight of the many nations. Then they will know that I am *Yehovah* their God because I made them go into exile among the nations, and then gathered them *again* to their own land; and I will leave none of them there any longer. And I will not hide My face [or presence] from them any longer, for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,” declares the Lord God.¹⁵⁹

The prophetic eschatological expectation being set forth within the Hebraic tradition, according to Ezekiel’s pronouncement, included that God was preparing a table for the children of Israel.

¹⁵⁹ Ezekiel 39:24- 40:1 NASB

- His sacrifice would be made on the mountains of Israel.
- His children would eat flesh and drink blood.
- It would be a time when God's presence would be restored.
- It would be a day of God's good-Wording or blessing, wherein His hand would be recognized upon them.
- It would be a day of divine forgiveness for Israel.

Jacob's treasure would be restored—which was encounter with the Word, the *panim*, or *Memra* and the reception of God's help through His daily *yeshuah*. From *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*, we understand that this was the Gospel that had been proclaimed by angels, John the Baptist and by Jesus and His disciples. Just as the author of Hebrews had proclaimed, in the Era of the first century A.D., individuals were encountering the same Word, Who had visited ancient Israel from atop Mount Sinai—when the Ten Commandments were given. The coming of the Word to Abraham had also been identified by Paul as the Gospel.

The Scriptures teach of this using the figure of the provision of the bread of heaven. In the *aionios* life, a divine meal would be served whereby humankind would be restored to the presence of God.¹⁶⁰

Its occurrence would be so obvious to those who attended to the feast that undeniably thereafter they would recognize the Lord.

It would be a time when God's Spirit would be poured out upon His children.

God would be jealous for His name, and rush to those who called upon His name in worship.

Repeatedly in the text of Ezekiel, the prophet lamented over God's name being profaned. The coming day of sacrifice would be

¹⁶⁰ "Jacob's treasure," his source of bread and sustenance, was the word of the Lord: And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, "If the *Memra* of the Lord will be my help, and will keep me in that way in which I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to wear, and bring me again in peace to my father's house, the *Memra* of the Lord shall be my God." Etheridge's translation of Genesis 28:20 from the Aramaic Targum *Onkelos*. Etheridge., p. 18.

one when those who sought after His name would do so in purity with changed hearts.

Furthermore, the passage pointed toward a much greater implication.

God's unmet desire at Mount Sinai had been to raise up a nation of priests. However, the Israelites were terrified of the Word and His thunderous manifestation. Instead they asked Moses to be their priest before *Yehovah*. Resultantly, the Aaronic priesthood, from the tribe of Levi, was born.

Up to the point of Moses' life, the only notable mass outpouring of the spirit had been upon the 70 ruling elders. By comparison, Ezekiel foretold the outpouring of the spirit upon the nation. It looked as if God's desire to have raised up a nation of priests was also going to take place following His supreme sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel.

And this is what took place at Pentecost.

Judgment was also destined to fall upon the future manifestation of Second Temple Judaism for the murderous crimes of their forefathers against the prophets, and because they would change the Law by adding the *takkanot* and abolish the ordained time for freedom from indebtedness by ignoring the year of Jubilees; and perhaps because they had changed the nature of the Sabbath. Initially the Sabbath provided the pathway into God's holy realm, however, under the rule of the Deuteronomists and the Second Temple, the secret things belonged solely to the Aaronic Priests. The Sabbath day was reduced and re-understood simply as a time of earthly rest. The indictment and judgment for counterfeiting *Torah* and the times appointed by *Yehovah* can also be read into the gruesome prophetic Word by Ezekiel.

Keeping all of this in mind and in the realization that the second power of heaven, God's Son, would provide Himself as a final sacrifice for sins, and with the establishment of a nation of priests through the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit, there would be no further need of the Jerusalem temple. Each person would be able to come before God on their own as had been the case with the ancient spirituality practiced according to the Order of Melchizedek.

Individuals would once again encounter the second power of heaven—without another human priest working as a mediator.

And accordingly, the pronouncement of Daniel against the corrupt religious regime would be accomplished in 70 A.D. The ripening evil of the Whore of Babylon would prepare itself for destruction, and the Abomination which had caused desolation in the realm of the *aiona* would be destroyed. The dominion of its wicked rulers and the falsehood of the traditions of the elders would no longer be imposed by force upon the Jews.

Instead, as it had been long ago in the days of old, all would be liberated to practice spirituality before *Yehovah* with freedom of conscience in spirit and in truth—wherever they found themselves in the world.

In the restoration of the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace, divine-human fellowship would be made simpler. From that eschatological day forward, the exceeding sacrifice of God's Son would allow for those having confessed their sins, and having turned from wickedness, to pass through the cleansing water and to be raised up to significance upon its surface and to reign in the heights above the Earth.

Just as Moses had ascended the mountain and had entered into the cloud, the faithful among humankind would discover an ancient place of rest in the Word of God. They would enjoy the company of the great cloud of witnesses who had gone before them—walking in fellowship with *Yehovah*.

The new nation of priests would once again be raised up to live by the voice of the resurrected second power of heaven, Who could not be defeated by death. And they would abide thereafter in the presence of *Yehovah* under the *chen, charis*, or grace of God, whereby Noah, Abraham, the *Ish-raah-el-ites* and the prophets had also been raised up to life.

David's key of worshiping the name of *Yehovah* would again unlock the gates of heaven for those with clean hands and pure hearts. Such ones as these would ascend the hill of *Yehovah*, and the son of Jesse's fallen tent would be restored.

The Gospel According to Micah

In the continuance of understanding the motif of bread and in light of the concerns of eschatological prophecy, consider:

But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *Too* little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity. Therefore, He will give them *up* until the time When she who is in labor has borne a child. Then the remainder of His brethren Will return to the sons of Israel. And He will arise and shepherd *His flock* In the strength of the LORD, In the majesty of the name of *Yehovah* His God. And they will remain, Because at that time He will be great To the ends of the Earth. And this One will be *our* peace.¹⁶¹

The phrase “days of eternity” might be thought of in several ways. First this Ruler would continue just as He had in the past. In this sense, the phrase “days of eternity” can be interpreted “as in ancient times.” Nevertheless, when we see the term “day” or “days” used in an eschatological context, especially when *aionios* is mentioned, we might also connect this to Day-One in creation when the heavenly host were called forth into the cosmos.

The literal translation is “from days of *aiona*.”

The inference is subtle. However, it is also present throughout Scripture that God constantly wanted His children to find their spiritual identity in Day-One. Of course, humankind was not created physically until the sixth day. However, it was the beings of Day-One from heaven who would be continually intervening in the lives of humankind on Earth.

Micah envisioned not only the coming of the *Ancient* One, Who formerly helped Israel and Who would again restore the sons of Israel, but also the place He would come from. The spiritual being of Day-One would come into the realm of Earth to establish His rulership through all who would become *Ish-raah-el-ites*. In this interpretive understanding, be reminded that Adam and Eve fellowshiped with “the Spirit of Day” in Eden.

¹⁶¹ Micah 5:2-5a NASB

“Bethlehem” is a composition of two Hebrew terms, *beth* and *lechem*,¹⁶² which are literally translated, “house of bread.”

Israel’s future ruler would be born here.

Although He would make His entrance into the earthly realm in the future as a child, His identity was from long ago in the ancient days.

His brethren, presumably those who were lost or dispersed, would be restored to the sons of Israel.

He would be known as a Shepherd.¹⁶³

In the majesty of the name of the LORD, His God, His empowerment would be realized.

He would be the peace of Israel.

In a segment of the larger context of Jacob’s blessing upon Joseph,¹⁶⁴ the Word was identified in keeping with His work among them as the Shepherd of their fathers. By looking after His children, God Most High would direct the second power of heaven to guide and help His children through life—just as He intended to do the same for the nation’s future children:

And his prophecy shall be fulfilled in them, because he was faithful to the law in secret, and set his confidence firmly. Therefore was gold laid upon his arm, and the kingdom was strengthened and confirmed. This was to him from the mighty God of Jacob, who by His Word pastureth the fathers and the children of the seed of Israel. The Word of the God of thy father shall be thy Helper, and the All-Sufficient shall bless thee, with the blessings of the dew that descends from the heavens above, with the blessings that spring from the depths of the Earth beneath, with the blessings of thy father and of thy mother. The blessing of thy father shall be added upon the blessing with which my fathers blessed me—which

¹⁶² בֵּית לֶחֶם—*beth lechem*

¹⁶³ Micah seemingly made an allusion to David here, however, it is more likely that he was referencing *Memra*, since the One he spoke of was Ancient and Eternal.

¹⁶⁴ Note Genesis 49:24-26.

the princes who are of the world have desired: all of them shall be upon the head of Joseph, and upon the man who was separated from his brethren. Benjamin: in his land will dwell the *shekinah*, and in his possession will the sanctuary be builded.¹⁶⁵

Note that God's sanctuary would be constructed within those who received God's Word as their Helper. Cornelius had become faithful to *Yehovah* by the Word, Whom he had encountered in His heart. The ancient *aionios* ruins were raised up within him, and with this came the outward works that had been wrought in keeping with his tangible walk of faithfulness to God. The centurion performed deeds that God noticed. And then the Gentile Centurion became an *Ish-raah-el-ite*. Following this, in obedience to the Word, he sent men to find Peter. Thereafter, he became informed regarding the Hebraic tradition.

In the larger Aramaic context, the Word—acting as their Helper—was their inheritance. At least for Joseph, the prophetic reception of this blessing was attributed to the fact that “he was faithful to the Law in secret,” upon which he had firmly set his confidence.

Joseph knew that if he was unrelenting in his decisions and actions to please God, *Yehovah's* blessing would abide with him.

Throughout Scripture, we note that those who embraced God's kind instruction in the *Torah* of the Ten Commandments also became inheritors of divine-human encounter with the living abiding Word of God. *Yehovah* longed to find fellowship with, and to provide for, those who proved their faithfulness as His children. Ones such as these, He would gather into His presence.

The location of Ephrathah, a term which meant “fruitful” or “abundant,” was near Bethlehem—where David intended to build a dwelling place for the Lord.¹⁶⁶ This was a place of eschatological

¹⁶⁵ Genesis 49:24-27 Etheridge Translation. p. 153.

¹⁶⁶ Note Ruth 4:11; Ephrathah was also the father of Bethlehem. See 1 Chronicles 4:4.

importance. "Look, we heard about it in Ephrathah, we found it in the territory of Jaar [or 'land of forests'].¹⁶⁷

In the Targums, this location was additionally identified in terms of its heritage and sacredness as a place where their ancient fathers had gathered to pray. So also David sought to memorialize their activity and to continue its use for the same purpose.

Let us go to his dwelling place! Let us worship before his footstool! Ascend, O *Yehovah*, to your resting place, you and the ark of your strength! May your priests be clothed with integrity! May your loyal followers shout for joy! For the sake of David, your servant, do not reject your chosen king! *Yehovah* made a reliable promise to David; he will not go back on his word. He said, "I will place one of your descendants on your throne. If your sons keep my covenant and the rules I teach them, their sons will also sit on your throne in the *aiona*." Certainly *Yehovah* has chosen Zion; he decided to make it his home. He said, "This will be my resting place in the *aiona*; I will live here, for I have chosen it. I will abundantly supply what she needs; I will give her poor all the food they need. I will protect her priests, and her godly people will shout exuberantly. There I will make David strong; I have determined that my chosen king's dynasty will continue. I will humiliate his enemies, and his crown will shine."¹⁶⁸

Note that the phrase "the LORD" was changed to read "*Yehovah*" in this passage. Also, the term forever was changed to the literal translation, in the *aiona*, as the context very specifically spoke of the dwelling place of *Yehovah*.

The motif of the provision of bread continued alongside the promise that an heir, a descendant from David's loins, would arise from the same location and be established. Moreover, rulership was not limited to a single person, but instead extended to be manifest throughout a dynasty. These were the *Ish-raah-el-ites*.

¹⁶⁷ Psalm 132:6 NET

¹⁶⁸ Psalm 132:7-18 NET

The manifold prophecies of the Hebrew and Aramaic Scriptures all were woven into the fabric of their eschatology. First century believers, who should have been more accurately understood as “faithful ones,” recognized many facets of the prophecies taking place and included references to aspects of their foretelling in the Gospels. The motif of the provision of bread, associated with the restoration of the Word, was significant in the first century Scriptures.

The Word of God was constantly compared to bread or sustenance in the Old Testament. Moses admonished that humankind was not to live by earthly bread alone but by every Word that proceeded from the mouth of God. By comparison, Jesus was understood to have been the Word of God Who had taken on human flesh. He was born into the earthly realm literally in the house of bread. It is also significant that His ancestor David worshiped very near to this place as He sought encounter with the Word.

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, in the time of King Herod, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem saying, “Where is the one who is born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”¹⁶⁹

In keeping with the Hebraic motif and the prophetic eschatological significance of the Word of God, Jesus or rather *Yeshuah* was born into the world in the place known as the “House of Bread.” The Word was simultaneously human and divine, in accordance with the prophecy of Micah. This too was how John presented Jesus in his Gospel.

Prior to the initiation of Jesus’ public ministry, He engaged Himself in a lengthy 40-day fast. Afterward, in the wilderness or in the *midbar*, when He hungered, Satan came and tried to tempt Him—challenging Jesus to turn stones into bread. The Rabbi replied with the admonishment of Moses: “It is written, ‘Man does not live

¹⁶⁹ Matthew 2:1-2 NET

by bread alone, but by every Word [or *rhema*] that comes from the mouth of God.”¹⁷⁰

The motif prevailed in His actions. Jesus rejected the adversarial meal, whereby Satan would have gained dominion over Him—as had been the case with Adam and Eve in Eden.

When the feast of the Passover had come, a great multitude had gathered before Jesus as He was healing and performing signs and wonders. From 5 barley loaves and 2 fish, the Word of God miraculously multiplied these to feed about 5,000 men.

Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had called forth grace, he distributed the bread to those who were seated. He then did the same with the fish, as much as they wanted. When they were all satisfied, Jesus said to his disciples, “Gather up the broken pieces that are left over, so that nothing is wasted.” So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with broken pieces from the five barley loaves left over by the people who had eaten. Now when the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus performed, they began to say to one another, “This is certainly the Prophet who is to come into the world.” Then Jesus, because he knew they were going to come and seize him by force to make him king, withdrew again up the mountainside alone.¹⁷¹

Note that *eucharisteo* was changed to be rendered here as “called forth grace” instead of as “gave thanks.”

Although Jesus’ rulership was inevitable, it would not be earthly as the multitudes and His closest followers had been expecting. The King had come into the world to make peace between humankind and God through His fleshly death and the shedding of His blood. Thereby, as a final sacrifice, through partaking in the divine meal and drink of His body and blood, Jesus would provide those attending His table with the potential for entry into His reign over the world. He would give them a place of

¹⁷⁰ Matthew 4:4 NET

¹⁷¹ John 6:11-15 NET

dwelling before Himself in the realm of the Spirit. With the power and authority obtained in His presence, they would continue to exercise His works upon the Earth.

Bread, the Word, and the Works of God

In the reading of John's Gospel, especially in chapters 5 and 6, it is essential to note the Hebraic understanding of the interplay between bread, the Word, and the works of God. Recall that in the Hebrew text, the term "Word" could be used to speak of the "actions" of God. It was the Word that brought the manifestations of the reign of God. Miracles, signs, and wonders could equally be identified either as divine "Words" or as God's "works" or "actions."

There was a functional linguistic equivalence between divine "Words" and "works." An author could have spoken either of God's Word or His works and have been discussing the same reality.

Combining this understanding of the interplay between bread, Words, and works with the recollection that the *manna* God gave Israel to feed on in the wilderness was called *davar*, John chapters 5 and 6 take on renewed significance in accordance with the Hebraic perspective from which his book was written.

John introduced his Gospel identifying Jesus as the Word of God Who came into the world and took on human flesh.¹⁷² He was also identified as the Bread of Life. Even as the *davar* of God both provided and was in essence the divine meal of *manna* for Israel in the wilderness, how might Jesus provide or become the same for His followers? The idea that Jesus might become the meal of God in order to restore divine-human fellowship would prove to be an astonishing assertion.¹⁷³

Recall that in reference to God's Words, they not only came in the form of verbalizations, but also as God's actions or miracles. Jesus knew the heart of the people and confronted them as those who were misguided.

¹⁷² Note John 1:1-14.

¹⁷³ Partaking of the flesh and blood of Jesus would result in interpenetration and intermingling with the Being of the Word of God.

And so crowds were seeking Jesus after He had walked on the water in the night and asked how He had gotten across the lake.

Jesus answered them and said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves, and were filled. Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to the ancient life, which the Son of Man shall give to you, for on Him the Father, *even* God, has set His seal.”¹⁷⁴

Note that “eternal life” here was changed to “the ancient life” in keeping with the Hebraic perspective.

The working of signs, which came by the empowerment of the prophetic ancient life, was the bread they should have been seeking. This was the Word of God or the second power of heaven referenced by Isaiah. Rather than just desiring to fill their bellies, Jesus and Isaiah wanted their audiences to seek after the bread of heaven.

The Rabbi reiterated Isaiah’s admonition in chapter 55, “Why do you spend your money on that which is not bread?” The ancient prophet had directed his adherents instead to invest themselves in seeking the Word of God that was like bread coming out of heaven.

We understand that it was through encounter with the Word of God that individuals could become empowered to work the works of God.

The reply of Jesus’ audience here indicated that these ones finally realized that the Rabbi was directing them toward the Word because they associated what He told them with performance of God’s miracles:

They said therefore to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?” Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you give yourselves in faithfulness to Him Whom He has sent.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ John 6:26-27 NASB

¹⁷⁵ John 6:28-29 modified NASB

Jesus was the Word of God identified as the second power of heaven. He was the Holy One Who Noah, Abraham, the *Ish-rah-el-ites* and the prophets had all encountered. These ones were given authority and were empowered by the Word to perform signs and wonders in the realm of the Earth.

Even as Isaiah had called those who would seek the Word to faithfulness with *Yehovah*, so also Jesus requested the same.

And so again we stress the importance of Proverbs 25:2: "It is the glory of God to conceal a Word but it is the glory of kings to seek out that Word." God had made it possible for those who would confess their sins, to turn from wickedness, to be cleansed by and to be raised up above the water—in order that they might become witnesses of the Glory of His Word.

Just as the second power of heaven served God Most High, so also members of humankind were called to serve the Holy One. And as they sought Him in worship, calling on the name of *Yehovah* and by thanking Him for His *yeshuah*, the heavens would be rolled back like a scroll, and seekers could stand in His presence.

As an important aside, readers should comprehend that God's Bow or radiance that was seen in the clouds should be directly associated in their minds with the term "Glory." When these concepts are connected, together with the identity of the second power of heaven, many facets of Scripture take on renewed meaning in accordance with the Hebraic tradition in which they were written. This was witnessed by Ezekiel, and this Glory was going to become manifest at the time of God's exceeding sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel (note the former discussion of Ezekiel 39).

In accordance with the peoples' realization that Jesus was claiming to be the Word, the Son of God, and the Bread from heaven, all of which were recognized in the Hebrew Scriptures as *davar*, they also understood historically that manifestations of the Holy One often were accompanied by miraculous occurrences. These included, dreams, visions, angelic visitation and other divine manifestations.

They said therefore to Him, "What then do You do for a sign, that we may see, and entrust ourselves to You? What work

do You perform? Our fathers ate the *manna* in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.'"¹⁷⁶

In light of the fact that Jesus had just fed 5,000 people with a handful of food, it seems incredulous that they requested the sign! Nevertheless, perhaps these ones had been unaware of the miracle that had taken place the day before on the other side of the lake. They may have assumed that the food had been purchased before it was provided.

Jesus therefore said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world." They said therefore to Him, "Lord, evermore give us this bread." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who pledges the marriage vow of faith like Abraham to Me shall never thirst. But I said to you, that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."¹⁷⁷

Note that the verb "believes" was altered to read "pledges the marriage vow of faith like Abraham" in keeping with ancient Hebraic background understandings. The verb *pisteuo* in the New Testament is directly connected to Abram's vow of faithfulness to the LORD in Genesis. He did not believe any information, but instead He had pledged his unswerving loyalty to *Yehovah*. This was proven by his actions.

Even as Isaiah in chapter 55 had identified the Word as that which came down from heaven to accomplish the will of God, so

¹⁷⁶ John 6:30-31

¹⁷⁷ John 6:32-38 NASB

also, Jesus referenced the same understanding of the Hebraic Tradition.

The Jews therefore were grumbling about Him, because He said, "I am the bread that came down out of heaven." And they were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, 'I have come down out of heaven'?"¹⁷⁸

We have to remember, as we read, that it had been many generations since the Holy One had manifested Himself to Israel. By the start of the first century A.D., it was likely in the minds of the Jews that all of the discussion of ancient divine-human interaction had been reduced to myth and legend. Second Temple Judaism's sterilization of spirituality had caused a lapse in memory for the first century populace.

Furthermore, Jesus' assertion that He was the Word of God, or the Holy One, now manifest as the bread of heaven, must have been unfathomable. Jesus may have only been fully comprehended as the Word of God Who had taken on human flesh near to the end of His life.

And so His audience needed help to make sense of all of this.

Jesus answered and said to them, "Do not grumble among yourselves...It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught of God.'¹⁷⁹

Herein, Jesus identified Himself as being the second power Who had spoken to their ancient ancestors of faith. He continued to explain that,

Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me. Not that any man has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who puts his trust in Me has the ancient or the *aionios* life. I am the bread of life. Your

¹⁷⁸ John 6:41–42 NASB

¹⁷⁹ John 6:43 & 45 excerpted NASB

fathers ate the *manna* in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live in the *aion*; and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh. The Jews therefore *began* to argue with one another, saying, "How can this man give us *His* flesh to eat?"¹⁸⁰

Jesus tried to help them to understand. And yet, as Jesus had observed, many of these people had only come seeking bread to fill their stomachs.

Jesus' identification of Himself as the Word, Who was the most ancient Teacher of Israel, was probably either preposterous or incomprehensible to the crowd.

Although the audience seems to have been familiar with Isaiah's comparison of bread to the Word, they appeared to be completely unfamiliar with the prophecy of Ezekiel. God had foretold His exceedingly great Sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel in a day when they would eat flesh and drink blood—a time when God's glory would be displayed among them and His Spirit would be poured out.

In antiquity, the reading of Ezekiel's text was controversial due to all of his heavenly encounters. Since participation in any of these kinds of matters was banned, the Jews thought that it was best to prohibit reading certain portions of his book. Therefore, the heritage of the *Ish-rah-el-ites* was not passed along to emerging generations. By the first century A.D., tremendous ignorance dominated the minds of the Jewish people.

The historical fact that the Jews have not freely permitted reading of the Scriptures, and moreover their abolishment of the knowledge of the second power of heaven, is very sad and quite unfortunate. Jews who might read the Gospels today might not be able to easily recognize that much of Jesus' teaching had to do with many of the Old Testament writings. Comprehending Ezekiel chapter 39 is important not only for making sense of John chapters

¹⁸⁰ John 6:41-52 modified NASB

5 and 6, but also for understanding the entire concept of the sacrifice of the second power of heaven. On that note, Jewish readers have had the rug pulled out from beneath them on two counts. We will understand more concerning the impact of censorship and erasure of the knowledge base ahead.

The withholding of historic prophetic material seems unconscionable and brings up several valid questions. Does Judaism, and for that matter, Christianity as well, have the fortitude to allow individuals within these movements to freely study and think for themselves? Is freedom of speech without retribution or recrimination possible? And furthermore, when new discoveries are made, is it conceivable that monolithic religious movements might move forward in mature growth?

Again, we are reminded that Orthodox Christian bishops were not the only ones throughout history who used censorship to control the minds of their constituents—especially in order to wipe testimonies of divine-human subjectivity from the record.

The Jews forbade reading of the texts in order to protect their children—just as Bishop Athanasius and his contemporaries eliminated many books and letters from their humanly selected list of texts that would allowably continue to have been respected as having been divinely inspired.

Well-intended Jews and Christians have shared in the desire to clean up or hide what they have perceived to have been embarrassing, controversial, or outright dangerous ancient writings. Nevertheless, as these texts become digitized and are posted on the internet, a new era of understanding is emerging outside of the confines of institutionalized religion. While the economy of these writings having become easily accessible is beneficial, the problem is that uneducated individuals, lacking contextual background knowledge, may have trouble with proper interpretation.

Because Jesus did not submit Himself to the restrictions of Second Temple Judaism, in John 6, the Word of God led His audience deeper into this forbidden controversy.

Jesus therefore said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats My flesh

and drinks My blood has the *aionios* life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me. This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate, and died, he who eats this bread shall embrace the ancient life [or live in the *aion*].¹⁸¹

Despite the wishes of the Jewish elders, and with disregard to their rules and regulations, Jesus laid the topic bare and pointed His audiences back toward Eden. Because Adam and Eve had listened to the adversarial word and had partaken in a forbidden meal, they had become subject to death. Nevertheless, now a new table of restoration to life was being set before Jesus' audience.

Sin entered the world through a meal and the inhabitants of the world were being given a choice to attend themselves to a different feast—which was the Word of God. Whose voice would they listen to? Adam and Eve made the choice to follow the voice of the adversary. Throughout the Bible, each individual made this choice.

These things He said in the synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of His disciples, when they heard *this* said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?" But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble? *What* then if you should behold the Son of Man ascending where He was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the Words¹⁸² that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life."¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ John 6:53–58 NASB

¹⁸² *rhema*

¹⁸³ John 6:53–63 modified NASB

Recall that Jesus had explained to Nathaniel the incredible news that he and the other disciples would see angels in the spiritual realm on the third day at the end of John 1.

Now then, let us read this passage one more time with the Hebraic background knowledge added to Jesus' instruction.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has the *aionios* life, and I will raise him up on the last day [of the three-day journey]. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.¹⁸⁴

Undoubtedly, many of my readers are still calling into question the concept of *aiona* being a standing place before God's throne that was associated with the dwelling place of Day-One—wherein God called forth the host of heaven into His creation. If we hope to make sense of John's text, however, the time has come to more fully buy into this idea.

The *aionios* life was discovered by Jacob as he witnessed the angels going up and down a ladder that extended into heaven. Jesus had informed the disciples that they would see the same manifestation in John's introduction.

Herein, we should point out that the *eschatos* day or the last day of the three-day journey was a day of encounter with the Lord. We are specifically speaking of Day-One, and make no mistake whatsoever, we are intentionally stating that individuals would be raised up into the heavenly realm in order to see these manifestations. Moreover, we contend that this had been the focus of the spiritually minded of ancient Israel for thousands of years.

To support this, we need to examine a few verses from Hosea. As we do so, keep in mind that Hosea lived about 800 years before Jesus.

Come, let's return to the Lord. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us. He

¹⁸⁴ John 6:53–56 NASB

will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day, That we may live before Him.¹⁸⁵

It is probably valuable to read these verses several times and to let all of this sink in. Amidst dealing with his own great distress, Hosea was reminding his audience about the three-day journey as a time to be raised up into the presence of God into a spiritual dwelling place.

This three-day journey, third day, last day concept is not a contemporary fabrication. It was the very essence of the lost and forgotten spirituality of ancient Israel. The practice preceded what God hoped would be the nation of Israel's intended induction into priesthood at the base of Mount Sinai. Abraham encountered the Holy One on the last day of his three-day journey. Jonah had unwillingly embarked on this journey and learned to heed and to obey the Word the hard way. Queen Esther walked this road before making her appeal for the Jews before the king. Joshua prayed three-days before moving ahead with God's plan to take the land of Israel's earthly dwelling. Ananias prayed for three-days before approaching Saul, a man who had posed as a heinous deadly threat to the Jewish followers of Jesus.

Although the Bible could never record every detail of what happened in the history of its writing, we can be fairly certain that Joshua was not the only *Ish-raah-el-ite* who fasted and prayed in the three-day journey before crossing the Jordan.

Hosea's assertion provides tremendous affirmation regarding this important facet of the spirituality of ancient Israel.

The prophet continued elucidating the expectation for divine-human encounter with the second power of heaven for those who would embark on this journey.

So let's learn, let's press on to know the Lord. His appearance is as sure as the dawn; And He will come to us like the rain, As the spring rain waters the Earth.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Hosea 6:1–2 modified NASB

¹⁸⁶ These invaluable passages from Hosea, underscoring third day encounters with the second power of heaven, 6:1-3 NASB.

Eating and drinking the flesh and the blood of Jesus would restore humankind to the *aionios* life of Eden. Those who partook were promised resurrection into the *aion* on the third day or the last day of their journey. Jesus assured those seeking the Word, "For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him."¹⁸⁷

Ultimately, Jesus, Himself would provide this abiding place as the faithful became one with Him and the Father.

The sacrifice of Jesus had the potential to restore the faithful, who understood participation in the journey, to their intended spiritual inheritance from the foundation of the world.

In Deuteronomy 30:14-19, the Word was the Source of Life, but the *Ish-raah-el-ites* had to choose the feast of the *davar*. At the same time, they had to live lives rejecting the voice of the adversary.

Moses admonished the *Ish-raah-el-ites*,

The Word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it. See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. This day I call the heavens and the Earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life, and he will give you many years in the land

¹⁸⁷ John 5:55-56 NASB

he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.¹⁸⁸

With the power of the Word or the Spirit of God working through them, faithful followers could work the works of God, *but only if they partook of the divine meal of the Word*, and specifically after completing the three-day journey.

Abraham, the nation of Israel, Joshua, Esther, Jonah and many others faced great tests of their faithfulness at the start of their three-day journeys. Imagine the pain of being called upon to sacrifice your son? Imagine the terror as the Nation of Israel fled Egypt and went down into the seabed surrounded by water held back by the wind. Imagine Joshua heading toward a battle which a majority of his contemporaries had feared could not be won. Think of Esther facing the genocide of her people and perhaps the loss of her own life as she went before the king uninvited. And we cannot forget the terror faced by Jonah, who learned obedience the hard way. Ananias had been instructed by the Word to go lay hands upon Saul in order to miraculously heal the man who had just stood with the mob—condoning the murder of Stephen.

If we study the Scriptures, the three-day journey was not merely another check box to complete following baptism. To be certain, Jesus was not presenting a formulistic ritual that came without significant cost.

Most of the crowd dispersed after Jesus had spoken of eating His flesh and drinking His blood. And these same ones probably had little or no understanding of what they were actually supposed to have been doing in the *kiddush* prayer as they entered the *qodesh* realm at the start of the Sabbath.

As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew, and were not walking with Him anymore. Jesus said therefore to the twelve, “You do not want to go away also, do you?” Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have Words or the *rhema* of the *aionios* or the ancient life. And

¹⁸⁸ Deuteronomy 30:14–20 NIV

we have become faithful and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.”¹⁸⁹

Even as Ezekiel had affirmed “From that day forward, the house of Israel will know that I am *Yehovah* their God,” in 39:22, Jesus’ closest followers could never leave Him because they had simply seen too much. They unmistakably recognized His identity as the Word, because of the signs and wonders. They firmly intended to establish themselves at His table and to feast upon the Word.

Peter, James and John had been immersed in the realm of the Spirit with Jesus when He was transfigured.¹⁹⁰ Even as Jesus had spoken of being with Abraham, so also these disciples had been with Moses and Elijah in the heavenly realm of God.

Micah looked ahead to a day of restoration when the ancient One would once again appear, identifying Him as the Shepherd of Israel. The metaphor was consistent with Israel’s heritage as *Memra* had cared for, helped and had rescued them. Although the religious leaders of His day refused to accept His eschatological identity as the Word of God, Jesus’ proclamations were in keeping with the prophetic announcements in the Old Testament.

I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ John 6:65-69 modified NASB

¹⁹⁰ Note Matthew 17:1-9 and Mark 9:1-10.

¹⁹¹ John 10:14-18 NIV

Jesus made some allusions to His sacrificial death during His ministry. However, not even His closest disciples understood these until He was explicit—shortly before His crucifixion.

The Jews gathered around him, saying, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” Jesus answered, “I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father’s name speak for me.”¹⁹²

In all of the time of their ancient heritage, there was one source for miracles whereby the help of God had come to Israel. These came through the Word Who was the second power of heaven. Even as Isaiah, Micah, Joel and others prophesied the Messianic return of the Word, the first century religious leaders should have immediately recognized Jesus as God with them because of His works. They were as closed minded as Cain had been to the Word of God. Instead of submitting and becoming Jesus’ devoted faithful servants, they hated Him. Because they attended themselves to a different feast, they were in the grip of the adversary and could not give themselves to the Rabbi.

but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them the ancient life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.¹⁹³

The “hand of the Father” spoke of God’s immanent presence, divine protection, and the conveyance of His blessing. Even as the religious leaders of Jesus’ day were far from Abraham in the spirituality he enjoyed, so also they were ignorant of the Patriarch’s commission to receive blessing from the Lord to be a blessing to the Gentile nations (note Genesis 12). They were also unfamiliar with their intended inheritance of the Word of God—Who came to Abraham (note Genesis 15). “After these things the

¹⁹² John 10:24-25 NIV

¹⁹³ John 10:26-30 modified NIV

Word of the Lord came to Abram in prophecy, saying, Fear not, Abram : My Word (*Memra*) shall be thy strength, and thy exceeding great reward.”¹⁹⁴ Following Abram’s request for a son and God’s comparison of his future descendants being as numerous as the stars, “he believed in the Word of the Lord, [which in Aramaic reads] {*Memra da Yeya*}.¹⁹⁵

In the Hebraic sense, Abram had put his faith in *Memra*—the second power of heaven. *Memra* went on to identify Himself as the One Who had led Abram out of the perilous land of Ur where he was raised and went on to promise the Patriarch land in which to dwell.

It was with many signs that *Memra* continued to prove Himself to be faithful in Abram’s life.

In His ancient existence, Jesus, the Word, had been with the Patriarch. He abode with the man as the Source of his empowerment in the world and as His Provider. As much as there were desires for worldly inheritances such as a son, land, or other needs, *Memra* Himself was Abram’s reward. They enjoyed ongoing fellowship. The religious leaders should have been familiar with their forefather’s relationship with the Word. Hence, Jesus attempted to use this point in identifying Himself to the religious leaders:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone treasures My Word¹⁹⁶ he shall never see death.” The Jews said to Him, “Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets *also*; and You say, ‘If anyone keeps My Word, he shall never taste of death.’ Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out *to be*?” Jesus answered, “If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God;’ and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know

¹⁹⁴ Genesis 15:1; Etheridge., p. 63.

¹⁹⁵ Genesis 15:6a; Etheridge., Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ *logos*

Him, I shall be a liar like you, but I do know Him, and treasure His Word.¹⁹⁷

The Greek term translated in this sentence as “keep” is *tereo*. It is a very important term in many contexts expressing the concept of “guarding” or “treasuring.” Jesus was not merely asserting the idea that He was obedient to the word; rather He was making the more salient point that the word was His treasure. His continued use of *tereo* with respect to the word was an admonishment to His disciples. They too should have become ones who treasured the Word.

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad.”¹⁹⁸ The Jews therefore said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?” Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.” Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple.¹⁹⁹

His continued assertion of divinity should have come as no surprise due to the signs and wonders. Jesus’ audience was blind

¹⁹⁷ John 8:51–55 NASB

¹⁹⁸ Abraham undoubtedly rejoiced with great relief on the day that He encountered the word Who instructed him not to sacrifice his son. The event occurred on “the third day,” otherwise understood as “the last day,” of his “three-day journey.” Jesus’ assertion that “Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad” makes sense in the context of reference to the Hebraic motif of the three-day journey. Although we do not know the precise origin of the motif of the “three-day journey,” it may be that when God revealed His desire for the sacrifice of Isaac, that the phrase intuitively inspired hope in the Patriarch. Mention of the “three-day journey” may have carried with it the connotation for expectation of encounter with the manifest presence of God on the third/last day. The Gospel revolved around obtaining the ancient life of encounter with the word. Abraham treasured eschatological encounter as it was the means by which God, against all earthly odds, 1) sustained his life, 2) provided his son as an heir, 3) substituted a sacrifice for Isaac, and 4) caused him to conquer his enemies.

¹⁹⁹ John 8:56–59 NASB

and demonstrated an apparent lack of awareness for the nuances of Hebraic eschatology. As Abraham had experienced and treasured the Word, in like manner to the disciples at Jesus' transfiguration, he had also experienced immersion into the spiritual realm.²⁰⁰

Within the events of Jesus' life and teaching, the motif of bread found its way into the pages of the Gospels. Examples were sometimes accompanied by references to the eschatological appearance of David's son—future heir to the throne of Israel. Although the intended inheritors of the Word did not recognize His Messianic, Anointed, or *Christos* visitation among them, there were Gentiles outside of the Hebraic Tradition who not only realized the identity of the Word, works and bread of God, but they desperately sought God's treasure.

And behold, a Canaanite woman came out from that region, and *began* to cry out, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed." But He did not answer her a Word.²⁰¹ And His disciples came to *Him* and kept asking Him, saying, "Send her away, for she is shouting out after us." But He answered and said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and *began* to bow down before Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" And He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." But she said, "Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."²⁰²

The realization Jesus had longed to find in His own Jewish brothers and sisters, this foreign woman had understood and embraced. Not only was she well versed in her understanding of the Hebraic motif connecting the concepts of bread, the Word, and the works of God's miraculous actions, she was exceedingly clever in her response. The Word that was initially withheld by Jesus was irresistibly unleashed:

²⁰⁰ See Genesis 15.

²⁰¹ *logos*

²⁰² Matthew 15:22-27 NASB

Then Jesus answered and said to her, 'O woman, your faith is great; be it done for you as you wish.' And her daughter was healed at once."²⁰³

Reflecting upon the recent mention of *tereo*, it is valuable to pause and reflect on the concept of "faith" here in the context of Jesus' commendation of the woman and His work of deliverance. This woman truly treasured God's Word, His works or His bread. All three synonymous concepts were portrayed in the passage. As *Ish-rah-el* was intended to have been, she was a desperate fighter—not unwilling to upset the *status quo* or to create a disturbance in order to find, embrace, and to feast on the word of God. Do you or I have *great faith* like this woman? Are we willing to embarrass ourselves to move the hand of God?

The Hebraic motifs, some of which have not been recognized by contemporary scholarship, prevail in the Gospels. Consider the following example in the continuance of the text above:

When he left there, Jesus went along the Sea of Galilee. Then he went up a mountain, where he sat down. Then large crowds came to him bringing with them the lame, blind, crippled, mute, and many others. They laid them at his feet, and he healed them. As a result, the crowd was amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled healthy, the lame walking, and the blind seeing, and they praised the God of Israel. Then Jesus called the disciples and said, "I have compassion on the crowd, because they have already been here with me three-days and they have nothing to eat. I don't want to send them away hungry since they may faint on the way."²⁰⁴

How long had they been with Jesus? It had been three-days. In the motifs of the Hebraic Tradition, the three-day journey ended in encounter with the manifest presence of God. Even as the Word

²⁰³ Matthew 15:22-28 NASB

²⁰⁴ Matthew 15:29-32 NET

was identified with bread, consider what happened next and then in the following pericope:

The disciples said to him, “Where can we get enough bread in this desolate place to satisfy so great a crowd?” Jesus said to them, “How many loaves do you have?” They replied, Seven— and a few small fish.” After instructing the crowd to sit down on the ground, he took the seven loaves and the fish, and after calling forth grace,²⁰⁵ he broke them and began giving them to the disciples, who then gave them to the crowds. They all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. Not counting children and women, there were four thousand men who ate.²⁰⁶

Even as God had provided *manna* for those who followed Moses into the wilderness, which was compared to bread and was even referenced in the Hebrew sacred Scriptures as “*davar*,” the endurance of these ones who followed Jesus was rewarded in keeping with the motifs of the Hebraic Tradition. Moreover, Jesus, or rather *Yeshuah*, the Word Who had taken on human flesh in order to provide rescue for His children, was about to become bread as He neared the completion of His own three-day journey.

Look, I am casting out demons and performing healings today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will complete my work. Nevertheless I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the next day, because it is impossible that a prophet should be killed outside Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you! How often I have longed to gather your

²⁰⁵ εὐχαριστέω—*eucharisteo*

²⁰⁶ Matthew 15:29-32 NET: Note that the phrase “given thanks” was changed to “called forth grace.” Context supports the interpretation that *eucharisteo* was a reference to Jesus’ action calling forth the grace of God (i.e. the gift of His miraculous manifest presence and power); notwithstanding the realization that heartfelt gratitude, prayerfully expressed, also moved the Father’s hand.

children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would have none of it! Look, your house is forsaken! And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!”²⁰⁷

The dwelling place intended for so many of the Jews, from the time of Abraham until the Word’s visitation to them as Messiah, or as the Christ, had remained largely unoccupied. Opportunity still remained however, and Jesus left them with the keys for entry into the holy realm. A call to righteousness and faithfulness prepared seekers for inhabitation in God’s Word, presence, or Spirit. Coterminously, these considerations conditioned those who were sincere seekers for authentic worship of the name of the Lord and entry into His kingdom.

And it came about that when Jesus had finished all these Words,²⁰⁸ He said to His disciples, “You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is *to be* delivered up for crucifixion”...And while they were eating, Jesus took *some* bread, and after a blessing, He broke *it* and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave *it* to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant...”²⁰⁹

And so the practice of re-enlivening the presence of the second power of heaven had been passed along to Paul. This was being spread further, even as the Word was coming to the Gentiles.

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had called forth grace,²¹⁰ He broke it, and said, “This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” In the same way *He took* the

²⁰⁷ Luke 13:32b-35a NET

²⁰⁸ *logos*

²⁰⁹ Matthew 26:1, 2, 26, & 28 NASB

²¹⁰ εὐχαριστέω—*eucharisteo*

cup also, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.²¹¹

Churchianity has always understood the last phrase “until He comes” as pertaining to the second coming of Jesus in relationship to Darby’s dispensational end times model. However, this celebration of worshipful re-enlivenment was done inviting the tangible presence of the Lord. Paul was not merely telling his audiences, “Hey, just keep going through the motions because one day there will be a second coming near to the time of Armageddon.” No—definitely not. Instead, perhaps we need to be reminded that in the context of the spirituality of ancient Israel that the Lord, Himself, would make known His manifest presence in the Word.

In the communion services I have attended, month after month, this is a mechanical process that is repeated—which does not include any appreciable time of waiting. And I do not ever recall having been instructed that God’s presence was expected to have shown up. Nevertheless, it was intended as a prayerful time of intimacy.

What I did hear were doctrinal arguments as to whether or not the bread and wine actually turned into the bread and blood of Jesus. And with this dominance of theoretical conflict, each person had to make up their minds whether or not to accept this or that tradition. In turn, this made a difference in the choice of selecting a denomination. Of course, the truly elect became Reformed Presbyterians. For anyone who wonders, that is intended as a joke. Hopefully my friends in that stream of faith will laugh with me.

Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who

²¹¹ 1 Corinthians 11:23–26 NASB

eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world. So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you may not come together for judgment. And the remaining matters I shall arrange when I come.²¹²

Although Paul celebrated the body and blood of Jesus, explaining this in the context of “remembering,” the action and its goal was not merely one of recollection with metaphoric value any more than Jacob’s encounter with the Lord was just a dream. Even as Jacob’s fight with the Lord in the spiritual realm and his resultant broken hip was tangible evidence of spiritual consequences, so also there were physical penalties from participation in the feast of Jesus for those who knowingly were not actually walking in treasured faithfulness with Him.

The meal could be the portal either to blessing or curse—as was demonstrated at the last supper’s inception:

Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, “I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me. His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, “Ask him which one he means.” Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?” Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.²¹³

²¹² 1 Corinthians 11:23-12-1 NASB: Note that the phrase “given thanks” was changed to “called forth grace.”

²¹³ John 13:21b-27a NIV

Herein we may gain greater insight regarding the concept of “the great and terrible day of the Lord.” The Hebrews had been chosen to bring the blessing or the good-Word of God to the nations so that all would come to know and to worship *Yehovah*. In this, they would be restored to the ancient or the *aionios* life of Day-One in Eden. In its eventual finality, this paradigm can be understood as the restoration of the day of the Lord. Nevertheless, we comprehend that along the way to this eventuality, there would be many apparitions of the day of the Lord. In these multiplied returns of *Yehovah*, there would be those who had not prepared themselves. These are ones who did not in reality uphold faith; or as the Scriptures are commonly translated, these ones did not believe. Encounter with the day of the Lord or with the presence of the Lord was a perilous event for those who had not consecrated themselves.

And the same was observable for those who wantonly entered into the ancient Tabernacle or temple and did things that had not been asked of them by *Yehovah*. For example, in Leviticus 10, Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, offered strange incense in the temple and were consumed by fire. They had directly disobeyed the instruction of Moses in Exodus 30:9, and were severely punished.

This was exactly the case for Judas. He was a pretender. The falsehood of his pretended faithfulness was demonstrated by his repeated theft of cash from the purse that supplied the needs of the disciples and the poor whom they encountered.

Although Evangelicalism has taught Christians to think of the day of the Lord as His final coming, this is not how the understanding was embraced by ancient Israel. For example, when John was baptizing, this was the great and terrible day of the Lord—prophesied by Micah in 4:5. The presence of the Lord would be falling upon individuals as they were raised to new life above the surface of the water.

In accordance with this understanding, when John the Baptist saw many of the Sadducees and Pharisees coming out to his baptism at the Jordan River, he addressed them according to their behavior and character. “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Your lives should bear the fruit of

repentance. Do not be deceived in thinking that just because you are the descendants of Abraham that your physical bloodline is what matters to God.” Paraphrased from Matthew 3:7-9. In John 8, Jesus clarified that, in the eyes of God, only those who did the deeds of Abraham were his actual children.

When we examine either the Old or the New Testaments, there were many apparitions of the Lord. Again the point is reiterated that Evangelical Christians have been misled because they have unwittingly placed such high emphasis on the travesty of John Nelson Darby’s concept of the second-coming.

There have been, and there will continue to be, many appearances of the Lord in the lives of the faithful. Jesus taught that if anyone sought Him with all of their heart, soul, mind, and strength, that they would find Him. Ideally the coming of the Lord would increase in frequency as seekers made their abode in the *aion* or the day of His presence. This was the emphasis of Hebrews’ author with repetition of the phrase “Today if you hear His voice.” The point was that the Lord was serious about leading the faithful to ongoing eschatological encounters throughout their lives. Zion sought for inhabitants. Those who were prepared for encounter would be blessed.

Accordingly, Jesus instructed those approaching the altar of God in Matthew 5:24, that if they were to have realized a relational problem between themselves and another person, seekers needed to first go to that person and become reconciled. There was a way to finding blessing, and it meant first becoming a person of good character—even if such actions had to be repeated day after day.

Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.²¹⁴

Because the practice of breaking the bread and calling forth grace resulted in divine-human encounter, and there were many

²¹⁴ Matthew 5:24 NIV

pretenders in the early church, the Apostle Paul noted that careless participation in the event led many to sickness and death.²¹⁵

Christendom has largely missed the point of Jesus' statement, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." To a large degree, churchianity has trained its constituency to think communion is merely a devotional memorial to be repetitively re-enacted until the second coming of Christ—at the end of time. This misinformed practice continues in ignorance because, by and large, Christendom has not apprehended the wider ancient context of the Hebraic concept of *zachar*.

This is not to say that individuals do not encounter the Lord in the ceremony, however, they also probably do not have any idea that breaking the bread was intended to have created a gateway into heaven for divine-human encounter in the holy realm. And of course, with heaven having been opened, God's kingdom could proceed forth in the world.

Earlier we discussed that the Hebraic concept of *zachar* should have been understood in keeping with the concept of re-enlivening. For example, God revealed His name to Moses so that for all generations, peoples of the Earth could cry out to and praise the name of *Yehovah*. When He heard them, He would rush to their aid and draw them into His presence.

The sacrificial broken flesh of the second power of heaven had opened the way through the veil into the holy of holies or the *aiona* of the *aiona*. In their breaking of the bread, celebrants were re-enlivening the second power of heaven. And when the Lord would arrive, those with eyes to see and ears to hear would undeniably recognize His presence with them.

Recall that it was the same Orthodoxy that promised life after death by agreeing intellectually with its doctrines that also focused its people on the long-distant, final second coming of Jesus. To exonerate the bishops, let's just agree that they did not know any better. These men had never walked through life witnessing signs and wonders. And furthermore, even in their own time when

²¹⁵ Note 1 Corinthians 11:30.

they heard testimonies of these occurrences, they labeled these as being demonic. They knew little or nothing about the concept of Emmanuel or *God with us* so far as recognizing personal experience with the tangible voice of God.

The notion of breaking the bread and calling upon *Yehovah* until the Holy One made His presence known in the room probably would have been labeled as dangerous subjectivity. Rather instead, the bishops proved themselves to be experts in deriving information about God from the Scriptures which could be appreciated and believed.

Celebration of communion merely as a ceremonial religious rite waiting for the final second coming of Jesus at the end of time was not what was experienced in the first century church. The Hebraic paradigm of faith understood that the Word of God was very much alive—making His way through the world and enlivening those whose deeds were forged in keeping with the will of God. Cornelius was a prime example in the book of Acts.

The practice of calling forth grace into the bread and wine was a proclamation of death until the moment His presence would fall upon them. As the author of Hebrews described, they “tasted the heavenly gift.” The ancient *aionios* life of Eden was availed. Ones were raised up into the heavenly *aiona* of Day-One each time He visited His presence upon them.

Furthermore, His presence was realized in different ways. As we discussed earlier, the Apostle Paul called forth grace into the bread on a ship that was doomed to be ruined upon the rocks of the sea. But he was instructed by an angel to prepare the bread with the miraculous grace of *Yehovah*—in order that all would be saved or experience God’s *yeshuah* or *soteria*.

In Scripture the entire point of the coming of the day of the Lord was synonymous with the apparition of His presence. For those who had consecrated themselves to Him in faithfulness, by having confessed and turned away from their sins and by their cleansing through baptism in water, the day of the Lord or the coming of His Word or presence was a blessing.

The coming of the day of the Lord can be understood as the faithful seekers of *Yehovah* re-encountering the ancient realm of

the *aiona* at Day-One that was mentioned at creation. In this sense, the concept of Day-One, can be understood as a location before God's throne. And this explains the distinguished use of a cardinal number in the Hebrew text of Genesis that described arrival of the light-bearing heavenly host. By contrast, the ordinal numbers of "second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth" were used to describe the order in which God created the Earth.

Even as eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil brought a curse to the ones who did so as they walked in disobedience to the Lord, so also the same was true at the new meal provided for the spiritual adherents of the Hebraic Tradition. The food became a portal into Day-One through which either blessing or curse might enter into the being of the supplicants.

Alternately, the celebratory meal was a portal also for the righteous into the spiritual realm. "Just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom."²¹⁶ Later, by the time the letter to the Hebrews was written, the same understanding relating encounter with the Word to the meal remained evident.

Concerning him we have much to say, and *it is* hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the Word²¹⁷ of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And this we

²¹⁶ Luke 22:29-30 NASB

²¹⁷ *logos*

shall do, if God permits. For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good Word²¹⁸ of God and the powers of the age to come, and *then* have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame. For ground that drinks the rain which often falls upon it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned. But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way. For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.²¹⁹

The reference above to “tasting the heavenly gift” of the good-Word of the power of God in a context of fallen participants’ having experienced an irreversible curse, might be understood similarly to the admonition of Paul regarding the sick and dying Corinthians or with respect to what happened to Judas at the last supper. It is very important to understand that there were irremediable consequences for those who did not very seriously consider their approach to the spiritual realm through the divine meal.

The phrase “tasting the heavenly gift” should be understood, once again, as the divine-human heavenly encounter with the power of God that took place when grace was called forth into the bread and the wine. Jesus’ torn flesh was the means into the holy realm. The only purpose in re-enlivening the body and blood of Jesus was in order for the faithful to gain entry into the presence of God.

²¹⁸ *rhema*

²¹⁹ Hebrews 5:11-6:10 NASB

Today, churchianity has become so far removed from this practice that what is being stated here undoubtedly sounds completely foreign to many readers. Hear O *Ish-raah-el*, the time has come to exercise the genius of Einstein! It is long past time to have a look outside the bubble, of what in many cases might be dead ceremonial religion, in order to see and to realize what our well-intended religious traditions have forgotten and left behind!

Those who may be frightened to do so need not fear if they approach passionately worshiping the name of *Yehovah* with clean hands and a pure heart.

Could God Most High possibly be upset by such actions that are offered with reverence and in broken humility? For it was He Who stated through Moses, to the *Ish-raah-el-ites*, this is my memorial name for all generations!

And for those Jews who may perceive this to be solely a Christian act of worship, be reminded that *kiddush* was understood as entry into the holy realm on the Sabbath many centuries before there were ever Christians on the Earth. Although you may not have previously understood the purpose of *kiddush* or entry into the *qodesh* realm on the Sabbath, this concept should be making some sense by now—especially in consideration of the earlier examples of Hannah, Abraham, and Ahaz preparing or eating a meal in context with miraculous events taking place. Perhaps even the historical understanding of the “*neshama yeterah*” (נֶשְׁמָה יְתֵרָה) or embracing the “additional soul” may be taking on a new significance.

In this regard, Jews have a steep intellectual advantage over Christian readers because more than 99 percent of Christians have never heard of the *kiddush* and the prayer of consecration spoken over the wine with the breaking of the challah bread—that is at least prior to having read *The Lost and Forgotten Spirituality of Ancient Israel*. I have never heard another Christian teach on these combined concepts. I do not intend to comment pejoratively, and so this is intended as a general observation for the benefit of my Jewish audience. The well-intended leaders of Christendom have busied themselves with the priority of building an institutional, hierarchical community that can pass along its ceremonial

celebrations or commemorations and teach important doctrines that are necessary for belief in order to ensure life after death. Largely due to the Judeo-Christian divorce that began with early Orthodoxy, Christians have not been taught the ancient significance of what Jesus was doing when He broke the bread at the Last Supper—preparing for entry into the holy realm of the Sabbath.

So then, we ask, is today the day of the LORD for you to taste the heavenly gift of the power of God and has the time come to embrace the ancient inheritance passed down by your spiritual forefathers?

There can be no doubt that Jews and Christians alike will find the thought to be scandalous that each can equally enter the presence of God through worship of the name of *Yehovah*.

When we read the Scriptures, in the Hebraic context in which the books of the Bible were written, the case is made that every person stands equally before God with the identical opportunities placed before each one to prove themselves as His children.

Nevertheless, many Christians would probably object, asserting instead that entry could only take place through calling upon *Yeshuah* or Jesus. In answer to the controversy, our ancient ancestors of faith specifically thanked *Yehovah* for His *Yeshuah*. Examine the Scriptures. To worship God Most High was synonymous with worship of the second power of heaven. This was the Holy One Who provided God's *Yeshuah*. It was not possible to worship either one without worshipping both. If any of us thanks God Most High for His *Yeshuah*, are we not simultaneously worshipping both *Yehovah* and the Holy One of Israel? It is not possible to worship the Father without worshipping the Son—the second power of heaven Who He has commissioned to rule over the Earth.

It could be that this invitation is premature for both Jew and Christian alike. If that is the case, perhaps you have been given enough information to begin to pray and to ask the Lord where you will go from here with respect to faith and spirituality.

When we discuss the life and teachings of Jesus ahead and explore how He performed miracles, perhaps more of this will become clear.

With this invitation being presented, it should also be duly noted that those Christians or Jews who have not given their lives in loyal faithfulness to God Most High should be forewarned. Taking the name of the LORD upon oneself in vain could place those who did so in peril.

Furthermore, what we speak of here was God's gift to the Jews long before the coming of Jesus. Although there are Christians who might assert that one must have the correct theology in order to approach God, the Scriptures themselves never convey that mistaken presupposition.

It is pertinent to be reminded that the blood of the sacrifice is effectual whether or not we know of or understand the theology behind it. If a sacrifice was made for all of humankind, then it should be self-evident that it would be effectual for all of humankind who would call upon the name of the LORD.

However controversial it may be to both sides of the Judeo-Christian tradition, *Yehovah* is the heavenly Father of each contingency. If we worship Him in spirit and in truth, He will prove Himself to be our heavenly Father without discretion. And the key for comprehending the idea of worshiping in Truth has to do with a daily walk of righteousness. Do you love your neighbor with your words and actions as you would treat yourself or your closest family member? Do you help the needy? To have done so indicates a pursuit of truth and righteousness. Such one's abide in God Who Himself is Truth. God looks at the heart, behavior, and the character of those calling upon His name and seeing His presence. The eyes of the Lord search all throughout the Earth to find those whose hearts are completely His.

As an aside, Calvinists introduced an idea that is pervasive in the Reform movement known as "total depravity"—which essentially teaches that an individual can never make a righteous decision or complete an act of righteousness. Keep in mind that John Calvin and the systematic theologians were not around when the Bible was written. The concept of total depravity is a man-made

construct, where in cherry-picked passages from the Bible are taken out of context, stacked together, and are filtered through the philosophical lens of rationalism in order to lead the unwary to a single conclusion. When more verses are added to the computation, the end result is that only Jesus' blood can make you righteous.

Don't be fooled for a moment that the ancient Jews who wrote the Bible intended for any of us to reach the conclusion that they were teaching the theology of "total depravity."

The fact of the matter is that individuals all throughout Scripture were confronted by choices. Those who acted with love of neighbor and who walked in honesty before God and man were described in Hebrew as *tsedek* which means righteous. Despite how theologians attempt to mess with our minds in order to satisfy their religio-political doctrinal agendas, the characters in the Bible and the ways that their relationship was observed with *Yehovah* should be the source of our understanding—providing the basis for the spirituality we live out each day.

What we know from the narratives of the Bible is that the blood of the sacrifice allowed for entry into the holy realm. And our goal is entry into the Kingdom of God. We do not need theological head games to hinder us. Whatever may or may not be theologically correct is immaterial to our walk of spirituality before the Lord. What we see from start to finish in Scripture is that choices and behavior shape character and that is exactly what matters in the eyes of God. Despite what agendized religious teachers try to sell you, those who do that which they know to be good and right in the eyes of God are *tsedek* or righteous.

At the start of this book we plainly stated that this work had not been written in order to trick Jews into becoming Christians. Rather instead, both groups have been called to inherit the treasure of Jacob. If we are to be authentically identified in heaven as the children of Abraham, it will only be because we practice the spirituality of Abraham and walk properly in righteousness as the children of *Ish-rah-el*. Jews and Christians need to realize the will of the Father in drawing all men to Himself. In His presence there is neither Jew nor Gentile.

Those who are prideful in their identities as Jews should be reminded that Abraham was a Gentile. And those who are egotistical about their Christian identity, need to be humbled in the realization that they have been grafted into the tree of *Ish-raah-el*. And for that matter, any of us who walk in boastful pride on any matter of self-identity, probably are demonstrating to the heavens by such foolishness that we are not ready for habitation in the holy realm of God.

The holy place is the dwelling of the lowly, the broken, and the humble. O how blessed are the meek and those who mourn. Blessed are the gentle and the peacemakers. Blessed are the pure in heart and those who bestow mercy upon others. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Ones such as these will receive mercy. They will be comforted and will find peace. They will inherit the kingdom of heaven and will see God. These ones prove that they are the children of God.

All of us bow before the Creator of heaven and Earth on the same ground right next to one another. We cry out to the LORD at the same wall. Somehow, we need to learn how to embrace our brothers and sisters in the grace of God. Whether we are too blind to realize it, or whether we are too stubborn to admit as much, both of us stand in His grace gathered together in His name.

We understand that the LORD is merciful, however none of us should test Him. Each of us knows in our hearts if we are seeking Him with pure devotional reverence. And we trust because of our sincerity, which He sees, that the Lord will show us if we have unfinished business on Earth to be done before we approach the holy gate of heaven through the praise of His name.

Jesus taught,

...if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.²²⁰

The whole point of Hebraic faith was the celebration of its spirituality. The fact of the matter was that God was not far off in

²²⁰ Matthew 5:23-24 NIV

some corner of heaven that was disconnected from the realm of Earth.

He had given humankind the means to enter into His presence—which had been celebrated through the *kiddush* at the start of the Sabbath by their most ancient ancestors of faith. And He desired for all to embrace Him as *Ish-raah-el-ites*—not through cold dead religion—but as those reverently seeking divine-human intimacy. And so for those who would seek as much, they were given eyes to see and ears to hear. As their angels in heaven always embraced the presence of God in heaven, so also they were intended to have become alive seeing and hearing in that realm—embracing this new life. Those having been born into new life in the *aiona*, need not fear life ending on Earth. For they had already embraced the being of the spiritual part of them that existed in the presence of God. In other terms, each of our angels in heaven that continually behold the face of God in heaven are each of us in a transformed identity who will never die. We embrace this identity by eating the flesh and by drinking the blood of the sacrifice of the second power of heaven. Those who do so will never die. From what we read in Scripture, it appears that those who willfully rebel from God and reject His ways are already dead.

This discussion could result in fear for those not having experienced any of this. Everyone on Earth has not had the same education or the same opportunities. It seems that the Lord holds us accountable for what we know and for His individual callings. All of us can be reassured by the thief dying on the cross next to Jesus. In his last breaths, he defended Jesus as an innocent man. It was all of what he could do with what little was left of his moments on Earth. And yet, because of this, Jesus reassured him, “Today, you will be with me in Paradise.”

Nevertheless, as we test what we are learning and our findings have been validated, we should walk in faithfulness to the Lord as He calls us. That is what we learn, start to finish, in the Bible. We do not want to be people of neglect, neither for the concerns of heaven, nor for the needs of those among us—which in actuality are the same needs. And for this reason, entry into the

godesh realm is necessary. We cannot hope to rise to the calling of God by our own efforts.

The knowledge that each of us has an angelic identity, who continually beholds the presence of God, should stir us to seek birth into the *aiona* in order to fully embrace the inheritance prepared for us on Day-One at the foundation of the world. All of the prophets embraced this heavenly identity. And they did so with fear and trembling. Jacob ended up in a fist-fight and came out of the altercation with a broken hip. In accordance with the examples in the Bible, we need to discard triumphalism. Instead, we should approach as ones who bear the fruit of righteousness and as broken humble desperate seekers.

Feasting on the holy Bread of the Word of God was not simply a symbolic ritual. Eating the sacrifice was the portal into the realm of the Spirit. Equally so, it was the means to either finding God's help and inhabitation by the Spirit or the slippery slope into bondage and the darkness of the adversary. Approaching the sacred table of Jesus' flesh and blood and imbibing the meal was a matter with severe tangible consequences for both the righteous and the wicked. The mature discerned between good and evil and prepared themselves before they attended to the sacrificial meal of Jesus' flesh and blood.

Washings—*Taher*

Note that Jesus washed the feet of the disciples following the last supper, in John 13, in conjunction with the discussion above in Hebrews 5. Washings were an important component of entry into the realm of the Spirit.

Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand."

Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you." For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean." When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."²²¹

Recall that Moses removed his sandals as he approached the manifest presence of God. We can understand in some sense that he was moving from the earthly world into the *aion*.

With the understanding that the Second Temple would be destroyed and that worshipers would gather before the throne of God, perhaps in any place at any time as they approached in spirit and in truth, physical consecration included foot-washing.

The comparable point regarding preparation for divine encounter could be made about "washings" or "water baptism" mentioned in the quote of Hebrews above. Although we might tend to associate these actions solely with the New Testament, due to the prominent work of John the Baptist, cleansing with water was an activity that prepared seekers to encounter the manifest presence of God. Likewise, the laver was used for preparation in the Tabernacle.²²² Sprinkling with water or blood was also a similar component.²²³

²²¹ John 13:3-17 ESV

²²² Note: Exodus 30:18; 28, 31:9, 38:8, 39:39, 40:7; 11 & 30.

In the sanctification of the Sabbath, the leader washes her or his hands, similar to the ancient priest who used the laver when entering into the temple. Hand washing (*netilat yadayim*) is the standard practice immediately before breaking bread, however, The Babylonian Talmud, in Tractate Shabbat 25b, provides details of washing the face, hands, and feet on Friday afternoon in order to physically and spiritually consecrate a person for the Sabbath. But this is only for a specific tradition.²²⁴

After Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, had avenged their sister Dinah, their father feared retribution so He sought the Lord. "Then God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel, and live there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau."²²⁵

So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods which are among you, and purify [or *taher*] yourselves, and change your garments; and let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and has been with me wherever I have gone." So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods which they had, and the rings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was near Shechem.²²⁶

²²³ Note Exodus 24:6; 8, 29:16; 20f, Leviticus 1:5; 11, 3:2; 8; 13, 4:6; 17, 5:9, 7:2; 14, 8:19; 24; 30, 9:12; 18, 14:51, 16:14f; 19, 17:6, Numbers 8:7, 18:17, 19:4; 13; 18ff, 2 Kings 9:33, 16:13; 15, 2 Chronicles 29:22, 30:16, 35:11, Ezekiel 36:25, 43:18, Hebrews 9:13; 19; 21, 10:22, 11:28, 12:24 & 1 Peter 1:2.

²²⁴ *Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Shabbat*, 25b, translated and annotated by Eliyahu Baruch Shulman et al., Schottenstein Edition (New York: Mesorah Publications, 2001), accessed via the Jewish Theological Seminary Library Digital Collections.

²²⁵ Genesis 35:1 NASB; It was time for the family to be cleansed.

²²⁶ Genesis 35:2-4 NASB

Leviticus chapters 14 and 22 employ the term *taher*²²⁷ in the context of using water for cleansing. Jacob's calling through the Word set the stage for a baptismal event. He compelled his children to repent of all that he had been in his former life so they should mature into their heritage as the children of *Ish-rah-el*.

Paul taught that there was one baptism into Christ. We interpret this qualitatively. However, there might be many washings taking place in the lives of those seeking entry before God's presence.

Undoubtedly, all of the disciples had experienced John's baptism. Nevertheless, Jesus washed their feet.

What we take note of was that cleansing with water was not just a New Testament practice. The concept of *taher* was a consistent exercise related to entry into the presence of *Yehovah* throughout the Old Testament as well.

As an aside in closing this section, I want to share a story. When I was a teaching assistant during my Ph.D. studies, in preparing participants for upcoming course-work, I asked students to prepare a brief reflection regarding a time or place that God might have spoken to them. I was not expecting any of them to have had the same response. Nevertheless, one third of the students asserted that the time they were most likely to hear God's voice was during times of bathing.

It was uncanny that so many would have experienced some measure of the presence of God as they were being cleansed with water.

As we move ahead, we will begin to examine the spirituality of Jesus, which He modeled for His disciples—whereby they too would become empowered to work the works of God.

²²⁷ טָהַר—*taher*

Section Six

Special Thanks

Our primary objective here is explaining the practical spirituality by which Jesus performed signs and wonders. I am grateful for those of you who have made it this far. I pray that you are blessed.

Section Six is very specifically dedicated to the church historian, Dr. Peter E. Prosser. His instruction opened my eyes to the importance of studying history to discover how interpreters of the Bible have shaped spirituality. His efforts in *Dispensationalist Eschatology and its Influence on American and British Religious Movements*—affectionately known to his students as “the pink book”—had a tremendous impact—resulting in much that I composed in section three. Not only did Prosser unshackle me from dispensationalism, which changed my life, but his allowance for me to continue work on the commentary of John provided the basis for the upcoming discussion.

Dr. Prosser’s work helped me see dispensationalism as a human invention, freeing me from fearful, rapture-focused evangelism and guiding me toward a hopeful, Hebraic view of God’s

growing kingdom. His invaluable mentorship completely reshaped my faith and research journey.

May the Lord always bless you, Dr. Prosser, and all of the generations of your family! May God's peace and His richest blessings always be yours!

Studying church history revealed how systematic theology progressively drifted from its original sources. Instead of examining the Hebrew and Aramaic Scriptures, generations of Orthodox theologians unquestioningly built upon layers of existing opinion. This reliance on tradition over text ultimately distorted foundational biblical concepts, redefining terms like "grace" into entirely different ideas.

When I shared these concerns with friends, I realized how deeply entrenched they were in denominational tradition. For them, the perspectives of favored theologians had effectively made the Bible irrelevant, save for a few familiar New Testament passages.

Many of my peers were trapped in a theological bubble, unable to look past their traditions. For example, I assert in this book that the Greek *soteria* never originally referred to going to heaven after death. In the Hebrew and Aramaic texts translated by the Septuagint, the foundational terms *yeshuah* and *purqana* carry no afterlife context. Yet, fourth-century architects of orthodoxy redefined *soteria* completely. Driven by an assumed mission to save the masses, they mistakenly reinterpreted *aionios zoe* as "eternal life" and forced that meaning onto salvation.

Today, when you confront Fundamentalist, Reformed, or Evangelical believers with the fact that Jesus instructed seekers of *aionios zoe* to obey the Ten Commandments, they look at you like you are from Mars. Unable to answer, they often invent contrived arguments on the spot to divert the discussion. In this confusion, Jesus' clear teachings are rendered completely irrelevant, sacrificed to protect an unbending religious tradition that proves itself blind, deaf, and ignorant.

This critique is not meant to offend, but to provoke necessary honesty. We must confront how dispensationalism allows people to systematically bypass Jesus' clear instructions. To dismiss

or rewrite His teaching while claiming to be His follower is a profound contradiction—one that approaches an “anti-Christ” posture. Rather than tiptoeing away from the text, modern “churchianity” needs to rediscover what Jesus actually taught, because true discipleship requires obedience to His instruction.

Historical religious movements reveal a recurring tension: as mainstream Christendom drifted into refined traditionalism, it systematically silenced dissent. Whenever ardent seekers throughout the ages began asking the right questions, they were marginalized, persecuted, or even killed.

Although I once assumed modern church practices extended back to Jesus, studying Bishop Epiphanius’s *Panarion* shattered that illusion. Witnessing the rigid demeanor of the fourth-century church was an eye-opening experience. It forced me to realize that true faith is entirely different from mere cognitive belief, and that orthodox dogmas had drifted drastically from the teachings of Jesus.

Dr. Prosser faced intense opposition to his Ph.D. research. When his initial dissertation advisor read the draft, he vehemently rejected the conclusions, declaring, “This will never be published—not over my dead body!” Shortly after, the man suddenly dropped dead. This event led Dr. Prosser to remind his students to be careful with the words they speak. Despite the initial setbacks, he eventually found a new advisor willing to help him finish his doctorate.

I felt a similar pain during my own doctoral journey. My program initially offered a track in Biblical Theology that perfectly matched my interests. However, because the school failed to include it in their accreditation request to the Association of Theological Schools, they abruptly canceled the track. Overnight, one-third of the Ph.D. program vanished from the website, crushing the dreams, time, and financial investments of individuals in our cohort. I felt the gross administrative error should have led to full compensation.

When I attempted to help one student who had been mistreated—optimistically offering advice how to preserve a pathway to complete the program—and as I respectfully made

suggestions to administrators of the program regarding ethical treatment of the cohort—I became *persona non grata* in the eyes of the program director. I had been naïve; such well-intended verbalizations apparently are simply not permissible without repercussion. I was heartbroken when the director summarily dismissed the first student whom I had ventured to help. Although I endeavored to remain active in the doctorate, a new authority figure in the program admonished me to leave with the parenthetical sage reminder that my comprehensive exams were going to be graded subjectively. Later, still others were terminated. While some students had the resources to start over elsewhere; the costs and loss for many was devastating.

After investing nearly 3 years in my own Ph.D. research it was made abundantly clear to me that my doctorate was not going to be supported by the school to which I had devoted my efforts as a teaching fellow. Due to the limited economy of time and money, as well as considering the needs of my family, I realized through a baptism of tears that it was time to move on. I was crushed. Nevertheless, the Lord also continued His enduring support—especially through great encouragement I received from a man named Loren Caudill—author of “The Messianic Matrix: A Theological Abstract of Pentecost.” The Lord used Loren to help me pick up the pieces and to keep moving forward to publish *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*. My desire from the beginning had been to use the time to complete my research, and I am unspeakably grateful to the Lord that this came to fruition. Looking back now, I realize that had I become a professor, I never would have had time to complete my independent research or to pursue my own interests revolving around the lost and forgotten Hebraic tradition.

Maturity in Scholarship

With each passing year, archaeological discoveries and digitized ancient texts grant us a historical vantage point our theological forefathers never imagined. While we mourn the tragic, politically motivated destruction of invaluable artifacts burned by early Greek bishops to protect their doctrines, we still possess far

more information today than the original architects of Orthodoxy. Powered by the internet, analytical tools, and high-level literacy—unthinkable during the fourth century or even the Reformation—modern researchers regularly master four or five languages over decades of study. Armed with this unprecedented expansion of knowledge, it is only reasonable that our traditional frameworks evolve. True orthodoxy must embrace mature self-criticism, remaining willing to say, “I was wrong; I have learned.” To instead claim that a historical system reached the ultimate apex of intellectual development is not orthodoxy—it is arrogance.

We must never trust anyone solely on the basis of their academic credentials. Despite our best research efforts, human knowledge is always limited, and we remain prone to error. Whether we admit it or not, everyone is driven by an agenda—even if well-intentioned. This is exactly why we must rely on the Lord as the ultimate Teacher, remembering the Apostle Paul’s reminder that we currently see through a glass darkly, but will one day see face-to-face.

If we are courageous enough to think critically, we must admit that many traditional Fundamentalist, Reformed, and Evangelical frameworks are inadequate for interpreting the Bible. Early leaders often wrote lengthy treatises based on an infinitesimally small knowledge base and limited source material. As our access to historical and biblical data grows, their sweeping conclusions are increasingly proven inaccurate—and in many cases, embarrassing. Though well-intentioned, these theologians simply lacked the tools required for comprehensive accuracy. Today, in light of new discoveries, there is a tremendous, undeniable need to revise these inherited systemic misunderstandings.

Inevitably, some individuals will never be able to let go of tradition, finding comfort in the intellectual ruts of the past. While we must be careful not to damage their faith, those of us who see clearly must press forward with honor and respect—even when surrounded by closed minds.

A new generation of researchers is eager to use modern tools to engage our expanding knowledge base objectively. Unlike early orthodox bishops—who selectively destroyed evidence or

approved only the texts that mirrored their doctrines—true investigators must follow the facts without bias. As we uncover the truth, we must also preserve the dignity of former generations, recognizing that we wouldn't be here without their immense sacrifices. Confronting inherited errors requires us to maintain complete integrity before a merciful Lord, whether those past mistakes were born of malice or well-meaning ignorance.

In all of this, many of us find ourselves at a point of decision. And so today, those who seek to understand the spirituality of the Bible are confronted by the question, “Will I trust in the information of the religious tradition in which I was raised—much of which was founded upon ignorance or absolutely incorrect information that was seasoned with bias? Or, instead, will I examine findings that have been based upon inductive contextual analysis of the Scriptures that have been cross-referenced with other ancient historical and religious documents?” The choice and actions based upon this question determine what individuals will discover. And this determines what and who each of us will become.

Ultimately, we face a critical point of decision. Anyone seeking the true spirituality of the Bible must ask: “Will I blindly trust a religious tradition founded on historical ignorance and bias? Or will I examine the findings of inductive, contextual analysis cross-referenced with ancient historical documents?” The choice we make—and the actions we take—will completely determine what we discover and who we become.

Dr. James Barr has relevantly commented,

It is perfectly possible today to reiterate the positions of the older Protestant orthodoxy, to regard its judgements as virtually final and to resist the possibility that they might be substantially modified as a result of more modern research into Scripture...the facts of Scripture are once again obscured through the imposition of a tradition...[that is] anxious to maintain these insights against the evidence of the text of Scripture or at least against the fact that quite different interpretations of the text are possible. When one looks at the various “conservative,” “orthodox,” or “evangelical” schemes of doctrine which are so influential

today, and all of which energetically proclaim the authority of Scripture as their first principle, it requires no great insight to see that in many cases it is “conservatism,” or “Calvinism,” or “evangelicalism” that is the actual authority, and that the authority of the Bible is used and maintained simply because it is supposed to provide the necessary support for the doctrinal authority, which is the real dominant power. The Bible is fully authoritative, but it does not have authority to question the accepted doctrinal tradition. This is analogous to the late medieval position against which the Reformers protested.

Contributing to Barr’s emphasis upon the Scriptures, I would add the importance of being guided by the voice of the Lord. Howard M. Ervin devoted significant discussion to this hermeneutical interest.²²⁸ As we have seen, biblical interpretation can be fallible, and our ability to hear the voice of the Lord is limited. This is why growth in maturity will always be a continuing process.

While almost every Judeo-Christian movement claims the Bible as its rule of faith, institutions have unwittingly built their foundations on ancient Marcionite agendas, Aristotelian philosophy, and distorted Greek definitions. Driven by historical biases and a desire to strip subjectivity from spirituality, both modern Judaism and “churchianity” have lost the ability to use Scripture to explain entry into the kingdom. Because sermons rarely focus on Jesus’ teachings within their original biblical context, we are left with a powerless spirituality. Instead of scriptural truth, religious leaders rely on political influence, rhetoric, and money to affect change—all in the name of a heritage passed down by theologians whose massive volumes are frequently riddled with historical inaccuracies and institutional bias.

As we move forward to identify how Jesus performed miracles, the foundational ideas from my original study of John’s Gospel are coming to fruition. Thank you, Dr. Prosser, for your kind

²²⁸ Ervin, Howard M. “Hermeneutics : A Pentecostal Option.” *Pneuma* 3 no 2 Fall 1981.

gift and invaluable instruction; I never could have guessed that studying history would teach me so much about theology.

The Lost and Forgotten Keys to John

Early in my seminary training, I recall reading an anecdote from Irenaeus's *Against Heresies* regarding Polycarp, the disciple of John. When asked if there was a hidden meaning in John's Gospel, Polycarp replied that if John had hidden anything, he of all people would have known.²²⁹ Yet, throughout the Christian era, the enigmatic question of a secret layer within John's Gospel has remained a persistent debate in the scholarly world.

While attempting to track down that reference regarding the question posed to Polycarp, I came upon a research paper by Dr. Margaret Barker entitled "The Secret Tradition"—discussing the longstanding historical mystery surrounding this controversy.²³⁰ Barker provided possible leads toward discovery, including references to the second century scholar Origen and to Clement of Alexandria—figures who might have been able to unravel John's supposed secret.

In her article, *The Secret Tradition*, she wrote:

There was far more to the teaching of Jesus than is recorded in the canonical Gospels. For several centuries a belief persisted among Christian writers that there had been a secret tradition entrusted to only a few of his followers. Eusebius quotes from a now lost work of Clement of Alexandria, *Hypotyposes*: "James the Righteous, John and Peter were entrusted by the LORD after his resurrection with the higher knowledge. They imparted it to the other

²²⁹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.3.4, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, *The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, trans. Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885).

²³⁰ <https://www.marquette.edu/maqom/tradition1.html>

Also see: Margaret Barker, *King of the Jews: Temple Theology in John's Gospel* (London: SPCK, 2014).

apostles, and the other apostles to the seventy, one of whom was Barnabas.”²³¹

Eusebius has been credited with having written the first history of the Christian church.²³²

And we recall that James, Peter, and John were participants in the event remembered by Christians as the Transfiguration. As we have already discussed, they went behind the veil into the realm of the *aion* where Jesus also met with Moses and Elijah.

At the start of *The Secret Tradition*, Dr. Barker also included two other invaluable quotes from Dionysius—who is thought to have been a first century convert of Paul.

This is the kind of divine enlightenment into which we have been initiated by the hidden tradition of our inspired teachers, a tradition at one with Scripture. We now grasp these things in the best way we can, and as they come to us, wrapped in the sacred veils of that love toward humanity with which Scripture and hierarchical traditions cover the truths of the mind with things derived from the realm of the senses.²³³

²³¹ Margaret Barker, “The Secret Tradition,” *The Journal of Higher Criticism* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 31–67.

Eusebius Ecclesiastical History, 2.1. Note that this version was quoted directly from Barker’s article *The Secret Tradition*. Barker, Margaret. “The Secret Tradition.” Margaret Barker Official Website. 1993. <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/SecretTradition.pdf>.

²³² Eusebius of Caesarea, *Church History*, 2.1.4, quoting Clement of Alexandria, *Hypotyposes* (lost work), in *Eusebius: Church History, Life of Constantine the Great, and Oration in Praise of Constantine*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Arthur Cushman McGiffert, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, vol. 1 (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890).

²³³ Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names*, 1.4 (592B), in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibhéid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 52–53.

As one who had come to faith in the first century, it is clear from the outset that Dionysius concerned his spirituality with divine-human encounter. Just ahead in this section, he moved on to discuss the transfiguration. So then we understand that entry into the heavenly realm not only continued, but moreover, first century non-biblical authors were referencing the Transfiguration to define their own mysterious experiences.

Whereas Jesus had indicated that individuals had an angelic presence in the heavenly realm, and the Jews apprehended that celebrants of the Sabbath received an additional soul, Dionysius spoke in similar manner of the experience of deification. On this note, the Essenes understood that they themselves were transformed into angelic beings when they entered into the *davar* or the holy of holies. Angelification would occur in their fixed calendar on the day of Pentecost—after visionary reconstruction of the temple. Dionysius had much to say regarding the hierarchy of angels who were encountered in the spiritual realm by those in his era and previously who had practiced this spirituality directly linked to the practice of Jesus’ disciples. And all of this takes us back to Jacob and Jesus’ statement that the faithful would see for themselves the angels of God ascending and descending upon the son of man.

While acknowledging that different individuals used a variety of diverse means to describe their experiences, the point in bringing these understandings together is to assert each of them was celebrating the same quality of divine-human encounter.

Whereas the Essenes used a worship document today that is entitled, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, as a guide for visionary worship leading them to Pentecost and entry into the Word of God, Dionysius attempted to package entry into the spiritual realm with instructions. Interestingly he mentioned the importance of worship in the Hebrew language.²³⁴ “As for the sacred song of the

²³⁴ For further study on the Essenes entry into the Word, I recommend two invaluable resources: *All the Glory of Adam: Liturgical Anthropology in the Dead Sea Scrolls* by Crispin H. T. Fletcher Louis (2001, Brill Publishing) ISBN 9004123261, 9789004123267. and *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism* (2006, Society of Biblical

inspiration of the God-rapt Prophets, it is called by those who know Hebrew, the ‘Praise of God,’ or ‘Praise ye the Lord.’”²³⁵ In Dionysius’ work *On Divine names*, divine praise was the key to entry into the incomprehensible and indescribable angelic realm.²³⁶ And those who study the life of David and his psalms will also recognize that this was the “key of David” mentioned in Isaiah 22 and Revelation 3. Worship by the faithful was the means of embracing divine royal authority in the world. Matthew similarly explained in 16:19, “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever you will bind on Earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever you loose on Earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Just as Jesus was repeatedly designated as the “son of David,” so also He delegated the power of God’s kingdom to His disciples.

By contrast, Second Temple religious leaders locked up the doors to the kingdom. They were the unfaithful stewards of the

Literature) edited by April D. DeConick. Note particularly “The Temple Within” by Christopher R. A. Morray-Jones p. 145-178. ISBN 1589832574, 9781589832572.

Keep in mind that these scholars did not write with an understanding of the Hebraic perspective and therefore they drew more limited conclusions than are possible from their studies.

²³⁵ Dionysius the Areopagite, “Ecclesiastical Hierarchy,” in *The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite*, trans. John Parker (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library), chap. 4, sec. 12, <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/dionysius/works.html>.

Dionysius the Areopagite, “The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy/Caput IV,” in *The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite*, trans. John Parker (Wikisource, last modified July 20, 2021), https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Works_of_Dionysius_the_Areopagite/Ecclesiastical_Hierarchy/Caput_IV.

Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Divine Names* 1.1, trans. John Parker (1897), Christian Classics Ethereal Library, <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/dionysius/works.html>.

²³⁶ Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Divine Names*, trans. John Parker, ed. Roger Pearse (The Tertullian Project, 2002), https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/areopagite_03_divine_names.htm.

throne room of God. In Luke 11:52, Jesus reprimanded those in authority of the temple, "Woe to you, lawyers, because you have taken away the key of knowledge: you did not enter in yourselves, and them that were entering in you hindered."

A shared quality among the ancient Hebrews, the New Testament disciples of Jesus, the Essenes, and Dionysius' audience was that praise of God or worship of God's name led to spiritual transformation along with entry into the realm of the spirit. This is what John the disciple of Jesus intended to convey. And it wasn't something new. Its roots were based in the antiquity of Abraham. Although we are used to delineating Jews from Christians, in the first century A.D., there had not yet been such a strong distinction. So then it should be expected to find overlapping practices and descriptions regarding spirituality.

Although Second Temple Judaism held strong to the agenda of eradicating subjectivity, divine-human encounter persisted. The Essenes fled into the far reaches of the Judean desert in order to practice faith according to conscience. Paul and the other Apostles were traveling far and wide in order to explain spirituality revolving around encounter with the Word. It would only be with a couple of centuries of retrospect that labels would begin to be applied to different streams of faith that had diverged from the same river of spirituality.

Dionysius admonished his listeners,

See, however, that you do not put to scorn things most holy (Holy of Holies); but rather treat them reverently, and you will honour the things of the hidden God by intellectual and obscure researches, carefully guarding them from the participation and defilement of the uninitiated, and reverently sharing holy things with the holy alone, by a holy enlightenment. For thus, as the Word of God has taught us who feast at His Banquet, even Jesus Himself...²³⁷

²³⁷The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, translated by John Parker, 1.1.
https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Works_of_Dionysius_the_Areopagite/Ecclesiastical_Hierarchy/Caput_I

Although I made use of different sources, I have reused the brief quotes from Barker's article because they provide an excellent witness to the continuance of a tradition that has been lost and forgotten. In fact, we can observe that these understandings were intentionally disregarded because much of this was an embarrassment to early Orthodoxy. As we realize from the bishop's writing in the *Panarion*, the emerging institution would not allow that prophetic empowerment could have possibly existed beyond the lives of the apostles.²³⁸ This would have prevented their development of the hierarchical institution of the church—an earthly hierarchy of men that usurped the place of the hierarchy of angels that included those who underwent angelification or transformation in their worship. Thankfully, the early Orthodox bishops were unable to gather and burn all of the evidence of the continuance of the Hebraic faith tradition.

To be clear, in *The Lost and Forgotten Spirituality of Ancient Israel*, I am respectfully disregarding Dionysius' admonishment. I fully intend to provide a coherent pathway into comprehension of a long lost tradition. Clement seems to have shared Dionysius' disposition on the matter explaining that the complexity of such mysterious matters should only be explained in person to select individuals. It is time to roll back the veil—in more ways than one. If we do not explicitly understand the teachings of Moses and Jesus, well then, the ignorance dating from the foundation of Christian Orthodoxy will be endlessly and needlessly perpetuated.

In my examination of Clement's miscellaneous writings, in book 1, chapter 1, I am convinced that he alluded to the fact that he knew the secret in John's Gospel.²³⁹ But he felt that to disclose as

²³⁸ Epiphanius, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis: Books 2 and 3, Sects 47-80, De Fide.*, 20-21. Translated by Frank Williams. New York: E.J. Brill, Original 4th century text, translated and republished in 1994.

²³⁹ Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata, or Miscellanies*, 1.1, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2, *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, trans. William Wilson (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885).

much in writing would be dangerous—comparable to placing a sharp sword in the hands of a child. To have written such things down for posterity could create unanswerable problems. Clement felt that these matters should only have been spoken in order that questions could be answered with immediacy by those having walked with experience in this path.

Clement spoke generally in terms of an unidentified concern, so nobody can really assert with certainty that these specific statements regarded John's Gospel. Nevertheless, he seems to have been addressing an important matter of spirituality.

Clement stated that on "some things my treatise will hint; on some it will linger; some it will merely mention. It will try to speak imperceptibly, to exhibit secretly, and to demonstrate silently." Seeming to indicate that there was insider knowledge, he felt that ears first had to be made ready before some matters could be discussed. Clement explained that the husbandman had to first clear the weeds and thorns before the planting of the vine. Those who are familiar with John's Gospel may make a connection with identical metaphoric usage of the vine and the husbandman: "I am the True Vine, and my Father is the Husbandman."²⁴⁰ We will examine the context later, but suffice to understand that the Vine was a mysterious spiritual place of abiding in the presence of God. Accordingly, Clement cryptically offered, "For there is a contest, and the prelude to the contest; and there are some mysteries before other mysteries."²⁴¹

Contests have to do with gaining positions or rewards as champions, however, engaging in the contest requires preparation. Accordingly, in Clement's multifaceted cryptic statement, engaging in some mysteries preceded partaking in other mysteries. And all of this pertained to the vine and the Husbandman Whose work of clearing the thorns must of necessity first take place.

We are not going to unravel all of Clement's statements in one fell swoop, but suffice to understand that all of what has been presented herein *The Lost and Forgotten Spirituality of Ancient*

²⁴⁰ John 15-1 ASV

²⁴¹ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 1.357.

Israel up to this point has revolved around “the prelude to the contest,” and to the clearing of thorns. We have provided a great deal of lost and forgotten background information. To a large degree, the knowledge base that should have been considered by early Orthodoxy has been set back in place. Nevertheless, before completing this section, we hope to have elucidated the mysteries Clement mentioned, that are tucked away in the Gospel of John. Herein we also unveil the means by which Jesus worked miracles. And we ascertain that it was His intention for these matters to have been embraced by those calling themselves His disciples, so that the miraculous Hebraic tradition would have continued.

In the penning of *The Lost and Forgotten Spirituality of Ancient Israel*, we have had to engage in the reconstruction of a huge corrective in order for readers to make their way back to the understandings of Clement’s era.

Isaiah had stated,

Some of you will rebuild the ancient ruins; you will restore the foundations once established in long ages past; you will be called the repairer of broken walls, the restorer of streets where people live.²⁴²

This rebuilding will continue across future generations until the heavenly manifestation of the New Jerusalem overwhelms our physical world.

Although, it would be difficult today for anyone to validly assert that they had discovered the secret of John’s Gospel which scholars have attempted to decipher for centuries, what is about to be presented is very different than what has been passed down by Orthodoxy.

The foundational keys necessary to comprehend Hebraic John are as follows. First and foremost, we have to accept that the ancient *Ish-rah-el-ites* were familiar with the spiritual motif of the three-day journey. Many realized that on the third or the last day of the journey, they could see into the realm of heaven or into the *aion*. Moreover, they were raised up into this place of dwelling

²⁴² Isaiah 58:12 CSB

before the throne of God. This happened when they thanked *Yehovah* for His *yeshuah* and as the faithful called upon His very name. Moreover, as has been previously explicated, entry into the *aiona* was also accomplished by means of the *kiddush* to enter the *qodesh* on the Sabbath. And this is why the larger context of Isaiah's statement in chapter 58 has to do with celebration of the seventh day. It was and remains as the time and place wherein God has awaited the coming of His children.

"Some of you will rebuild the ancient ruins; you will restore the foundations once established in long ages past; you will be called the repairer of broken walls, the restorer of streets where people live. If you keep from desecrating the Sabbath, from doing whatever you want on My holy day; if you call the Sabbath a delight, and the holy day of *Yehovah* honorable; if you honor this day by not pursuing your own interests, or by seeking your own pleasure, or by speaking many words; and instead you choose to delight yourself in *Yehovah*, then I will make you ride over the heights of the land, and let you enjoy the heritage of your father Jacob." For the mouth of *Yehovah* has spoken.²⁴³

In our discussion, we have emphasized the Greek term *aiona* because today's primary source material for the New Testament consists of Greek manuscripts. However, ahead we are going to more closely examine the Hebrew term "*olam*" from which the phrase *eis ton aiona* was translated. And literary history will provide the undeniable evidence that certain sects of the Jews clearly understood mystical entry into the *olam* hidden holy realm by means of the Sabbath.

This spirituality was destroyed by the evil kings of Israel, even though some of these were commemorated as having been good leaders. Hezekiah tore down the altars to *Yehovah*. Josiah, perhaps acting under the control of agendized religious leaders, purged the land of priests and holy places—wherein worship had taken place according to the Priestly Order of Melchizedek. A ban

²⁴³ Isaiah 58:12-14.

was placed upon speaking the name of *Yehovah* that even applied to saying the literal phrase, “the name,” as this utterance might have pertained to referencing God. Even though this explicitly violated the instruction of Moses, and the example and mandate for the nation set by King David, nobody was permitted to celebrate this ancient mystical spirituality.

For all of this, and because of their idolatry, the nations were taken into captivity and slavery in Assyria and Babylon. Nevertheless, a day was proclaimed when *Yehovah* would make His sacrifice on the mountains of Israel. The wicked would be punished and the Word of God would be restored with the re-manifestation of dreams, visions, and angelic visitation—accompanying a tremendous outpouring of the Spirit. The *Aionios* Covenant of Peace and the Priestly Order of Melchizedek would be made alive once again. Those who hungered for righteousness would feast upon the bread of heaven by breaking bread at the *kiddush*.

And with the breaking of the bread, they entered into the *qodesh* or the holy realm. The breaking of the bread was synonymous with breaking down the doorway to heaven which had been accomplished through the sacrifice.

Recall that the first animal sacrifice had been made by God on behalf of Adam and Eve to provide them with clothes. It was the broken body and the shed blood whereby inhabitants of Earth were allowed to regain entry into the holy realm. Herein, God Himself initiated the first *kiddush*.

And for those who may have missed the point, in ancient Hebrew most scholars agree that there were no vowels. Therefore *kiddush* in its most ancient context of understanding was the same term as *qodesh*. Note that all of the Hebrew consonants are identical, although in English, these are transliterated quite differently (קדש). The *kiddush* prayer accompanied breaking of the bread at the start of the Sabbath. So then as English readers wrap their minds around the Hebrew language and Hebraic spirituality, the fourth commandment to remember or to re-enliven the Sabbath, keeping this holy, was accomplished. Our most ancient ancestors were not merely taking a day off work. And they were not simply having dinner when they broke the bread. Rather instead,

they were taking a journey to the destination of God's presence. They intended to arrive in His temple—after breaking the bread—which re-enlivened the sacrifice. And in the accomplishment of this, they were transformed.

One of the ways used to explain this transformation in history was to say that they had received an additional soul. This new life or identity spoken of as the *neshama yeterah* provided or imparted the means of seeing and hearing God. Jesus affirmed that individuals on Earth had angels in the holy realm who beheld the presence of God. Accordingly, Jesus taught seekers to pray for eyes to see and ears to hear.

The term “holy,” “*kiddush*,” or “*qodesh*,” was comprehended as a setting in the presence of God. It was religious traditionalism that changed the meaning and usage of the term to speak of moral behavior—notwithstanding the notion that the choice to live an immoral lifestyle might have prevented entry. Ardent seekers were using this time to enter into the holy realm before the presence of God. They were finding their inherited places of standing in His divine temple.

In the practice of *kiddush*, those having pledged faithful loyalty to *Yehovah* became the tangible inheritors of the ancient life of Eden. This had been received by many including the Judges and the prophets.

In order to enter into Day-One of *Yehovah*, seekers of the divine mystery turned from wickedness, confessed their sins—and having been cleansed—were raised up above the water. They had allowed the Husbandman to clear the thorns from their lives. They faithfully worshiped the name of *Yehovah* and re-enlivened the sacrifice so that the doorway into the *qodesh* was opened. They found their heavenly places of seating as those who abided in the Vine. They dwelt in the *aiona* in the presence of God.

And this weekly, monthly, and yearly lifestyle set the stage as preparation for the three-day journey.

What we discover in John's book is that the Jews had lost sight of the original purpose of the Sabbath. Furthermore, they had departed from the legacy of understanding that divine-human encounter took place on a third or last day following worshipful

consecration, fasting, and prayer. They no longer understood that the faithful could be born through water into the *qodesh* realm. The pathway of the *Ish-raah-el-ite* had been lost and forgotten.

The Miracles of Jesus

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth...For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.²⁴⁴

How did Jesus perform miracles? It is our goal to answer this question by elucidating the lost and forgotten spirituality of ancient Israel.

There is a short answer, and there is a more detailed unfolding of what it looked like in practical terms.

The short answer is that Jesus performed miracles by the grace of God. But the statement is not meant to be understood in the Orthodox sense of Jesus having received God's favor. Rather instead, for Jesus to have walked in the grace of God meant that as He lived the life of an *Ish-raah-el-ite*, waiting upon the manifestation of the Word of God, seeing what the Father was doing, and hearing His voice, He simply obeyed carrying out what the Father had shown Him that lay ahead and what He should do. This was the practical walk of the *olam* or the *aionios* life. This was the life of grace for the prophets. A place of standing in the spiritual realm had been saved for individuals who pledged and proved their faithfulness to *Yehovah*. With this, they became His servants in the world. They would live seeking and serving God's Word.

It may come as a surprise, however, that there were other individuals who followed the same *Ish-raah-el-ite* path of spirituality in order to invite God's intervention into their own lives—long before Jesus had been born.

²⁴⁴ from John 1:14, 16-18 ESV

If you took a poll and asked today how it was that Jesus worked signs and wonders, many would probably respond saying something to the effect that “Jesus was God.” Problematically, Elijah and Elisha seem to have been just men, but they performed miracles. If they were not gods, then how did they accomplish these feats? Therefore the response that Jesus performed miracles solely on the basis that He was God naively negates the concept that there was a process involved—in which other humans could participate.

And so, if Jesus performed miracles simply because He was God, we can probably just end the book right here. However, because there was a methodical approach, we have something very important to discuss.

The problem with Jesus performing miracles just because He was God is that Jesus told His disciples that they would perform even greater works. Although none of them and none of us today seem to be gods, Jesus expected His followers to outdo Him.

Now on this point, we do have to take a step back. And as we broach the topic, we are going to discuss something that might just get us into trouble with Orthodoxy. But keep in mind, our goal is to make sense of Jesus’ teachings in the Gospel of John—as these are interpreted through the lens of the Hebraic tradition.

We understand that those who put their faith in *Yehovah* were recognized as the children or the sons of God. These were individuals who, like Father Abraham, lived lifestyles of encounter with the Word of God.

In John 10, Jesus was confronted by the Pharisees, who were looking for any and every reason to put Him to death. He was not keeping the Sabbath in the way they prescribed and was not obeying the traditions of the elders. And here we find them arguing with Jesus:

Again his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?” “We are not stoning you for any good work,” they replied, “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.” Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I have

said you are “gods””? If he called them ‘gods,’ to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be set aside—what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, ‘I am God’s Son’? Do not believe me unless I do the works of my Father. But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.”²⁴⁵

Although most Bible commentators are going to reference Psalm 82 in order to explain Jesus’ reference, a more straightforward practical example is Exodus 7:1. God told Moses, “See, I have made you a god to Pharaoh.” We simply observe that Moses had encountered the Word of God and became empowered to perform signs and wonders.

More commonly, those who performed miracles were given the title “man of God.” Such was the case when Elijah raised the son of the widow of Zarephath from the dead.²⁴⁶

Clement of Alexandria stated that those who contemplated divine concerns were integrated into the divine nature so that the *Word of God* transformed the believer into a “god walking in the flesh.” In *Stromata* book 7.10 we read an expanded quote:

But the knowledge of the truth is our guide to the right conduct of life...For the concept of knowledge is, so to speak, a sort of perfection of man as man, which is completed through the knowledge of divine things, being in character, life, and word, harmonious and consistent with itself and with the divine Word. For by it faith is perfected, since the believer becomes perfect in this way alone. Knowledge is therefore a quick intermediate step to the purification of the soul, and a preparation for its capacity to receive divine power...And to be integrated into that nature is the characteristic of the gnostic soul, which is already,

²⁴⁵ John 10:31-38 NIV

²⁴⁶ 1 Kings 17:4

through its virtue and knowledge, a god walking in the flesh. For after the soul is freed from all passion, it advances to the inheritance of a divine state, not by a sudden transition, but by step-by-step progression, until it reaches the supreme abode of rest, where it lives a life of uninterrupted contemplation, face-to-face with the Lord.²⁴⁷

By the time of Clement of Alexandria, we see that the Aristotelian concept of truth as knowledge was already pushing aside the concept of God's Being as Truth—which was encountered in the Word. Although Clement clung to the more ancient understanding that encounter with the Word was divinely transformational, his own concept is held in contrast to that of Moses who was changed suddenly by divine-human encounter. Moses did not gradually grow in virtue as a result of religious knowledge.

Something we know about *Ish-raah-el-ites* is that they encountered the Word of God and at times they were empowered with the authority to perform signs and wonders. An observation that can be made is that such ones appeared to be gods. One example from Acts 14:8-18 concerned Paul and Barnabas.

And at Lystra there sat a certain man, impotent in his feet, a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked. The same heard Paul speaking: who, fastening his eyes upon him, and seeing that he had faith to be made whole, said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped up and walked. And when the multitude saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voice, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercury, because he was the chief speaker. And the priest of Jupiter whose *temple* was before the city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the multitudes. But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of it, they rent their garments, and sprang forth

²⁴⁷ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 7.10.

among the multitude, crying out and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and bring you good tidings, that you should turn from these vain things unto a living God, who made the heaven and the Earth and the sea, and all that in them is: who in the generations gone by suffered all the nations to walk in their own ways. And yet he left not himself without witness, in that he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness. And with these sayings scarce restrained they the multitudes from doing sacrifice unto them.²⁴⁸

Moreover, in the Hebraic tradition, and in accordance with the spirituality of the Essenes, and in the understandings of Dionysius, there were diverse means of describing how human beings were changed in the presence of God that included angelic transformation and deification. The Jews acknowledged that this transformation took place in priests who entered into the Word or the holy of holies. And even in the Sabbath, the concept was explained as the reception of an additional soul. And then we can add this understanding to the return of the prophet Samuel when King Saul summoned him through the medium. Samuel was referenced as being among the *elohim* of heaven in the Hebrew and as *theos* in the Septuagint. These terms are commonly translated as “god.”²⁴⁹

So then we do have a connection between entry into the spiritual realm and becoming a god. However, this understanding was purged from allowable continuing discussion by developing Orthodoxy.

Irenaeus of Lyons, a church father who lived in the second century between about 130 and 202 A.D., wrote:

²⁴⁸ Acts 18:8-18 ASV

²⁴⁹ Note 1 Samuel 28:13.

He who was the Son of God became the Son of man, that man, having been adopted by the Word and receiving the sonship, might become the son of God.²⁵⁰

In the Preface to Book 5 of *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus continued:

...following the only true and steadfast Teacher, the Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who did, through His transcendent love, become what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself.²⁵¹

It should be noted that Irenaeus merely used the phrase “Son of man” to denote that Jesus had come in the flesh. He was not using this in the biblical sense of stating that Jesus was a prophet; as is the case in many instances in the Bible when this title was given by God to those who stood before His throne.

Athanasius of Alexandria, a key founder of Orthodoxy who lived between 293 and 373 A.D., stated:

For He was made man that we might be made God; and He manifested Himself by a body that we might receive the idea of the unseen Father; and He endured the insolence of men that we might inherit immortality.²⁵²

However, his discussion, as well as that of Irenaeus, had more to do with the transformation that takes place with conformation to virtue. Neither man seems to have intended for their statements to have been understood in the same sense as those of Jesus.

²⁵⁰ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.10

²⁵¹ Ibid, chapter 5

²⁵² Athanasius of Alexandria, *On the Incarnation of the Word*, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2nd ser., vol. 4, *St. Athanasius: Select Works and Letters*, trans. Archibald Robertson, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892), 54.3.

In several instances, Philo referenced Exodus 7:1, where God told Moses, "See, I have made you a god to Pharaoh." The first century devoted Jew and Hebraic thinker further explained:

Therefore, He did not say, "I have made thee the God of Pharaoh," but "a god" in order that he who was appointing him might be known to be the true God, while he who was appointed was called a god only in a relative sense...²⁵³

Accordingly, Philo reflected on Moses' transformation as was stated in Exodus 21:20, "Moses entered into the darkness where God was:"

For he was named God and king of the whole nation, and entered, we are told, into the darkness where God was, that is into the unseen, invisible, incorporeal and archetypal essence of existing things. Thus he beheld what is hidden from the sight of mortal nature...²⁵⁴

Philo understood that heavenly transformation took place as individuals entered into the presence of God. He spoke of this repeatedly in a number of his literary compositions.

The wise man, seeking to understand the nature of the truly Existent One, enters into formless and invisible conceptions. There, he finds that the nature of God is to be invisible and incomprehensible to all creatures.²⁵⁵

When the mind, soaring upwards, has dreamed of the supreme Ruler of all, it does not stop there...but passing beyond all created reality, it presses forward into the unseen and ungraspable realm, where it can find no resting

²⁵³ Philo, *De Mutatione Nominum* [On the Change of Names], 128–129, in *The Works of Philo Judæus, the Contemporary of Josephus*, trans. C. D. Yonge, vol. 2 (London: H. G. Bohn, 1855).

²⁵⁴ Philo, *De Vita Mosis* [The Life of Moses], 1.155, in *The Works of Philo Judæus, the Contemporary of Josephus*, trans. C. D. Yonge, vol. 2 (London: H. G. Bohn, 1855).

²⁵⁵ Philo, *Posterity of Cain*, 14–15.

place except in the contemplation of the absolute Existent One.²⁵⁶

Why does Moses enter into the cloud? It means that the mind is leaving behind all somatic and visible things...and is translated into a divine, incorporeal, and intelligible region, which is the archetype of all visible things. In this cloud, the soul is initiated into mysteries hidden from the multitude.²⁵⁷

Furthermore, Philo understood that heavenly transformation took place through worship.

But Moses, pitching his tent outside the camp—that is, outside the entire body of mortal existence—begins to worship God. He enters into the hidden sanctuary of the invisible Mind, becoming a companion to the divine realities and an initiate into the archetypal mysteries.²⁵⁸

When the soul is filled with the divine breath...it is carried upward into the inner sanctuary. It leaves behind the outer courts of sensory perception and gazes upon the invisible and incorporeal beauties which are hidden from mortal sight.²⁵⁹

In a larger sense, Philo understood that:

The highest and truest Temple of God is, we must believe, the whole universe, having for its sanctuary the most sacred part of the essence of existing things, namely the heaven;

²⁵⁶ Philo, *On the Change of Names*, 7.

²⁵⁷ Philo, *Quaestiones in Exodum [Questions and Answers on Exodus]*, 2.29, in *The Works of Philo Judæus, the Contemporary of Josephus*, trans. C. D. Yonge, vol. 4 (London: H. G. Bohn, 1855).

²⁵⁸ Philo, *De Gigantibus [On the Giants]*, 53–54, in *The Works of Philo Judæus, the Contemporary of Josephus*, trans. C. D. Yonge, vol. 1 (London: H. G. Bohn, 1854).

²⁵⁹ Philo, *De Ebrietate [On Drunkenness]*, 145, 148, in *The Works of Philo Judæus, the Contemporary of Josephus*, trans. C. D. Yonge, vol. 1 (London: H. G. Bohn, 1854).

for its votive offerings, the stars; for its priests, the angels who are ministers of His powers...²⁶⁰

Moreover, Philo understood that humans could become the temple of God.

what house can be prepared for God the King of kings...? The heaven is not a worthy dwelling place for Him, how much less than a house made with hands? But the true dwelling place of God is the mind of the wise man, which is a house built by virtue, into which God enters and dwells as in a temple.²⁶¹

He persisted, explaining that those inviting God's presence into themselves required consecration.

Let us, then, who are eager to become a house of God, cleanse our minds...for the house of the Ruler must be pure. If you prepare yourself in this way, the Creator will descend and walk within your soul, using it as a temple. And it will be raised up from the Earth to the highest heavens of reality.²⁶²

The true altar of God is the grateful soul of the wise man...built up of perfect virtues without a single flaw. For God rejoices not in the costliness of material offerings, but in the most holy and upright mind of the worshiper, which is the truest sanctuary.²⁶³

²⁶⁰ Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus* [On the Special Laws], 1.65–66, in *The Works of Philo Judæus, the Contemporary of Josephus*, trans. C. D. Yonge, vol. 3 (London: H. G. Bohn, 1855).

²⁶¹ Philo, *De Sobrietate* [On Sobriety], 62, 64, in *The Works of Philo Judæus, the Contemporary of Josephus*, trans. C. D. Yonge, vol. 1 (London: H. G. Bohn, 1854).

²⁶² Philo, *De Cherubim* [On the Cherubim], 99–100, in *The Works of Philo Judæus, the Contemporary of Josephus*, trans. C. D. Yonge, vol. 1 (London: H. G. Bohn, 1854).

²⁶³ Philo, *On the Special Laws*, 1, 271–272.

There are more examples of heavenly transformation which could be cited from antiquity. However, these are different from the biblical concept resultant from divine-human encounter with the Word—wherein immediate miraculous empowerment took place.

Of course, when anyone brings up something so controversial as the topic of becoming a god, we have to immediately douse the erupting fire of criticism. That being said, anyone walking around today asserting themselves to have somehow become a god is going to be thought of as a crackpot. Typically, individuals who make such claims demonstrate by their actions that they are, in fact, not gods. And if anyone reads this book and then goes around making such claims regarding their divine identities, I am the first to judge and to condemn such foolish assertions as having nothing to do whatsoever with my instruction.

However, if we are going to allow our minds to interpret the Scriptures in the context in which they were written, we have to go back in time, perhaps to a much less sophisticated mindset wherein those who were subject to divine-human encounter with the Word of God, became thought of or even spoken of as “gods.”

To be clear, individuals who encountered the Word of God did not become worthy of human worship in any way, shape, or form and said individuals were in no way equal to God Most High. Nevertheless, because they were recognized as having been born into and out of the holy realm, and because they received divine empowerment and authority, they were recognized in some sense as the progeny of God. Therefore, in a far different historical context of understanding than we exist in today, they were identified as “gods.”

If we do not allow for acknowledgment of this lost and forgotten historical context of discussion and understanding, it will be difficult to make relevant contextual sense of Jesus’ use of the phrase “son of man” and His reference regarding those who became gods according to the Scriptures’ testimony after encountering the Word (note John 10:34).

Although there is none who are equal to God Most High, He is spoken of as having sons in heaven and on Earth—some of these being referenced as “gods.”

For who in the skies can be compared to *Yehovah*? Who among the sons of God is like *Yehovah*, a God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones...²⁶⁴ Note that most translations mistranslate *bene elim* as “heavenly beings” in keeping with Orthodoxy’s doctrines instead of literally rendering the phrase as “sons of God.”

Exodus 15:11 similarly reads:

Who is like You, O *Yehovah*, among the gods (*elohim*)? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?²⁶⁵

Dr. Michael S. Heiser explained passages such as Isaiah 43:10, “...Before Me no god (*elohim*) was formed, nor shall there be any after Me...” and 45:5, “I am *Yehovah*, and there is no other, besides Me there is no God (*elohim*)...” in the ancient Near Eastern context as not implying the non-existence of other gods, but rather instead to be apprehended as comparative idioms of supremacy. *Yehovah* is uncreated, sovereign, and unmatched in power and rank. Nevertheless, the Hebrew text described the existence of “gods” in the plural sense of the term.

We see this from the very start in the pages of the Bible. In Genesis, God reflected, “Let Us create man in our image.” However, in most instances, the plural identity of God has been hidden from the eyes of English readers.

Those of us who are trinitarians, all too quickly, wrap this verse up in our doctrine without considering that this was not officially formulated until the fourth century A.D. We do better to consider the contexts in which biblical references to gods were written and initially read. And this we must do if we are to make an honest assessment of Jesus’ intention to raise up sons or children of

²⁶⁴ Psalm 89:6–7 modified ESV

²⁶⁵ Exodus 15:11

God. In chapter 1, He spoke of giving the right to become children of God. In chapter 3 He spoke of being “born from above.” And in chapter 12, He spoke of becoming sons of Light. In 20:31, John explained “but these are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name...” which was a completion of his statement in 1:12-13:

But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, to them that believe on His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.²⁶⁶

Therefore, if we are truly hoping to make sense of John’s Gospel, we have to step outside of the conditioning bubble imposed upon us by Orthodoxy that has only permitted us to have become God’s children in a theoretical sense as repayment for having accepted Orthodoxy’s doctrines.

In the first century context, it was understood that those who had encountered the Word of God, having been addressed at the throne with the title “son of man,” and who were authorized and empowered, and who afterward returned and performed signs and wonders, proved themselves as the sons of God on the basis of divine works rather than by religious ideological association. In the most ideal sense, ones such as these had become *Ish-raah-el-ites*. And in the most ideal sense, John wrote his treatise in order to explain how to become a son, daughter, or a child of God. And moreover, having become birthed of divine progeny, said individuals were to have proven their birthright through the manifestation of signs and wonders.

Problematically, the Christian tradition has been robbed of understandings due to the imposition of the Orthodox tradition upon interpretation of the Scriptures. And so Reform-minded translators have not rendered translations literally—but instead, as good servants of their religious traditions, they have masked and have hidden what the authors of the Bible hoped for each of us to comprehend.

²⁶⁶ John 1: 12-13 ASV

Heiser described his initial translation of Psalm 82, which Jesus appeared to have been quoting, as a life-changing event. In the Hebrew text, it is evident that there is more than one God. Heiser explained that although there are none comparable to God Most High, that in heaven, according to the Hebrew Scriptures, there are “gods” in the plural sense of the term.²⁶⁷ To better understand much of which the Orthodox monotheistic agenda has hidden from the eyes of churchianity, read: *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* or his book, *Supernatural: What the Bible Teaches About the Unseen World and Why It Matters*, by Michael S. Heiser.

Heiser helped readers to make sense of the concept that there is a divine “council of the holy ones” which is translated from the phrase “*sod qedosim*,” who are in heaven—explaining the phrase *bene elim* as the “sons of God” or as “heavenly beings.” All of these divine beings have standing places before *Yehovah*’s divine presence. Although Heiser made the case that this assembly existed “in the skies” in order to demonstrate that the Old Testament text of Psalm 89 spoke of divine beings, Jesus called for birth into this realm so that believers could also become the children of God.

Heiser laid out a schematic to help students of the Bible comprehend the divine architecture of beings in the unseen heavenly realm. What I attempt to add to Heiser’s work is human entry into the divine realm by seekers of the kingdom of God. And while showing how the puzzle of scholarship is further pieced together, my work runs tangent alongside of Barker’s. She and I do not share all of the same perspectives, however, the way I see it, we are on similar paths heading toward the destination of encounter with the Holy One of Israel.

Whereas Heiser reasonably ruled out a human context of interpretation for the Psalm whereby the majority of English translations have been subdued by Orthodoxy, an honest reading of

²⁶⁷ “The Psalm That Changed Heiser’s Reading of the Bible,” *Dr. Michael S. Heiser Foundation* (newsletter), Substack, September 12, 2024, <https://michaelsheiserfoundation.substack.com/p/the-psalm-that-changed-heisers-reading>.

the Old and New Testaments clearly conveys that humans had discovered their tangible standing places before the throne of God in the *aion*.

In our own more immediate interest in making sense of John's Gospel, the disciple of Jesus was attempting to provide a pathway into the spiritual realm.

Although many pastors or teachers might dismiss Jesus' statement regarding individuals who encountered the Word becoming gods, in the context of discussing the performance of miraculous works as being too difficult to understand, we have a solution that is sound in keeping with the Scriptures. Although we are not advocating that anyone start thinking of themselves as "gods," addressing these verses brings us a step closer to seeing how mortals, who had been mysteriously transformed, could become empowered to perform miracles after encounter with the Word.

And for his own part, Michael Heiser explained that the term "*elohim*" was "a place of residence term." His interpretation was that Samuel was among the Elohim because he was in heaven after he died.

Although I highly respect Heiser's incomparable grasp of Hebrew and the wide knowledge base of studies that shaped his conclusions, there may have been more to Samuel's address as having been counted among the gods than his mere residence with them. Jesus stated that the faithful would judge angels. Therefore, we find a connection between Dionysius' angelic hierarchy into which transformed humans found their places of abiding before the throne of God.

Although two Roman Catholic brothers led me to tangibly embrace the Lord, I have never identified myself as a Roman Catholic. However the entirety of this discussion could be used to support the Roman Catholic concept of sainthood after death. Many among Roman Catholicism find that certain individuals in the afterlife can be called upon for help in the world today.

The disciples were renowned for having performed many magnificent signs and wonders, however, this was not the case with the rise of early Orthodoxy—as would be expected because of their

cessationist agenda. And it is not the case today within the dominant Orthodox institution.

Perhaps this is because there are so few individuals today who actually prove by their lives that they really are authentic followers of Jesus. Nevertheless, we have the potential to change this if we can clarify and follow the unadulterated teaching of Jesus.

Truly, truly, I say to you, he that puts his faith in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater *works* than these shall he do; because I go to the Father. And whatsoever you shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask anything in My name, that will I do. If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.²⁶⁸

If we study Jesus' works throughout the book of John, it is evident that the statement references His miracles. Therefore, it seems obvious by His assertion that Jesus intended for His audience to comprehend that they too would perform the same kinds of signs and wonders—and in greater measure.

The Performance of Miracles by the Faithful

Looking back at the passage, once again, note that there were several conditions in Jesus' promise.

Truly, truly, I say to you, he that puts his faith in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater *works* than these shall he do; because I go to the Father. And whatsoever you shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask anything in My name, that will I do. If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.²⁶⁹

The first condition for performing miracles was that Jesus was going back to the Father. And, according to the Gospels, He did His part, suffering a horrific death, and having been resurrected, He

²⁶⁸ John 14:12–15 ASV

²⁶⁹ John 14:12–15 ASB

went back into the clouds of heaven. The sacrifice of the Holy One of Israel provided a doorway into heaven for those who would understand the breaking of the bread and its significance to re-enliven the sacrifice. The next two conditions were to be fulfilled by those desiring to replicate His works. They would ask in Jesus' name so that the Father would be glorified in the Son. It seems obvious in this instance that Jesus intended for His disciples to call upon the Father using the name "*Yeshuah*."

Recall that in the Hebrew Bible, individuals revered God for the impartation of His *yeshuah*. And combine this action with the context that they repeatedly recognized the activity of the second power of heaven among them. That was not a new concept as it may be to some of us here and now. The Holy One of Israel was understood as a heavenly reality, Who was sent from heaven, and Who moved and worked in the midst of the faithful. Now follow this reasoning closely: The Holy One gave Himself to seekers, and in these contexts, individuals like Jacob, Hannah, and Jonah, etc., thanked God for *yeshuah*. So there is the sense that the Holy One is inseparable from the *yeshuah* He provided.

For example, let's consider that the Holy One healed a person. In our minds we tend to separate the gift of healing from the divine Giver. However, there is the sense that the Giver Himself becomes the gift of healing. So in this sense, the action of *yasha* and the reception of *yeshuah* are inseparable from worship of *Yeshuah*, Himself.

And for my Jewish readers, this discussion may seem as if it has no application in your world because you may not recognize Jesus as having been anything more than a man. However, all of what we are discussing came from your world. Jesus was a Jew and what He was presenting were Jewish understandings dating far back into antiquity. It should be underscored that as we see these matters applying to the Jews, that all of this was the heritage of your people. And it was taken from you by well-intended leaders who thought they were keeping you safe by robbing you of your intended heritage. They were sick and tired of Christians using this knowledge for proselytization. Herein, we are guiding you in the reclamation of something that belonged to you long before

Christendom superimposed the Orthodox version of Aristotelian belief over the pages of the Scriptures.

Understand that you do not need to accept what you have heard Christians teach about Jesus in order to walk in your intended spiritual inheritance. As you have seen, I have not been shy about respectfully confronting some of the falsehood that has become established in the mindset of Christendom. And the point here is that both sides of the Judeo-Christian movement need to learn how to move forward with harmony in faith.

The quotes ahead demonstrate the inseparability of the Holy One from the Help He provides.

In you, Lord, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame. In your righteousness, rescue me and deliver me; turn your ear to me and save me. Be my rock of refuge, to which I can always go; give the command to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress. Deliver me, my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of those who are evil and cruel. For you have been my hope, Sovereign Lord, my confidence since my youth. From birth I have relied on you; you brought me forth from my mother's womb. I will ever praise you. I have become a sign to many; you are my strong refuge. My mouth is filled with your praise, declaring your splendor all day long.²⁷⁰

As for me, I will always have hope; I will praise you more and more. My mouth will tell of your righteous deeds, of your saving acts all day long— though I know not how to relate them all. I will come and proclaim your mighty acts, Sovereign Lord; I will proclaim your righteous deeds, yours alone. Since my youth, God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds.²⁷¹

Your righteousness, God, reaches to the heavens, you who have done great things. Who is like you, God? Though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter, you will

²⁷⁰ Psalm 71:1–8 NIV

²⁷¹ Psalm 71:14–17 NIV

restore my life again; from the depths of the Earth you will again bring me up. You will increase my honor and comfort me once more. I will praise you with the harp for your faithfulness, my God; I will sing praise to you with the lyre, Holy One of Israel. My lips will shout for joy when I sing praise to you— I whom you have delivered. My tongue will tell of your righteous acts all day long, for those who wanted to harm me have been put to shame and confusion.²⁷²

So then, perhaps we can make sense that the One Who provides deliverance is the Deliverer. And it is in no way wrong to worship the “Deliverer.” His actions are not separable from His Being.

In this discussion, I am underscoring the rationale that worshiping God was the same as worshiping the emanation or the manifestation of His presence that not only came into the earthly world, but that also raised up the faithful into the realm of the spirit.

Now there were still two conditions which were more or less combinable. “If you love me” and “if you keep my commandments.” Those who actually loved Jesus would keep His commandments. And this was faithfulness—which Jesus first referenced in His statement.

Some of us might ask, “Which commandments of Jesus should I obey?” That is a valid question, and there are two different ways of providing the same answer. The first is that in the plain context of Matthew, Jesus had been speaking about the Ten Commandments. However, due to the insights of individuals such as Alan F. Segal, Margaret Barker, and Michael Heiser, we apprehend that Jesus was an incarnate manifestation of the second power of heaven—Who appeared to Moses atop Mount Sinai. And so Jesus was actually the divine Being Who gave Moses the Ten Commandments.

Anyone who contends that Jesus was not speaking of the Ten Commandments has not read or understood the context in which the Gospels were written and also has not taken into

²⁷² Psalm 71:19-24 NIV

consideration the fact that Jesus repeatedly represented Himself as the Holy One. He continually pointed those seeking what Orthodoxy translated as “eternal” life back to reverent obedience to *Torah*. It is clear that Jesus was speaking of an ancient form of life, and more specifically, that which had been conveyed by Moses.

Problematically, much of Christendom has embraced the Reform movement’s version of grace and Evangelicalism’s theoretical intellectualized doctrinal salvation. They have concluded, perhaps for different or overlapping reasons, that *Torah* no longer applies. But we have to understand that the majority of people in these constituencies have not been taught that there were two laws. And furthermore, while many remain focused on Paul’s statement, “you are not under the law, but under grace,” from Romans 6:14, many of them neglect to admit that Paul affirmed the Ten Commandments in Romans 13. To do so would conflict with their doctrinal assumptions. Furthermore, they do not realize that the sweeping decision to equate grace with favor all throughout the Bible was an interpretive error that was introduced by early Orthodoxy. Without questioning the Classical Greek meaning, and because they were willfully ignorant regarding the contextual usages of *chen*, *charis*, and grace in the Hebrew Bible, they never associated grace with the activity of subjective divine-human communication.

In 1999, I attended a pastors’ conference in Anaheim CA, where I found coherence with a question posed by Richard Foster: “If grace is merely the unmerited favor of God, then why are we exhorted to increase in the grace of God?—You either have the unmerited favor of God or you don’t.” The logical implication was that *charis* could not be definable as “the unmerited favor of God.” 2 Peter 3:18, states, “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

In the Hebraic tradition, grace was the voice of God and His abiding manifest presence. Therefore, in the first century, individuals would have understood that they were not under the traditions of the elders, but instead were to be led by the voice of God. And this was Jesus’ teaching in John 10. He asserted that His sheep would be able to hear His voice. This is how their lives would

be guided, just as it was in the days of their Hebraic ancestors of faith.

Moreover, the voice of God would never lead anyone to violate the Ten Commandments. There are only a few exceptions to that rule. Shiphrah and Puah in ancient Israel were commanded by Pharaoh to kill the baby Hebrew boys at birth. Nevertheless, they lied to Pharaoh about the matter and saved the children. Although they apparently violated the precept of bearing false witness as it would be written in *Torah*, God rewarded them. The fear of the Lord and the desire to walk in obedience to Him trumped any apparent precept of *Torah*. So then we can make sense of the fact that the grace of God's voice might change how we reasonably apply *Torah*. The understanding that it was wrong to kill the innocent trumped telling a lie. However, anyone saying God told them to violate the Ten Commandments should understand that they will stand before Him, one day, to give an account. Compare Exodus 20:16 with Deuteronomy 5:20 to the account in Exodus 1:15-21.

Another apparent discrepancy regarding the command not to kill is that in kill or be killed circumstances each person had the right to defend themselves. And if eliminating the threat meant that individuals had to be killed, this was justified. And of course, in order to eliminate threatening nations, *Yehovah* sent His people into war. Again, the grace of hearing and obeying God's voice worked together with *Torah*. These were not in opposition to one another.

The point of hashing through Reform and Evangelical conclusions again is to make the point that if grace was the voice of God, personal accountability continued—just as it had all throughout the Bible. However, if grace was God's unmerited favor, everyone had an excuse if they disobeyed God. They could just say, "Oh well, I am under the grace or the unmerited favor of God, so then sin doesn't really actually matter very much." This thought thrives today in the Evangelical movement.

The fact is that God is merciful. He is willing to forgive. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."²⁷³

But, if anyone had accepted Darby's Evangelical doctrine of dispensationalism, willful sin no longer mattered at all. There was no divine-human accountability for even the most heinous crimes of wickedness. Once a person accepted Jesus' sacrifice, and intellectually believed the doctrine of grace, she or he was all set. It was no longer possible for them to violate any law because supposedly they were under God's unmerited favor. And according to Darby, nobody who had accepted Jesus should ever at any time confess any individual sins.

And so this counterfeit doctrine that identified grace as God's unmerited favor allowed for presumed leniency instead of faithful obedience. Those who sinned willfully disqualified themselves from walking in the miraculous power of Jesus. But if they also lived in early Orthodoxy's cessationist paradigm, well then, none of this really mattered. Right?

Defining "grace" as "favor" had a tremendous impact—changing the course of Christian spirituality. And to be clear, whatever a person does is the measure of his or her spirituality. If you sit around and watch television all day and night, watching television is your spirituality. If you live a life of fornication, then fornication is your spirituality. By contrast, if anyone considers the Lord's will and works in each situation, thanking Him throughout the day as David did in Psalm 71, seeking His voice to guide them; such ones as these walked in the spirituality of grace.

With this observation, we do affirm that God is merciful. However, participation in miracles was reserved for those who loved God—as was proven by their actions and the reality that they kept His commandments. They proved that they loved God by walking in His commandments.

Furthermore, the individual who gives himself over to fornication, day in and day out, and who thinks he is under grace because he cognitively believes a few intellectual religious facts,

²⁷³ 1 John 1:9

makes a mockery of God. Such a person has taken the name of the Lord in vain. He is not living a life in the grace of God.

One of my instructors in seminary said that if you look at every sacrifice in the Old Testament, there was no sacrifice for willful sin.

Individuals who listened to the voice of the adversary became like him in being. They were the lost whom Jesus came to deliver.

For these ones, and perhaps only these ones, “whatsoever you shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask anything in My name, that will I do.” And then Jesus concluded, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” The Holy One was looking for demonstrations of faithful actions. Note that He did not say, “If you love Me, you will believe the correct religious facts.” Of course, doctrine cannot equip anyone to perform greater works than Jesus. And everyone knows this. Resultantly, many Fundamentalists, Reformers, and Evangelicals will never walk in the miraculous empowerment of God. Instead, they will exist as doubters and critics. They will call signs and wonders the works of Satan. They will assert that miracles no longer take place. And in all of this, they prove the indictment that they are antichrist thinkers, because they contradict the teachings of Jesus.

Nevertheless, all of the mess can be straightened out if individuals understand the harmony between living by the voice of God and walking according to His commandments.

Remember that it was Marcion who first pitted the Law against the Gospel. Tertullian confronted this error, but the Orthodox bishops refused to listen. Although they ostensibly rejected the Marcionites and their doctrines, they subtly continued in the error of Marcion by sharing in his hatred for the Jews. Hatred is an ontological snare that affects individuals’ perceptions and inhibits them from walking in the grace of hearing God’s voice. In all of this, the early bishops of Orthodoxy found Marcion’s rejection of the Law to be convenient in their own ignorant development of separatist doctrine.

It seems unfathomable that even continuing Orthodoxy did not see the logical problem that they were dismissing *Torah* on the basis of Romans 6 while Paul was still affirming Moses' Ten Commandments in Romans 13. Had they taken time to explore the history of the development of the two *t/Torahs* and the division that arose between the Jerusalem Deuteronomists and the Abrahamic worshipers of *Yehovah*, they would have understood that Paul was rejecting the uninspired *takkanot*. And if they had studied the concept of grace dating back to Noah and had traced this all of the way through the Hebrew Scriptures, they would have understood this to have been a consistent reference to the voice of God and His manifest presence.

It was not because they were perfectly correct that the Orthodox leaders came to persuade the decisions of Constantine. It is that they were the most skilled at rhetoric and because they argued longer and harder than their opponents.

And we do emphasize, along with Jesus and Paul, that the Law is carried out when a person loves God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength and when they love their neighbors as they love themselves. In this the Law is fulfilled. And so, we know that such individuals will not be lusting after their neighbor's wife or committing adultery with her. And if they are, they will be actively getting help through confession of sin and by walking in a human-to-human relationship of accountability until this is no longer a problem. However if they are willfully walking in adultery, then God knows by their actions that they do not really love Him or their neighbor.

And so the antithesis of Jesus' statement is understood. Very truly, those who actively pursue sin as violators of the Ten Commandments, apparently not having put their faith in Jesus, will assuredly not do the works of Jesus. It would be fruitless for them to ask the Father in the name of *Yeshuah* to empower them. Instead, they need to be calling upon the Lord in repentance as seekers of His mercy. They are not without hope, but God's rulership was intended to come into the world through His faithful children—the *Ish-raah-el ites*.

In the case of some Reformed thinkers, the mere fact that she or he has become a Reformed thinker, supposedly proves her or his divine election. And there are some Reform adherents who also say that Jesus' teaching no longer applies on the errant basis of having received God's unmerited favor. More or less, this outweighs the need to pursue uprightness, or human-to-human and tangible divine-human accountability. Although they will assert in agreement with Paul that they are seated in heavenly places in Christ, for all intents and purposes, this is theoretical. In practical spirituality, some distance themselves from God as if He were a million miles away. And therefore, in all of this, it is easier for them to dismiss subjective faithfulness. Their primacy is to remain faithful to the doctrine that Jesus died for their sins and that they are under grace.

Because many so-called "believers" have intellectually confessed agreement with the correct religious facts, their spirituality revolves around gratitude for Jesus' sacrifice that saves them from hell. With this, conformist faith communities are established. Constituents typically value steady church attendance, become highly upstanding individuals in the community, and are persuaded to live their daily lives in accordance from principles that they derive mainly from Paul's teachings. Nevertheless, they would be very hesitant to admit that God could actually speak to anyone—except through reading the Bible. It would be scandalous for most of them to consider that God might appear to anyone in a vision. And they would be frightened to think that one of their sons or daughters might claim to have had a divine-human encounter with the Holy One of Israel in a vision.

Keep in mind that I spent many years in Reformed churches and have many friends who are wonderful people from this tradition. I hope not to alienate them, but at the same time I want to emphasize that proving oneself to be God's child requires evidence. Part of this has to do with two way communication. And while I would wholeheartedly agree that God speaks to individuals through their reading of the Scriptures, there are many other means by which He communicates. There is far more to the life of grace than spending 45 minutes of social fellowship inside a church

building, talking about religious matters on Sunday, and going through the motions of singing songs and agreeing with the prayers of the pastor. All of that is a good start, but the rubber meets the road as we pull out of the parking lot and as we walk through the week ahead. If there were an objective observer looking over one's shoulder all week long, would they say that your life belongs to God or to the adversary?

Although Evangelical or Reform-minded individuals might label themselves as the followers of Jesus or as His disciples, both groups have given themselves the means to dismiss His teachings. And those ones actually having done so, have removed themselves from the criterion of performing the greater works.

Although Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he that puts his faith in Me, the works that I do shall he do also," very few people among Christendom actually seem to put demonstrable faith in Jesus. So then we have to ask some questions. If someone finds no tangible way of obeying the commands of Jesus, because they don't even know what these commands might have been, are ones such as these actually provable as Jesus' disciples? Does cognitive agreement with religious information make anyone a servant of Jesus? Followers of Jesus will be doing what He told them to do. Otherwise, they do not belong to Him. Belonging to a church is different than belonging to Jesus. In the same way, membership at a Jewish temple, even for those born in the nation of Israel, does not make anyone an *Ish-raah-el-ite*. Only those who are loyal like Abraham, who know very specifically what and Who they are faithful to, should ever expect to perform miracles.

This is why miracles are seldom heard of in the church of the wealthy western world today. Churchianity has trained its people to buy their way out of difficulties in life.

However, in some cases, there are claims of miracles, but these are actually falsehood. Recall earlier my testimony about watching the evangelist lengthen the person's leg who was sitting right next to me. As I bowed my head in the service, I was looking down at his hands and watched him manipulate the woman's shoe to make it look to those sitting further away as if her leg was growing. From what I saw, the whole event was a complete farce.

And remember, I am a guy who claims to have seen miracles and who does not need to be convinced that these take place today.

A little girl at my church many years ago suffered from scoliosis. Her spine was twisted. The surgeon had to wait until she had grown more before she could undergo the operation. When the time came, her Mom took her in and the new x-rays showed that her back was picture perfect. And yet all of the sets of previous x-rays showed her mal-formed spine. The doctor was incredulous and with the Mom asked the girl if she knew if anything had happened. The child explained that in Sunday school, the teachers asked if anyone needed prayer. She said that they laid hands on her back and while they prayed, it felt like spiders crawling on her back.

Her Mom brought the x-rays to church to show everyone. The doctor was an atheist, but he told them that it was a miracle. There was no other way to describe how her back had changed between the last two sets of x-rays.

Many at our church were people who actively lived out lives of faithfulness and were guided by the voice of the Lord. This was while I was in seminary and during my Ph.D. studies. I would describe the congregation as passionate worshipers who actively participated in helping the needy. They took Jesus seriously. Some were also very disadvantaged, and we had some very broken people in our midst. But that did not stop them from trying to reach out to their neighbors and the community. I did not see everyone getting healed and some of them died while I was there. Nevertheless, that girl had experienced a miracle.

Looking back, I would say we had some *Ish-raah-el-ites* in that church.

Before we get too far, I want to include a note for Jewish readers. Some of you might be saying to me, “Hey wait a minute. You said you weren’t going to try to trick us into becoming Christians. Now you’re telling us all this stuff about Jesus. What’s up with that?”

So then, here is the approach to understanding I hope that non-Christian Jewish readers will take. At the start of the book I said that one of the main reasons Jews do not understand the teachings of Jesus is because of Christendom’s faulty presentation of His

teachings. I am holding to that point. Jesus was a Jew. Although some Christians have their head in the sand and don't want to admit as much, Jesus taught the teachings of Moses. The *Tanakh* runs all through His instruction; although contemporary translations from Greek manuscripts can make some concerns difficult to see. Whereas Moses and the prophets emphasized the importance of seeking the Word or entry into the presence of the Holy One—especially in the feast of bread coming from heaven, the Gospels emphasized encounter with the Word and entry into the kingdom. Jesus presented the *kiddush* to His disciples in what Christians have labeled as the “last supper.” Whereas celebrants of the Sabbath may be familiar with the *neshamah yeterah*, Jesus contended that even little children have angels in heaven who behold the face or the presence of God in heaven.

So then, if we can account for slightly different means of describing identical realities, it would be far more difficult to say that Jesus taught something different than Moses. And for those who might still take that bet, what about all of Jesus' quotes of Moses in agreement with him? Look at John 5:46, examine the provision of *manna* in John 6, and review John 3 and the discussion of lifting up the serpent in the wilderness. In the sermon on the mount, Jesus instructed the crowds in the Ten Commandments. Compare Exodus 20 to Matthew 23. Jesus repeated Moses' teaching, “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that comes from the mouth of God” (note Matthew 4:4 and Deuteronomy 8:3—as well as Luke 4:4). And when we understand that the Word of God was identical to the Holy One of Israel, it is easily understood how Luke emphasized the primacy of the spirituality of the *Tanakh* while upholding the concept of having become an *Ish-raah-el-ite*. He introduced the Luke–Acts narrative explaining that he was about to give a record of all those who had been eyewitnesses of the Word and who thereafter became His servants. This very statement recounts the story of Jacob's life.

If anything, I feel as if I am trying to sell Jesus to Christendom. Nevertheless, I do challenge my Jewish audience to read through the Gospels and to consider whether or not these were the identical understandings of Moses. Perhaps also read *The*

Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom as well so that you get a grip on Hebraic eschatology. There are lots of things that are not emphasized in Jewish biblical teaching and that are pretty much unknown in churchianity as well, which, when you understand these things, you're going to be able to recognize concerns of the *Tanakh*. So far as my goal with Jewish thinkers, if there is anything I would try to sell you, that would be a tangible relationship with the Holy One of Israel. My unhidden desire for both sides of the Judeo-Christian movement is that all would become *Ish-rah-el-ites*—faithful individuals who live a life in the grace of hearing God's voice and carryout the commission God gave to Abraham.

Keep in mind, as well, I am not preaching what some would call "the Christian message." Although I consider myself to be a Christian, my heart and soul are all wrapped up in the Hebraic faith—the origin of which was founded in the *Tanakh*. And all of the *Tanakh* served as the foundation of Jesus' teaching. Although I was raised in the Orthodox tradition, whose starting point for learning are the doctrines that were extracted from the New Testament, I came to understand that the Hebrew and Aramaic Bibles are where we learn about the tangible essence of faithfulness to *Yehovah*. Jesus' teachings become something entirely different than was intended—if any of us unwittingly accepts Orthodoxy's conclusions and superimposes these over Jesus' instruction. The same goes for the rest of the New Testament. However, Jesus did not come to start a new religion. This is what early Orthodoxy did—having followed in the hateful attitude of Marcion, severing *Torah* from the Gospel. Jesus came to resurrect the more ancient faith of Abraham, David and the heroes of Old Testament faith.

As for my strong recommendation that Jews should read the Gospels, keep in mind that I am not saying that you have to read this as inspired Scripture. Read it like didactic literature, and see if you can make some connections between this and the *Tanakh*. Analyze it deciphering the problems that existed in the timeframe in an effort to make sense of the solution Jesus was presenting. The Holy One of Israel is your Teacher, and He will guide you—especially if you invite His presence into your reading.

My point in discussing the Gospel of the Kingdom that has been lost and forgotten is that this pertained to the Word of God—Whose presence was personally experienced in Eden and after members of humankind were cast out of the Garden. Moses told Israel to choose life by obedience to *Torah* and the Word. These were completely different concepts. Problematically, some Jews today have actually followed in the error of Orthodox Christianity—having labeled the writings of the Scriptures themselves as the “word” of God. I have heard one Jewish teacher who I usually enjoy, mistakenly explain that the Bible is the “word” of God, because these writings reflect His will for humankind. By promoting study of the Hebrew Bible, he is actually erasing the biblical concept that encounter with the Being of the Word of God is possible—an ancient understanding that was clearly conveyed and demonstrated by Moses.

Philo was a devoted Jew who spoke *ad infinitum* regarding personal encounter with the Word, and according to at least one scholar, more than 96 percent of his quotes are from the Pentateuch.²⁷⁴ Therein, the contextual significance of our heritage that the Word was understood as the Being of God Who was at work in the world is lost. When I wrote *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*, I had not yet heard of Segal, Barker, or Heiser. And so I never knew that individuals described the Word of God as “the second power of heaven.” Even so, it was quite obvious to me that the Word was just that. And if any of my Jewish readers have read the *Targums* and are familiar with *Memra*, well then, the concept of the second power might not be so difficult to understand and validate. The divine being of *Memra* could never possibly become mistaken with the inspired writings of Scripture. *Memra* is the Word of God. “*Memra*” repeatedly occurs in the

²⁷⁴ In Naomi G. Cohen’s comprehensive study *Philo’s Scriptures: Citations from the Prophets and Writings*, she called attention to this extreme disproportion. While Philo quotes the Pentateuch thousands of times in his literary works, his entire surviving corpus contains only about 46 references to the Prophets and the Writings combined.

Naomi G. Cohen, *Philo’s Scriptures: Citations from the Prophets and Writings* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 45.

Aramaic Bible where the Hebrew Scriptures use the name *Yehovah* alongside the title “Holy One of Israel.”

Examining the texts of Isaiah 45:17, Hebrew translates: “Israel shall be saved by *Yehovah*” although Targum Jonathan states: “Israel shall be saved by the *Memra* of God.” And “*Memra*” is the term “Word,” which was translated from “*davar*,” that is repeatedly used in the phrase “‘Word’ of God” in the Hebrew Scriptures. Therefore, in the Scriptures themselves, the phrase “‘Word’ of God” is not a reference to the Scriptures.

Note Isaiah 41:16 which translated from Hebrew reads: “and you shall rejoice in *Yehovah* and glory in the Holy One of Israel,” whereas the Targum Jonathan translates, “but as for thee, thou shalt rejoice in the *Memra* (Word) of *Yehovah*, thou shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.”

From innumerable passages such as these, it is clear that the “Word” of God and the “inspired writings of the Scriptures” were completely different concepts in antiquity.²⁷⁵ Those today who attempt to associate the inspired writings with the “‘Word’ of God” in the Scriptures are making a vast error that blinds students of the Bible and robs them of the divine-human spirituality that was intended for them by the biblical authors. And sadly, changing one concept for another is actually done by some with the agenda to remove subjectivity from both sides of the Judeo-Christian movement. There are actually individuals who intentionally confuse the concept of the Word, replacing this with the Scriptures using divine inspiration of the writings in order to eliminate the notion that it is possible to hear God’s voice today through other means than by reading the Bible. Instead, by example we should understand that Isaiah read the Scriptures but He had a divine-human relationship with the living active “‘Word’ of God. Completely different sets of terms in both Hebrew and Greek

²⁷⁵ Ludwig Blau and Kaufmann Kohler, “Memra,” in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. Isidore Singer (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1904), 8:464–465, <https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/10618-Memra>. Henry M. Morris, “The Holy One of Israel,” *Institute for Creation Research*, accessed July 26, 2026, <https://www.icr.org/content/holy-one-israel-4>

differentiate the “Word” from the sacred writings in both Hebrew and Greek and this differentiation continues throughout the New Testament. This was a significant topic of discussion in *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*.

Jesus was instructing individuals in the nation of Israel how to become *Ish-raah-el-ites*. These were people like Jacob who became ones whose spirituality revolved around seeking, hearing, and obeying the second power of heaven, or the Holy One of Israel—Who in the Aramaic Bible was known as *Memra*. Once you understand the portrayal of *Memra*, it is not difficult to perceive a Father-Son or a King-Viceroy relationship between this manifestation and God Most High.

Jesus taught that we could have eyes to see and ears to hear, just like Jacob and that we could enter the holy realm and become empowered. Because the Word went with Jacob to meet Esau, they were reconciled. Or at least, Jacob and his family were not slaughtered. The Word, or *Memra* or the Holy One was looking out for Jacob.

The point in this book is that the performance of miracles is possible. We just need to know how these spiritual dynamics work. And as we have stated, we have to understand all of the agendized concerns that can stand in the way.

And for my Jewish readers, when you come to discussions in the New Testament regarding “eternal life,” make sure that you understand that Jesus was teaching instead about the ancient life which Moses admonished ancient Israel to embrace in Deuteronomy 30. Furthermore, also understand that this was a reference back to Eden and to the quality of life living by the voice of God or by His Word that was enjoyed in the Garden.

Humankind dwelt in the presence of God in the *aiona*—standing in the presence of *Moshia*/Messiah—the second power of heaven. He Himself was their Temple. They worshiped in His presence. This was the *aionios* life. There is no *aionios* life apart from abiding in one’s place in God’s presence. And this was the object of concern in seeking the Word of *Yehovah* which was stressed by both Moses and Jesus. Although the Word came in different forms and in different ways, at times, recipients became

enveloped in the Word. The world around them was rolled back like a scroll and they beheld the heavens and the angels.

Furthermore, understand that vital knowledge was taken away from the heritage of the Jewish people by second century leaders of Judaism—who removed the concept of the second power of heaven from the annals of history. You were robbed of a dynamic spiritual tradition. However if you dig deep enough, and even look at your traditional Jewish songs, you are going to find that Jews have thanked God for *yeshuah* far longer than the existence of Christianity. Your historical tradition revolves around accounts of how your people were rescued by the Holy One or the Word of God. It was His watchful eye and intervention that kept you from harm.

Some of my Christian friends may disown me with what I am about to say next. I want my Jewish readers to understand that you do not have to intellectually agree that anyone's religious doctrines are theologically correct in order to encounter the second power of heaven.

Although many Christians emphasize the supposed doctrinal prerequisite, Jesus did not. Jesus taught Jews how to embrace their ancient inheritance before there were people on Earth called "Christians." If these Jews encountered the Holy One, so can you!

So then, at least for now, even if you do not think that Jesus was the second power of heaven, read the Gospels and hear what He had to say about entry into the kingdom. See if this makes sense. If you do, you are going to discover tremendously valuable information about the spirituality of Abraham. And you can confirm this by reading about the life of Abraham in the Targums. Furthermore, study David's worship and what he taught the *Ish-rah-el-ites* to embrace.

I am telling you, that if you regain the knowledge of your ancient inheritance and if you put into practice the matters of spirituality explained herein, you are going to encounter the second power of heaven. If you turn to Him and confess and forsake your wickedness and worldly idolatry, He is going to come to you. As you start to meet the needs of the poor around you, as Isaiah instructed, the Holy One is going to begin speaking to you. And this

may happen through dreams, visions, or by angelic visitation. Moreover, the second power of heaven will make His identity known to you in the encounter.

You do not need to jump into Christian Evangelicalism in order to find your place of standing in the *olam* or the *aiona* before the presence of God. But be forewarned, the Holy One is going to call you into works you never imagined, and life is not going to get easier for you; especially as you relate to your Jewish brothers and sisters. They are going to put you out of the synagogue and your own family members are going to accuse you of wrongdoing, heresy, and are going to think you are out of your mind! My parents had some of these same worries—although I am respectfully grateful they did not disown me. Nevertheless, be comforted by the fact that what you may lose amounts to nothing by comparison to what you gain in the kingdom.

I have not instructed anyone to become a Christian, especially through any denominational formula. However, what I have told you is to use the Gospels and the teachings of Jesus to understand that He restored the ancient *Ish-rah-el-ite* spirituality of Noah, Abraham, the Judges and the Prophets. This spirituality was greatly celebrated by beloved King David. As you do so, take special note of the first verse of the book of Matthew that particularly identified Jesus as “the son of David, the son of Abraham.” Although Matthew provided a genealogy, he was writing in verse 1 about spiritual progeny.

And when you have made your way to the book of Acts, which is the second part of Luke’s Gospel, pay particular attention to the three sermons that are preached there. Each one begins with Abraham, then moves on to David, and finally concludes with Jesus.

Christians traditionally assume Jesus started a new religion due to historical, linguistic, and philosophical oversights by early Greek-speaking bishops. Illiterate in Hebrew until Jerome, early Orthodox leaders failed to distinguish between the original *Torah* and rabbinic amendments (*takkanot*), leading to a false Marcionite separation between Law and grace that was later amplified by the Reformers. Furthermore, influenced by Classical Greek and Aristotelian rationalism, they incorrectly redefined *grace* as mere

favor and *faith* as cognitive belief rather than active, lived faithfulness. By ignoring the Old Testament context, the Church conflated early Abrahamic spirituality with later Second Temple legalism, ultimately missing the reality that Jesus came to restore the ancient faith of King David.

Relying on Classical Greek instead of Hebrew context, they defined *charis* (grace) as mere "favor" rather than as God's living voice and divine empowerment. Influenced by Aristotle, they turned *pistis* (faith) into a cognitive belief system rather than active divine-human faithfulness.

And so, Orthodoxy successfully intellectualized a sterile theological system of belief—wherein a divine-human matrimonial relationship has been reduced to empty gnostic theory.

And in all of this, Orthodoxy never understood Old Testament eschatology; therefore, they could not properly interpret the writings of the Latter Prophets—as these pertained to the judgment of Second Temple Judaism. *Ish-rah-el-ites* had lived by the living active Word of God experiencing all kinds of different manifestations of grace. However, Orthodoxy was a cessationist movement. Therefore, their disposition inclined them not to expect that spirituality to have continued into the Christian Era.

God continually provided His *yeshuah* to individuals in the nation of Israel.

As the kings turned toward evil and commandeered control of the Jerusalem temple, they eradicated the Priestly Order of Melchizedek and outlawed prophetic spirituality. They murdered the prophets and banned worship of the name of *Yehovah*. If we follow Barker's research, they committed genocide. And those who were able to flee became refugees in Arabia. For all of this God withdrew His presence, brought about a famine of the Word, and did not continue pouring out His Spirit. His bride had turned to whoredom and He gave her over to her sin—which resulted in the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. This happened just as Moses had foreseen. Judgment had fallen upon Judaism for their adultery, idolatry, and a long list of other violations of divine-human loyalty listed at the start of Amos. However, *Yehovah* also promised a

future day of restoration. Jeremiah spoke of the return of the *tov davar* or the good-Word.

Joel foretold the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. Amos foretold that the fallen tent of David would be restored. And the return of the Word, presence, or Spirit of God, that had been experienced by the faithful in the Old Testament was the Gospel that was preached by angels, John the Baptist, Jesus, His disciples, Paul, and by others in the New Testament.

By the time Orthodoxy had gained control in the fourth century, knowledge of the second power of heaven had already been removed from the understandings and practices of Judaism. Therefore, Orthodoxy set about its focus on attempting to prove that Jesus was the Messiah, apart from considering His identity as the Holy One of the *Ish-raah-el-ites*. Essentially, Christianity's typical argument against Judaism is that they did not accept Jesus as Messiah. By putting a spin on the Gospels and making this seem as if the Messianic identity of Jesus had been the main concern of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, they pitted Christianity firmly against Judaism. Although Jesus' messianic claim was acknowledgeable as a large concern of the authors of the Gospels, what is perhaps far more important to realize is that Jesus was a human manifestation of the Holy One of Israel. He came to restore the *Ish-raah-el-ite* divine-human matrimonial communal relationship which had been the treasure of Jacob. Orthodoxy stressed differentiation between itself and Judaism, whereas the New Testament writers had been encouraging audiences to understand the fulfillment of the restoration of the faith of Abraham, David, and the prophets. They were able to see unity whereas Orthodoxy became stubbornly rooted in exclusivity.

Orthodoxy never understood that Jesus was teaching about divine-human encounter that had been celebrated in the Hebrew and Aramaic Scriptures—for which the namesake "*Ish-raah-el*" had been given. And while comprehending that baptism had to do with washing, they did not realize this was also preparatory consecration for entry into the *aiona*. Ones abiding in the namesake of Moses would be raised up to new life in significance above the water. Although "Jerusalem" as the "foundation of peace" was intended to

have been inhabited by *Ish-rah-el-ite* worshipers who would raise up the walls of a spiritual temple in the place of Zion by praising the name of *Yehovah*—all of which had been made possible by the sacrifice, early and continuing Orthodox bishops scurried around managing religious information in the vain effort to prove their intellectual correctness. On this basis, eventually they had raised themselves high enough in the arena of religion so that they could anathematize Origen due to errors in his theological conclusions. And yet, they themselves were just as guilty in misunderstanding Jesus.

Orthodoxy's mistakes were amplified and became even more distorted by the well-intended Reformers and Evangelicals. With the rise of dispensationalism, two covenants were divided up into 6 or 7 and everyone forgot that the "whore of Babylon" and "the abomination that makes desolate" had once pertained to the counterfeit religion of the Second Temple. Evangelicals, like Darby, were so far separated from the ancient knowledge base of Israel and the texts of Daniel and Revelation that they could no longer make sense of ancient Hebraic eschatology. Historically, Christendom has drawn its theological conclusions from such a miniscule pool of information studied with a biased interpretive lens—resulting in a religion that has fallen short of the teachings of Jesus. Comparatively speaking, Orthodoxy baked a cake, lauding its perfection, while yet naively having left out most of the ingredients. On top of this, they have added all kinds of other components that have absolutely nothing to do with cake recipes. Resultantly, modern readers examined the Scriptures and superimposed dispensationalist Evangelical concoctions over the biblical passages—mistakenly thinking that the realm of Earth was in "the last days" or "the end times." Due directly to Darby's influences, Evangelicals began paying close attention to earthly news broadcasts in order to discern the signs of the times—hoping to identify the supposed Antichrist, the False Prophet, and the Beast of Revelation.

Error was compounded upon error, century after century, until nobody seems to have actually needed Jesus' instruction regarding how to enter into the kingdom. All that really mattered to

Christendom was whether or not any of them had acquired the correct doctrines to believe in order to avoid hell, to cure guilt, and to guarantee heaven after death. Some of them even learned how to use religious knowledge to gain earthly riches. In some instances, faith became a talisman—which if used correctly, ensured, health, wealth, and prosperity. In the process, much of Christendom alleviated the need for divine-human loyalty and accountability. Some even used doctrinal distortions of religious thought to condone licentious fornication and adultery. Tangible mystical experience with the Word, presence, or Spirit of God that had filled the pages of Scripture and that had been the foundation of Emperor Constantine's faith, was excoriated from most of Christianity.

Other developing Christian movements, predating Orthodoxy, were not so blind. The Ebionites plainly understood that Jesus had come to restore the teachings of Moses. The Montanists clearly connected the gifts of grace with the continuing prophetic Word of God. And some of the early Jewish adherents, seem to have understood some of the mystical aspects of encounter with the Word or entry into the presence of God.

We have to remember that after its divorce from Judaism, Christians of all variety were forced underground due to Nero's persecution in the second half of the first century. Many different streams developed without crosspollination. And by the time that Constantine had legalized Christianity, many individuals had fled into the deserts in order to practice spirituality in freedom of conscience. It is likely that when the church councils were called, they did not think influencing the Emperor's understandings was a matter of importance. Those streams of faith and spirituality that did remain out in the open, practicing in mainstream society, were attacked, one-by-one, and were eventually eliminated. Orthodoxy did not leave any room whatsoever for a second form of Christianity.

For those who are interested in this history and commentary by other authors, read "Part Two" of *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*.

A Few Recommendations

At some point, we have to reconcile an answer to a question. Do the teachings of Scripture lead us to the experience of God's presence and His tangible intervention in our lives? Or instead, was the Bible written so that we could use the narratives to extract intellectual doctrines, which if "believed" could ensure life after death.

Moving forward, for my Jewish audience, my advice is that you put your trust in the second power of heaven—Whom your ancient ancestors of faith knew by many titles such as the Word, *Memra*, the Holy One, *Moshia* or Messiah, the Angel of the Lord, the King of Righteousness, the King of Peace, Melchizedek, and even as *Yeshuah* by the *Yahad* etc.,—and walk with Him. Call upon His name. Worship and adore Him like David. He will lead you to like-minded people who share this spirituality. Always keep Him first in your life. Although people will let you down, He will always prove Himself faithful. And humbly remember, this spirituality belonged to your people long before Christians ever walked the Earth.

And for my Christian friends who respond asserting, "We have Jesus. We don't want to hear about the Holy One of Israel." I would question, how can it be proven that you have Jesus? Do you do the deeds of Jesus? Jesus was an *Ish-raah-el-ite*. If you are a follower of Jesus, what evidence exists in your life that you are actually an *Ish-raah-el-ite*? If you can recognize that there is little or none and admit this is the case, the good news is that you have the perspective and choice to change this. Christians need to start reading the Gospels too.

On this topic I want to add one more comment. I have heard a Karaite Jew teach on the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6 asserting that this was very much a prayer that was suitable for Jews. Start here with Jesus' instruction. Begin by praising the name of the Father. Many of you know that name but have been taught by your tradition never to speak it. The question is, will you let your tradition control your life or will you follow the instruction of Moses, who taught that calling upon God's name was the means of

calling forth His kingdom reigning presence for all future generations?

Yehovah has preserved a temple in which each of us can stand, and this temple is raised up and entered by worshiping His name. *Yehovah* Himself is our temple. God's *Yeshuah* is the doorway through Whom we enter into the holy realm and He is the Gift of God's presence each of us receives as we enter.

Herein, each of us has to courageously face the choice of obeying either our religious traditions or the clear instruction of Moses. And if you do begin worshiping the name of *Yehovah* and start thanking Him for His *Yeshuah*, and for the abiding presence of the Holy One, and if you ask Him to open the gates of heaven to you, and you patiently wait for Him to come, He is going to prove His faithfulness to you. And you are going to be filled with unimaginable joy. And tears of baptismal water are going to flow from your eyes down your cheeks as He draws you close to Himself. And all of this is going to be quite unbelievable. And I lack the words to say more. I can assure you of this reality, but what you are going to realize cannot fully be described.

And persist in worship until He comes or speaks to you. Learn to wait patiently upon the coming of *Yehovah*. Know that He loves you and wait, just breathing out praise to His holy name.

Some may object asking how it was that worshiping the name of *Yehovah* should be equated with the calling forth of His kingdom.

The name of *Yehovah* was given, as the memorial name, or in Hebrew as the *zachar* name, to all generations in order to call to the Holy One of Israel for His help. The coming of the Holy One is the same as the calling forth of His rulership.

When the Holy One makes His presence known to you, I promise that you will know that you are in His presence. You will feel His power. It will be unmistakable. He will be with you and will gather you into His holy presence. The first time this happens, it is going to be a deeply intimate life altering moment. You may cry, and you may not even be able to stand amidst His glory. Let Him flow through you. And you're not even going to believe it when it is happening. And as God's presence falls upon you, and as you feel

His love amidst your tears, be welcomed into the *chen, charis*, or grace of God.

Never thereafter let anyone rob you of Jacob's treasure. You have a dwelling place in the mansion of God. The Holy One is your sanctuary.

My suggestion thereafter is that you study Jesus' teachings to understand the ancient heritage that has been restored. And as you might find a few like-minded friends with which to call forth God's presence, as He leads you, begin to ask Him for direction and for His *yeshuah* to meet the needs of others around you. You are going to see signs and wonders.

If everything is not perfectly clear, don't worry or fear, but continue to seek Him and He will lead you like a shepherd guiding His sheep. He will call you to take certain actions. When you obey, He will prove Himself to be strong in your life.

And rejoice with King David that you have been made alive in the *olam* or the *aiona*.

Although you may face challenges in life, your name is known in heaven.

David worshiped God's name passionately and told others to do the same. No human being has the right to shut the doors of heaven with rules or man-made facsimiles of legislated religious spirituality to be practiced by rote.

Section Seven

The Backdrop of Jesus' Instruction

As we move forward, I hope that readers will keep in mind that those who became divinely empowered to perform signs and wonders had entered into the kingdom of God. Entry into the kingdom was the central focus of Jesus' teachings. Therefore, ahead as we examine His instruction, we are going to remind ourselves that whatever He taught His audiences was given in order to motivate them in that goal.

The next verses we are going to study come immediately after the Beatitudes—wherein Jesus described the character of those who were the children of God and the inheritors of His kingdom.

Let's examine Matthew 5:13-48.

You are the salt of the Earth: but if the salt has lost its savor, what will make it salty again? Saltless salt is good for nothing except to be thrown away and trampled upon by the feet of men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Men do not light a lamp and put it underneath a basket. But instead, they put it on a lamp

stand, and it shines on all that are in the house. Even so, let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father Who is in heaven.

Just as salt was used for the purpose of seasoning, it was expected to produce a savory effect. So also, Jesus' followers were proven to be authentic by what they produced. If people claimed to have faith but failed to produce the works of faith, then they were worthless and fit to be trampled underfoot.

And it may seem harsh to say as much, but those who preach intellectual doctrinal salvation that is based upon Aristotle's definition of acquiring "truth" as correct information are the worthless desalinated salt Jesus condemned.

By contrast, those who belonged to *Yehovah* in the Scriptures performed works as they were empowered by His Word and they altered the course of the world.

As we have learned from history, it is very much possible to indoctrinate people into theoretical religion. However, doctrinal intellectualization never results in miraculous empowerment.

A faithful relationship with *Yehovah* was intended to produce works through individuals laying claim to such faith. God was at work in the world through those who were eyewitnesses and who became servants of the Word. Their works were made to be seen. And the miraculous works immediately identified those who actually belonged to *Yehovah*. Jesus expected good works from those who attested to being His followers. Moreover, Jesus' brother, James, wrote that assertions of faith without works amounted to dead religion. James challenged those who testified to have allegedly believed in Jesus, "then show me your faith by your works!"

Note that the single Greek term *pistis* can be translated either as belief or as faith. In the western European sense, belief and faith can represent entirely different concepts. However, in *Koine* Greek, most usages of *pistis*, *pisteuo* or other related forms when defined by context of discussion demonstrably pertained to loyalty, faith, or faithfulness.

James put forth a simple logical argument. "If you say you have faith then what evidence can we see that proves this?" If there

are no works of righteousness in your life, then you are a fraud. There is no such thing as faith without works.

It was the Aristotelian concepts of *pistis* and *pisteuo* which centered on believing correct information that misinformed Orthodox and Reformation thinkers resulting in Martin Luther's triumphal expression, *sola fide* or "faith alone." Leaders in religious movements, who have naively embraced *sola fide*, have failed to understand that the origin of this idea was not derived from Scripture as it was intended to have been understood by the original authors. Neither Judaism nor the teachings of Jesus were ever focused on the acquisition of correct information. No matter how anyone vainly attempts to twist the writings of Paul, the concept that individuals could simply believe religious information as truth is a distortion of the Apostle's writings that came directly from Aristotle's influence on interpretation of the Bible by early Orthodoxy.

Of course, as we said, some individuals are never going to be able to come to grips with this fact. And accordingly, they are perhaps the least likely people to ever manifest signs and wonders. Neither let us regard those in disdain who hold to different understandings or who may be scoffers, nor let us rob them of their own understandings of faith. We acknowledge that their prayers and worship also ascend into the realm of heaven. Each of us can only walk according to conscience in the reality that we are able to perceive. But let each of us who are able to perceive things differently press on to maturity in our faith while demonstrating love for those who may not agree.

Moreover, we need to come to grips with the fact that attempting to please others with our lives is a snare. The approval and affirmation of others feels good and drives the social media industry. Nevertheless, don't get caught up in trying to please someone else with your choices and behavior or fall prey to the snare of seeking another person's approval. The only One you should ever be certain to please is the Holy One of the *Ish-rah-el-ites*.

People are going to let you down. You are going to be treated unfairly in life. Your calling is to maintain a grip on the Lord

so that you make it through this world unscathed. And when you are hurt, along with King David, know that the Lord is your Helper, Healer and Rescuer. When you are wronged, forgive and move on. And whenever forgiveness seems very difficult, pursue the Lord's wisdom and help. You have learned how to enter into His miraculous presence.

Going to church or the synagogue proves that we practice religious observance. This is not a work of faith. Works change the lives of others and alter the course of the world. Stopping to help a person in need, to feed the poor, to clothe the naked and to heal the sick are works of faith. And the one who gives sacrificially out of his or her own need, gives in greater measure than a rich man out of his wealth. The rich man who went to a place of torment after death earned his place there because of his neglect for hungry sick Lazarus—who daily lay on the ground outside of his gate. Each of us needs to get to work identifying those like Lazarus in our lives, and begin caring for their needs—even when it is inconvenient. Each of us should have living proof that we have tangibly loved and cared for our neighbors. In keeping with the reprimand of Isaiah, James the brother of Jesus said that the practice of true religion was to care for widows and orphans. Who are the orphans and widows in our lives?

Do not think for a moment that I came to destroy the law or the prophets. I did not come to destroy, but to fulfil. I truly tell you until heaven and Earth pass away, not one jot or tittle shall in any manner pass away from the law, until all things have been accomplished. Therefore, whoever will break one of these least commandments, and who will teach other men the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever will do the commandments and will teach the commandments will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will in no manner enter into the kingdom of heaven.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁶ Matthew 5:17-20

Jesus was very strict whereas the church today is often very lax. But then again, I want to reiterate the point that by and large, churchianity does not teach individuals how to enter into the kingdom. Instead the church teaches that believers in the correct doctrine have obtained the unmerited favor of God. To be certain, God is Love and He loves each and every one of us. And He is merciful and willing to forgive our sins and to draw each of us to Himself. However, man-made doctrines having to do with the unmerited favor or the grace of God freeing us from divine-human accountability are not in keeping with the warnings of Jesus. And this is not brought up to create an argument with anyone. But instead this is stated to make things clear that if you hope to enter the kingdom and to do the greater works Jesus said belonged to the faithful, you are going to have to come to grips with His teaching that your choices, behavior, and character can prohibit you from entry.

Again, we understand from the continuing passage that works are vital and Jesus has explicitly emphasized the Ten Commandments. Moreover, with mention of the prophets, He has called attention to the continuance of the manifestation of the Word of God. Seekers of the kingdom would be individuals who had embraced the inspired *Torah* which was given by the second power of heaven from the cloud atop Mount Sinai.

Christians today who say that this *Torah* somehow passed away are without excuse. Such ones as these are allowing their dispensationalist religious tradition to obscure their reading of the Scriptures. Furthermore, so-called believers who assert that the prophetic Word has ceased are also without excuse. Once again, such individuals are following in a man-made religion that has been allowed to usurp the teachings of Jesus as well as the exhortations of other New Testament authors. Just as in the days of old, so also in the days of Jesus and continuing decades after His death and resurrection when the Gospels were written, these concerns were put into print for posterity.

And for those who still want to argue about the relevance of the Law, let us remember that every time anyone came to Jesus seeking eternal life, which actually was the ancient life, Jesus clearly

and adamantly instructed each one to observe the teachings of Moses and specifically the Ten Commandments.

You have heard that it was said to them in the days of old, “You shall not kill; and whoever shall kill will be in danger of the judgment. But I am telling you, that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whoever refers to his brother as “brainless” is in danger of the council and whoever accuses his brother of being “a fool” is in danger of the fire of hell.²⁷⁷

Jesus not only clearly and consistently upheld the continuance of the *Torah* of the Ten Commandments, but He also enlightened its hearers of how the Law played itself out in their daily lives.

Self-righteousness that was demonstrated by derogatorily judging, upbraiding, and by condemning another person was identical to murder. And it mattered even if this was permitted to go on in one’s mind. Each of us becomes something different in being than what God intended when we are filled with hatred, lust, greed, or the desire to take advantage of others. We were created to bear the image of God—through and through.

The allowance for one to fall into anger and to be controlled by the expression of hatred was the opposite of being born of the Truth of God’s Being. It was exactly contrary to bearing His loving image—as was His intention for humankind from the beginning of time. Name calling was an immediate indictment for killing another person. This shameful act brought with it severe consequences. The goal of the Father and the Holy One of Israel was to draw individuals into the *chen, charis*, or grace of God. However, being a hateful, unforgiving, smart Alec was the same as willfully jumping into hell. Such individuals violating *Torah* were not to expect to have the right or the ability to enter into the kingdom. They were not the proven sons of God.

Jesus continued,

²⁷⁷ Matthew 5:21–22 modified NASB

Therefore if you are approaching the altar with a gift for God, but then you remember that you have a problem with your brother, leave your gift at the altar, but then go back and first be reconciled with your brother. After you have done this, then return and offer your gift to God. Furthermore, settle arguments with your adversaries quickly while you are with him. Or else he might turn you over to the judge who might put you in the hands of the jailer and then you are cast into prison. Truly, I am telling you, you will by no means come out until you have paid the last penny.²⁷⁸

Jesus' goal for those calling themselves His disciples was for each one to enter into the heavenly dwelling place of the kingdom. However, not all of them were going to prove themselves serious enough to make it. The point here is that daily behavior mattered. Arrogant stubborn people proved themselves to be unfit for the kingdom because they could not back down and apologize. They refused to humble their hearts in order to admit wrongdoing and thereafter to ask God for His forgiveness, help, and deliverance.

These were the first steps in the pathway back to the ancient life of Eden. It was the goal of heaven that individuals should once again become innocent children. In fact, some have been so hard-headed like arrogant Cain that they would rather fight their ways into the prison of Satan, bringing suffering upon themselves and others, rather than to be like broken Jacob who fought his way into heaven to find help and deliverance.

You have heard that it was said, You shall not commit adultery. But I tell you that everyone who even looks on a girl to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

According to Jesus, adultery took place long before sexual intercourse and even in cases where two people never even spoke or touched one another. Self-control was of necessity. Job was renowned as having covered his eyes so that he would not look lustfully upon the young virgins. Potiphar's wife sought to seduce

²⁷⁸ Matthew 5:23–26 Paraphrase

Joseph, and he immediately ran away. God was watching and counted Job and Joseph's choices and behavior as acts of righteousness.

Jesus continued on the topic,

And if your right eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it far away: for it is better that one part of your body should perish rather than giving your whole body to be cast into hell.²⁷⁹

As we see, those who might attempt to excuse adulterous behavior by saying, "It wasn't my fault. My eye just caught a glimpse of her and I could not help myself" were also without excuse. In fact, for anyone who was going to attempt to contrive such a ridiculous argument that it was the fault of their eyes, then Jesus offered what might have also been thought of as an equally preposterous solution.

And whatever lame excuse anyone tried to make for another part of the body could be fixed by the same remedy.

You have heard that it was said, you shall not commit adultery: but I am telling you, that every person who looks at a woman lusting after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if your right eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it away from yourself. Isn't it better for you that one part of your body should perish rather than your whole body being cast into hell? Or, if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off, and cast it far away. For it is better that one part of your body should perish rather than giving your whole body to be cast into hell.²⁸⁰

The point is that there was no excuse. Those who did not take action to eliminate their lusts remained guilty and condemnable for feeding their ungodly desires.

²⁷⁹ Matthew 5:29 modified ASV

²⁸⁰ Matthew 5:27-30 Paraphrase

Despite the teachings of certain Fundamentalists, Reformers or Evangelicals, those who dismissed the enduring relevance of the Ten Commandments walk on shaky ground as they identify themselves as “followers of Jesus.” The inspired *Torah* given on Mount Sinai that was engraved on tablets of stone was and remains as the foundation of the spirituality of Ancient Israel. However, there is much more that has been lost and forgotten needing to be addressed, which leads to the miraculous life under the *chen*, *charis*, or grace of God.

Part of Jesus’ lesson at the start of Matthew’s Gospel was that nobody should excuse their own sinful choices or behavior. Instead, each person needed to claim ownership of their behavior and choices—even to their own detriment. Furthermore, actual entry into the kingdom was not allowable for pretenders playing religious games.

I have Christian friends today whose hearts have become hardened in considering that looking lustfully upon a woman is displeasing to God. This is because they have an Orthodox dispensationalist definition of grace. They think that because they have God’s unmerited favor, that the sin of lust is erased. But what they have not understood is that this was not the biblical definition of grace. Grace was encounter with the Word and living by the direction of the voice of God. Their definition actually changes the character of God.

By inserting a non-biblical definition over the texts of Scripture, they are misdirected into a licentious spirituality and moved away from divine-human encounter.

Note that in Isaiah 30:18, the Lord longs to be gracious and then in 21, His desire is for the faithful to encounter His Word:

Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you; therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him. Yea, O people in Zion who dwell at Jerusalem; you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when he hears it, he will answer you. And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself any more, but your eyes

shall see your Teacher. And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left. Then you will defile your silver-covered graven images and your gold-plated molten images. You will scatter them as unclean things; you will say to them, "Begone!"²⁸¹

Recall that the term blessed is literally to be "good-Worded." And the Word of God was constantly compared to bread. In their rebellion they received meager portions of bread, but the implied contrast with being blessed was that they will receive abundant bread—or rather significant divine-human encounter with the Word.

In keeping with these understandings, Jesus repeatedly compared Himself to bread and promised Himself to be the source of living water.

Of course, in this passage Isaiah spoke of the Holy One of the *Ish-raah-el-ites*.

Continuing with verses 23-26, we read:

And he will give rain for the seed with which you sow the ground, and grain, the produce of the ground, which will be rich and plenteous. In that day your cattle will graze in large pastures; and the oxen and the asses that till the ground will eat salted provender, which has been winnowed with shovel and fork. And upon every lofty mountain and every high hill there will be brooks running with water, in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall. Moreover, the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day when the Lord binds up the hurt of his people, and heals the wounds inflicted by his blow.²⁸²

When we interpret these verses from the perspective of ancient Hebraic spirituality, the phrase "in the day" mentioned in verse 25 is a return to Day-One of creation wherein the faithful

²⁸¹ Isaiah 30:18-22 RSV

²⁸² Isaiah 30:23–26 RSV

encountered the Word. The coming of the day of *Yehovah* would be a blessing for the faithful but a day of judgment and punishment for the wicked. Each one's own choices, behavior and character ultimately determined whatever they were to have received. And the coming day of God being gracious, was a day of expectation for the faithful. For this day, each one waited upon the Lord in worship. This was repeatedly referenced by the author of Hebrews with the phrase, "today if you hear His voice." And the mention of the seven days is significant of the day of the Sabbath when individuals would enter into the *olam* or the *aiona* to stand before God's throne.

Paul knew he would not be returning to the area where he had led many into faith and encounter with the Word. He departed saying, "Now I commit you to God and to the Word of His grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Recall that "sanctified" is derived from the Greek term "*hagios*" which means "holy." Those who had entered into the holy realm or who coterminously had encountered the Word were called "holy ones" or "saints." Again, the term "saint" is simply a translation of the Greek term *hagios*.

Therefore we apprehend from the English translation that Paul was entrusting his brothers and sisters to the active care of God's Word. Keep in mind that in this era, there was no New Testament. Paul was referencing the living active Word of God; His voice that came by grace and by which they were gathered together into the *olam* or *aionios* realm.

Now I commit you to God and to the Word of His grace,
which can build you up and give you an inheritance among
all those who are sanctified.²⁸³

They too would obtain the inheritance of the Word passed down through innumerable generations from the time of Noah—whereby individuals entered into the holy realm and became known as ones who were "holy."

²⁸³ Acts 20:32 NIV

What we learn from this verse and the previous quotes from Isaiah is that God longed for individuals on Earth to become faithful *Ish-rah-el-ites* walking in His marriage covenant of grace.

I have Fundamentalist and Reformed friends who have remained in bondage to besetting sin. One Reform-minded friend's wife had a divine dream that her husband was addicted to pornography and she confronted him. With his actual confession of sin, to my knowledge, he became free. He had a hard time accepting that God's Word came to his wife through a dream, but he could not deny the whole of what had taken place.

However, some like him have errantly become convinced that they do not have free will and essentially blame God for their ongoing struggle with sin.

This is absolutely absurd.

Is it not complete blasphemy to accuse, insinuate, or to disparage God as being the author of wickedness?

May the Lord have mercy upon us!

God would not be mocked, whatever a man sowed, so also would he reap. Wide is the road that leads to destruction and many follow its path—all the while claiming to be people of belief.

Intellectual belief is unlikely to deliver anyone from slavery to secret sin and the accompanying life of humiliating condemnation. However, verbal confession to a trusted friend along with acceptance for personal responsibility and subsequent cleansing with water leads to the pronouncement of forgiveness with freedom and new birth into the *aion*.

God provides *yeshuah*, but this happens under His terms—which we understand are not always the same as we would like. I do not want to discount the miraculous power of God in anyone's life, or to dismiss the value of a 12-step program. These provide excellent opportunities for accountability and healing. However getting one's mind wrapped up in the fatalistic philosophy of a lack of freewill is going to be problematic. God is not the author of sin. He is the divine Liberator. Everyone has the God given right to choose to confess their most heinous embarrassing crimes and to be set free. Those who are born of the Truth of the Being of God, as difficult as it may seem, are ones who bring their darkest deeds into

the light before another person of faith so that Satan can no longer accuse and imprison them. And when they sin again, they confess again and are cleansed again. Just as the priests of ancient Israel repeatedly prepared for entry into the Word or the holy of holies, so also they passed many times through the cleansing water of the laver. This model was set in place for each of us.

Repeated repentance became a problem for Christians because of Orthodoxy's strict association of salvation with going to heaven after death. Since these ideas were chained together with seemingly infallible doctrine, the question arose regarding the potential to lose eternal salvation each time a person sinned. This problematic situation led to Aristotelian hierarchical categorization of sins. It seems that in many instances when Orthodoxy invented one doctrine, it had to come up with a dozen more to remedy objections to the rule.

In the Hebraic paradigm, those who walked with the Lord in their earthly lives were destined to life in the spiritual realm with God. It was that simple. Those who pursued a relationship with the Holy One made themselves known as His possessions because of choices, behavior, and resultant character. Growth in a divine-human relationship was a progression. Just because a person had a lustful thought did not mean they were suddenly going to hell if they did not pray a sincere prayer of repentance. However, thinking lustfully was an indication of an addictive problem that needed to be dealt with by confession, accountability and cleansing with water in order to move further ahead in the mystery of God.

Yehovah demonstrated start to finish in the Scriptures that He is merciful. Life on Earth was a time of sorting out just exactly who God's children actually were. We see with the prophet Samuel, that the ultimate destiny of those who walked with *Yehovah* on Earth was the realm of the *elohim* in heaven.

One more issue to address concerns the author of Hebrews' statement in 6:4-6:

It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age and who have fallen

away, to be brought back to repentance. To their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.²⁸⁴

Most Christians are going to attribute interpretation of the verse to wholehearted and complete abandonment of the Lord through apostasy. Jesus' sacrifice is re-enlivened whenever anyone turns to the Lord in repentance, confession of sins, and in washing with water.

Due to Orthodoxy's unbending association of salvation with the permissibility of getting into heaven, verses like this one cause individuals to become gripped and paralyzed by fear. However, God is Love. God is merciful. God is the Forgiver of unrighteousness. God longs to set each of us free from slavery to sin. Therefore, embrace God's love, mercy, and forgiveness and cast down every vain suggestion of the devil that would lie about the Character of God.

Fear not!

Refocusing on Matthew 5, we continue with the teaching of Jesus.

It was said also, whoever puts away his wife, let him do so by a writing of divorcement. But I tell you, everyone who divorces his wife, except for the cause of fornication, makes her an adulteress. Then whoever marries her when she is put away commits adultery.²⁸⁵

Israel forsook their marriage covenant of *chen*, *charis*, or grace with *Yehovah* after He had continually walked in faithfulness with them. He endured, but finally gave the nation over to their own choice along with the consequences of the withdrawal of His Word, presence, and grace. Anyone can get what they want in this life, but there are consequences in the next existence.

If you want to call your brother a fool or if you want to sleep around, just be informed before you make those choices that you may be sealing your doom.

²⁸⁴ Hebrews 6:4-6 NIV

²⁸⁵ Matthew 5:31-32 ASV

Marriage was not intended to have been considered as a casual agreement. It was a one-way ticket—for better or worse. Jesus did make an exception for adultery. In the case of the ultimate act of betrayal, the adulterer could be put on notice and let go.

Again, you have heard that it was said to the ancient ones, You shall not make oaths to the Lord that you cannot keep. But instead, I am telling you, do not promise to do anything at all, not by heaven and not by Earth. Heaven is the throne of God and the Earth is the footstool of His feet. Neither swear by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Neither shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make a single hair white or black. But instead respond “Yes, yes, or no, no.” Whatever more you respond than this is born from evil.

Why is it that individuals feel compelled to make things larger than life with their oaths or promises? It is because their words and they themselves are born of evil instead of being born of the Truth. Humility is evidenced at times by the fruit of one’s lips. Honesty is not grandiose. Honesty is simple, quiet, and humble. Honesty does not have to work hard in order to express itself.

The world has trained people to be dishonest, and to resist and fight back. However, the way of the kingdom is different.

You have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, don’t resist an evil individual: but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, give him the same opportunity with the other cheek as well. And if anyone would drag you into court and take away your coat, let him have your cloak as well. And whoever would force you to walk one mile, instead, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks of you, and do not turn away those who want to borrow from you.²⁸⁶

If these sound like difficult words, this is because entry into the kingdom was very costly. Those who would enter were a select

²⁸⁶ Matthew 5:38–42 Paraphrase

group of individuals who proved by their character, choices, and behavior that they were worthy to be blessed or to be good-Worded.

You have heard it said that you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. Instead, I am telling you that you must love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you in order that you may prove to be the sons of your Father Who is in heaven. He makes His sun to shine on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust. Behold, if you love those who love you, what reward have you earned? Do not even the wicked do the same? And if you respect only your brothers, what are you doing that is more worthy than the actions of anyone else? Don't the Gentiles do the same thing? Therefore you are to be perfect in your character, choices and behavior, taking extra measure to please God, just as your heavenly Father has set an example of perfection in the way He treats you.²⁸⁷

Those who are familiar with popular renditions of the close of the chapter will take notice that I enhanced the paraphrase—hopefully in keeping with the spirit of Jesus' previous remarks.

Our Father in heaven goes above and beyond for each of us in His faithfulness. And so each of us should emulate all of Who He is and what He does.

Those choosing the *chen*, *charis*, or grace of God prove their identities as His children by their visible works. They are obedient to His voice. God allows new birth into the Truth of His Being and takes those who are dead while they yet walk on the Earth and gives them life in the *aion*.

Every time we approach the Lord in worship, we come under judgment for our words and actions. This is why Jesus said to go make peace with your brother with whom you have an offense before attempting to enter the gates of heaven to bring your offering before the throne of God. Jesus wanted individuals to enter God's presence, however, there was a spiritual protocol. And as we

²⁸⁷ Matthew 5:43–48 Paraphrase

note with Judas of Iscariot, in the celebration of the *kiddush*, when he entered as a treacherous deceiver consuming the bread, this judgment allowed Satan to enter into him. He literally ate condemnation upon himself. The Apostle Paul warned the Corinthians about this peril.

We have to understand that the lost and forgotten spirituality of the ancient *Ish-rah-el-ites* was not a ceremonial religious game. Ceremonial religion is for people who want to feel good about themselves. Entry into the kingdom is an entirely different matter.

Without having yet considered the Beatitudes, the lesson of Matthew 5 is that the Holy One of Israel has high expectations for those who will prove themselves worthy to enter into His kingdom.

Jesus was fully human, having given up His heavenly position as the Holy One in order that God's Glory would be manifest in the Earth to humankind. As a human, Jesus lived out the same character, choices and behavior that He asked from His followers.

We understand from the Aramaic Bible and from John 1 that in the beginning at creation the Word was in the Garden and that the Word was God. Although through the ages the Word had come to humankind in many forms and in many ways, as Hebrews' author explained, in the first century A.D., He had taken on human flesh and dwelt on the Earth as the incarnate Son of God.

The Apostle Paul wrote encouragingly the at the start of Philippians 2 regarding the character, choices and behavior of those calling themselves faithful,

If there is therefore any exhortation in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions, make my joy full, that you be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; *doing* nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind, each counting one another better than himself; do not look only to meet your own interests, but help with the interests of others.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁸ Philippians 2:1–4 modified ASV

Paul emphasized in all of this that Jesus was not asking for more than He also demonstrated and gave.

Have the same motivation which was also in Christ Jesus: Who existing in the form of God, did not count being equal with God a thing to be grasped. Instead, He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, becoming obedient *even* to the point of His death; which was the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and gave to Him the name which is above every name; that at the name of *Yeshuah* every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven and *things* on Earth and *things* under the Earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.²⁸⁹

So then, one of the first important points in this section, is that Jesus was human—just like those among whom He lived. Accordingly, He did not have a magical advantage over anyone else in the performance of His miracles. Those around Him had the same opportunity to enter into the kingdom or the *aion* and to become empowered in the presence of God.

A second point is that entry into the kingdom was not a slam-dunk for anyone and everyone. There were no guarantees—even for those who never missed celebration of *Shabbat*. There were requirements, and not everybody was going to measure up. The fact of the matter was that some people made themselves unfit to stand in the presence of the Holy One. All had to consider their choices, behavior, and character—while also relying upon His mercy.

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve existed in original innocence. They had hearts like children. They were taught by the Word and walked in communal fellowship with Him. In the corrupt world into which He was born, Jesus warned that unless individuals changed and became like innocent children that they could not

²⁸⁹ Philippians 2:5–11 modified ASV

enter into the kingdom. And so this is why repentance, confession of sins, and washing or passage through water was necessary.

These actions represented the entry point into Hebraic spirituality—the goal of which was entry into the kingdom.

Character, choices, and behavior qualified individuals to both see and to enter into the kingdom of God.

Jesus made several pertinent statements regarding this concern.

You should enter into the kingdom by the narrow gate. Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many live by the way of destruction. By contrast, the narrow gate and the way that is straight leads to life. Very few individuals will find this gate.²⁹⁰

“Truly I tell you,” He said, “unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”²⁹¹

Notwithstanding His consecration through baptism, we have to keep in mind that Jesus, as a human being, was able to see and to enter into the narrow straight gate into the *aion*a because of his character, choices, and behavior.

Again we confront the false teaching that individuals do not have the ability to make personal choices, which has been a stalwart pillar of many Reformed thinkers. In the Bible, individuals were constantly facing choices. Moses told those who would become authentic *Ish-rah-el-ites*, or individuals who would see God, that they needed to choose life.

When you press them on this issue, some Reformed thinkers will say that it is only because God gives you the grace to make a choice that it is possible for you to make that choice. Essentially, Reformed thought is hyper-sensitive in making certain that no individual can come to God on the basis of their works. They choose to ignore or to randomly dismiss Cornelius in the book of Acts

²⁹⁰ Matthew 7, 13-14 Paraphrase

²⁹¹ Matthew 18:3 BSB

whose works were noticed by God and how he became blessed because of these.

Along this confused line of Reformed thought, for a person to have made any choice strictly based upon their own volition, would be considered by staunch Reform theological thinkers to be the same as approaching God by works.

In Reformed Churches where the doctrines are properly understood, nobody ever makes or owns the decision to become a Christian. Instead, God selects individuals and gives them irresistible grace. Once a person receives this supposed form of grace, she or he can never make any other choice except to become a Christian. The irresistible grace of the Reformers is compelling, unavoidable, and unchangeable. In this paradigm of thought, grace might be understood as a form of divine magic. The spell is cast from heaven and individuals become Christians. God alone is the owner of the choice of these individuals.

The Reformed concept is a perversion of the grace which was received by Noah.

Noah's grace was the voice of God and the miraculous ability to stand in His presence. Noah chose to obey as a result of his own volition and conviction of what was right. Furthermore, Noah was remembered by God because of his choice and volition. He knew the difference between good and evil. Noah obeyed God and produced the work of building the ark. In all of this Noah proved his faithfulness to God. And reciprocally, God proved His faithfulness to Noah and his family. He saved them or provided them with His *yeshuah*. In all of this God established the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace with the man and his descendants like Abraham, Jethro, and Moses—who learned to walk in loyal faithfulness to God. Such ones were given a miraculous standing place in the presence of God and were known of with the namesake of *Ish-raah-el* as *Ish-raah-el-ites*. Just like Noah, they were individuals who could see and hear God. Just as they encountered and entered into the Word of God, so also they were empowered to carry out His will and works in the world. This was the life of *chen*, *charis*, or grace that Jesus came to restore.

Noah lived in a faithful relationship with God and produced divinely empowered works. This simple statement can be used to describe perhaps every person in Scripture who walked with the Lord. Despite the misunderstanding or ignorance of well-intended theologians throughout history, the example set by Noah was a life lived in the presence of God under grace.

Conversely, Reformed theologians love to tell you about how God hardened Pharaoh's heart in order to supposedly prove that God is in complete control of human decision. This is a complete error and demonstrates profound ignorance of the Hebrew text. In Hebrew, the text more clearly states first that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Afterward it says that his heart hardened his heart. Then in the end, the text says that God hardened his heart.

The point is that we do actually have free will. We have the opportunity to make choices in one direction or another. God did not force Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. She was not predestined to commit sin and neither was Adam. They were placed in a world with the freedom to choose to obey God or to reject Him.

Eve was tested and she failed the test that would have otherwise proven her faithfulness.

It is vital to always understand that the concept of obedience would mean absolutely nothing if humankind did not have the will to choose.

Some Reform thinkers go so far as to assert that the reason individuals go to hell is because God created them for this purpose.

This very thought makes me want to vomit, and I choose to disagree.

Although I used to argue with these friends, now I just try to love. When it becomes necessary, I explain how I see things differently. If they shun me, or choose to mistreat me, they were probably never authentic friends to begin with. May the Lord have mercy upon us all for ever having mistreated another person. We learn from the Beatitudes that it is necessary for each of us to embrace original innocence if we are to enter the kingdom.

This is a test of my character, and I want to pass by finding consolation in God's presence. My desire is to prove by my words and actions that I am His son.

Whatever we deal with in this earthly life, we do not want to become trapped in the pity-party of a victim mentality. That's what Cain did. And Cain's actions were the product of what he had allowed to abide in his mind. If malice, hatred, lust, greed, or jealousy, etc., is allowed to live within any of us, we are not bearing the image of God which was His intention from the foundation of the world. Each of these are used by Satan as guiding voices which lead us to harm. Cain acted out of hatred and jealousy—thereby proving just exactly whose son he was. He obeyed the adversarial voice he had allowed to live within his being. And just like every similar person in the Bible who violated *Torah*, God held him accountable for his actions. And the text shows us that he could have made a choice. Nevertheless, he stubbornly refused.

Others' actions and choices or even their theological preferences should not prevent any of us from sincerely praying for their families or keep us from lovingly helping them when they are in need. None of us should become arrogant. Assuredly God will teach us through others with whom we disagree.

In keeping with Moses' teaching, Jesus also taught that we should love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. And we should love our neighbors as we love and care for ourselves. And we should not expect anything in return. God, Himself, will make up the difference.

When somebody hurts you, it is an opportunity to forgive and to love. On this note, Jesus said that if we were unwilling to forgive those having committed wrongs against us, neither would we be forgiven by our Father in heaven (see Matthew 6:15).

This is a hard statement for most of us to bear. The point is that our heavenly Father has demonstrated His love and provision for each of us while our hearts were yet turned against Him. So then what right do any of us have to withhold forgiveness from those who offend us?

God is love. He desires that all would come to the knowledge of the Truth—which means that God desires to reveal

Himself to all of humankind as their benevolent heavenly Father. We are the agents of His love in a needy world. When we help those around us we are helping the Holy One of Israel. Proverbs 19:17 teaches, "Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed."²⁹²

And we have to keep in mind that there are unseen spiritual events taking place in the cosmos around us. Our choices, attitudes, behaviors, and actions affect what happens in the spiritual world.

On the point of providing correctives for Reformed theology there is more to say regarding God's love.

Always remember Jesus' clear statement in John 3:16. It begins, "for God so loved the world."

Who does it say God loved? John tells us that God loved the entire world."

Notice that the verse does not say "for God so loved just the very few elect people on Earth" or that "God only loved the divinely predestined people in the world."

No.

We are instructed to understand once again that God loved the world and that He sent His Son so that whoever would put faith in Him would have the *aionios* life. Herein, we also take note of personal volition. Everyone has choices. Just who and what we become in this world is a progression.

On the topic of election and predestination, I highly suggest that since individuals from the time of ancient Israel onward have mixed ego with interpretation in order to identify themselves, supposedly, as God's elect, that it is best just to leave this topic alone. History has demonstrated that everyone likes to establish arguments that prove God was speaking of them in the Bible. And we take note of this in early Christian and ongoing Orthodoxy and through the Reformation.

The discussion becomes a perverse egotistical sickness wherein the topic gives rise to combatants. If someone really needs to prove they are among the elect of God, maybe they can go form

²⁹² Proverbs 19:17 ESV

a good ole boy club over in the corner and then eventually argue amongst themselves who is truly elect.

The humble never have to engage in any such conversation, much less invent doctrines on the topic.

In its simplest sense, those who are spoken to by *Yehovah* or the Holy One have literally been called by *Yehovah*. If *Yehovah* told any of them, "Here is what I desire for you to do," they understand that God has given them a destination. God's revealed intention for our lives is His "pre-destination," will, or His purpose. But not everyone chooses to listen to the voice of God. Therefore, some do not walk in His pre-destination. It is very simple.

A few of my Reformed friends insist upon complicating the topic explaining just exactly which doctrines must be intellectually believed and confessed in order for an elect person to prove themselves as such. However, no author in Scripture ever gives a list of doctrines as non-negotiables to prove this supposed election or predestination. I prefer to stick with the Bible and in particular, with the teachings of Jesus. These well-intentioned friends twist Paul's teachings this way and that way and combine all of it with Calvinism to the point that I am afraid they can no longer see the forest through the trees. And I should say that I intend this as a light-hearted commentary on their positions—which in fact are not all exactly identical.

I find some humor in the fact that some of my Reformed friends make the argument on the basis of doctrine whereas my Jewish friends make the argument on the basis of bloodline. I am baffled as to why anyone feels the need to even have the discussion. Paul addressed the topic as Hebraic faith and spirituality was passing into ownership by the Gentiles in order to make the case that God had not forgotten the Jews. The bottom line is that God has good intentions for all of us if we will listen to His voice and obey.

When God does speak to someone, this does not give anyone an elite status. Neither does the topic of predestination. In his discussion on election and predestination, Heiser gives an example or two wherein individuals or the nation were predestined

for certain events to have taken place, and yet these never actually took place because circumstances changed.

For those who feel that they must make better sense of these concepts from an informed biblical perspective, consult the work of Dr. Michael S. Heiser. You might search online for “errors of Reform theology Michael Heiser” and see what you come up with. The benefit Heiser offered was his extensive understanding of biblical Hebrew. Therefore, he was able to identify errors in Reformed theology which others had not thought to consider. In all of this discussion, Heiser relied upon the Scriptures rather than the opinions of fallible human beings.

Personally speaking, I find little reason to ever waste time arguing about a person’s supposed elect or predestined status. The topic is above my pay grade. Instead, my goal is to walk out a living relationship with the Holy One of the *Ish-raah-el-ites* and to teach others how to do the same.

We reiterate the point that an important component of the *aionios* life is entry into the gates of the kingdom. Those who walk with the Lord before His throne in the *aiona* and with Him here on Earth will also be with Him in paradise after their earthly death.

Once again, the well-intended Reform thinker is probably going to say that anyone who claims that they have experiences of standing before God’s throne is insane. This is due to inexperience and because they genuinely desire to protect congregants from falsehood. While the position seems commendable, it is also rooted in fear. And it does not allow individuals to walk as priests before God. Reformers raise up elders, who in some sense, limit and control the religious experiences of the congregants.

“Mysticism” has become a dirty word in certain denominations. However, if we rule out the acknowledgment of the validity of mystical experience, there would be nobody in the Bible left to talk about—except perhaps the wicked. And if we read closely, even they too were sometimes recorded as having had mystical divine-human encounters.

Diverse mysterious phenomena took place when individuals encountered the Word and when they gained entry into the *aiona*. To deny that God has continued His workings among humankind is

an anti-Christ teaching. In other terms, Jesus never taught that one day divine-human encounter was going to cease. Those who have arrived at such a conclusion did not get this from Jesus. Instead they churned and twisted Scripture introducing rational deduction upon biblical texts that are taken out of context. Recall the example dialogue presented earlier between Mr. Religious Expert and the student of the Bible who we called, "Junior."

Again, I have many greatly loved friends in the Reformed movement, but just as it is wrong for them to tell students of the Bible that the greater works Jesus said we will do is to bring intellectual theological theoretical salvation to the world, it is also corrupt to legislate cessationist religion while banning subjective spirituality implying that this is what was prescribed in the Scriptures.

Moreover, we have to take care in separating what we have gained from our religious traditions from what is actually taught in the Scriptures. Our heritages are fallible. And when we superimpose these over the texts of the Bible we end up with syncretistic fallacy.

There is nothing ludicrous about an individual believing that she or he can actually be raised up into the presence of God with the saints who have gone before us. Visionary experiences span the pages of Scripture. We saw this explicitly in the lives of Peter, James, and John in the transfiguration. To say that these kinds of experiences do not exist today is to assert personal authority over the authority of the Bible. Furthermore, those who say such things make themselves guilty of shutting the way into heaven.

Jesus spoke against Jewish leaders in His own time who committed the same crime.

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.²⁹³

For the record, I was once part of a Reformed congregation where manifestations of dreams, visions, and angelic visitation

²⁹³ Matthew 23:13 NIV

were embraced; however this is a rarity. For those who may still remember me from that place, I miss fellowship with all of you at The Barn.

It is amazing when one of my conservative Reformed friends unexpectedly experiences some aspect of the mystical reality of the kingdom and reports what they saw or how it affected his or her life. Quite often, ones such as these are going to be silenced, stripped of their eldership, and put out of more conservative congregations. I can only imagine that this would be the same for many of our Jewish counterparts.

Conversely, it can also become problematic when some churches or leaders embrace false forms of Hebraic subjectivity. Those who turn out to be maniacal leaders use this as a means to establish power and influence over the lives of others. What we typically end up with are myopic cultic factions. This was seen in some instances of what was known as the Shepherding Movement in the 1970s and 80s, wherein religious leaders prescribed and controlled the paths of the lives of their congregants.

This still goes on today. Individuals fall prey to the snare of seeking their religious leaders approval to the sick degree that they allow him or her to control their lives. In some cases the leader chooses what job a person will take or decides who they will marry.

These groups are the fruit of the idolization of religious leaders by members of the religious community. When congregants adoringly and ignorantly live for the consoling affirmation, approval, and recognition of their supposed spiritual teachers, this mindset and these activities are the precursors to deep trouble.²⁹⁴

We have to be very careful in regarding anyone as a prophet. Although God may give every one of us prophetic empowerment in the *olam* or the *aion*, this should not give license to assumption of an egotistical title. Supposed prophetic cultic

²⁹⁴ To learn more about the Shepherding Movement, search for information by S. David Moore or obtain the following publication: S. David Moore, *The Shepherding Movement: Controversy and Charismatic Ecclesiology*, Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series 27 (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 45.

communities arise wherein highly revered individuals are placed upon a pedestal. Constituents of the community hope that they too will one day be chosen by the leadership to shepherd others. Eventually, this dynamic leads to disappointment and destruction in people's lives. The story of Jim Jones in Guyana serves as a horrific but applicable example of the worst extreme in my own generation.

For my own part, when I hear of particular individuals being singled out and spoken of today as prophets, I feel ill. I have seen three too many cases where such ones stand up in front of the congregation and make all kinds of pronouncements that never come to pass. I recall a so-called prophet telling a man in our church about the future ministry God was calling him to undertake through her supposed words from God. He asked her, "What about my cancer?" In fact, he passed away a short time thereafter.

We have to face the fact that just as it was in the Old Testament, individuals faked being prophets in order to feed their egos, manipulate others, and to rob individuals of offerings that should have been given to the Lord in some other way. Some people are just looking for attention. They desire for others to entrust themselves to them.

Often these supposed prophets drive around in shiny new cars and live privileged lifestyles. They promise the naïve that they too will have these earthly luxuries if they will just listen and have faith.

Although Paul told us not to despise prophecy, thoroughly test it. And if the so-called prophet is attempting to engender themselves to you, my advice is that you should walk away. Test the word, but walk away. None of us owes anyone anything with respect of a person's supposed prophetic word.

One time I was teaching on this topic and as a complete Freudian slip, I described these false statements as "pathetic words." And then when I realized what had come out of my mouth, I began to laugh. How fitting that mistake was!

These days, when a supposed Prophet has been invited to speak at our church, I don't bother going. I realize that it is best for me to be judicious about what I allow to enter my ears. If the person is off base, I really don't want my energy to be wasted by

passing judgment upon them. That affects who I am. I would just rather spend time worshiping or getting things done around the house. I want to invest my time in that which brings peace to my soul.

In this season of my life, I appreciate having peace and quiet so that I can pray and write. I do not place myself under any legalism regarding religious duties. And for that matter, if I had to choose, I would rather attend a prayer meeting than a church service.

I trust that the Lord can speak prophetically through anyone at any time. Recently, I was very discouraged about something I discovered pertaining to our family history. What I perceived as tremendous wrongdoing had occurred. When I was speaking to a friend about it, in one or two sentences, he offered a completely different perspective on why the Lord might have allowed the event to happen. As his words sank in, healing began to permeate my soul. To the best of my understanding, that was a true prophetic Word. It resulted in *yeshuah*. And the presence of the One Who exists as *Yeshuah* was invited into the event.

The point of walking in a priesthood is that none of us needs hierarchical leadership. Each of us stands before the Lord on equal ground. In the Hebraic paradigm, the Lord Himself is our Teacher. And just as iron sharpens iron, so also individuals around us help us along the way. However, the recognition stands that even our most respected friends are fallible. We are taught from the life and teachings of Jesus, as was written down by John, that Jesus did not entrust Himself to men because He knew what resided in men. And in the narrative of the Gospels, among Jesus' disciples, we understand that these were men of very limited understanding who sometimes made tremendous mistakes.

A popular colloquialism reinforcing the valuable tool of skepticism in discernment advises that we should take what we hear with a grain of salt. Well-intended people are going to lead each of us far astray if we do not test what they have told us with what we hear in the Word or the presence of God. And we don't always have to be able to explain why a person's advice may be

wrong, but we are accountable to the Lord for whether or not we follow His instruction in the matter.

There are times that we know in our spirit by discernment that we should cover our ears and walk away from a religious teacher. And it is very important that we heed the quiet voice of the Lord. It is not our job to argue or to justify our position unless the Lord has made that abundantly clear. Just find a way to quickly move on.

Each of us struggles with immaturity on some level. That does not mean that we have to open our mouths and admit as much by what we let come out.

If you argue with a fool, bystanders might not know which one of you is a fool. Proverbs 26:4 states, “Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you yourself will be just like him.”

I don’t always agree with what I hear from the pulpit. On the other hand, I have never gone up to a pastor and told him or her, “I’m going to take your sermon with a grain of salt.” Not only would that be rude or disrespectful, but it would get some strange looks. The point here is that, unless the Lord were to have directed me to do so, I am not going to engage in an argument. Moreover, we have to look for ways to be kind—especially to those who are naïve. And all of us are probably naïve. What matters is what I do with what I understand to be erroneous teaching, and that I do this understanding that the Lord has told me to take such action.

In my own flesh I may think I need to correct a person, but instead I need to heed the direction of the Word of the Lord—and simply move on if that is how He has directed me.

Each of us was intended to have become bearers of the image of God. The Bible does not teach that we were supposed to become bearers of the image of our priests and pastors. And heaven forbid that any of us feels the need to bear the image of a prophet!

Just as Jesus was setting an example for posterity, in John 2:24 we are told that Jesus did not entrust himself to men because He knew the shortsightedness, ignorance, and the uninformed or evil biases that resided in men. This is my own paraphrase of the

verse. Immediately, thereafter the text of John's Gospel introduced his audience to Nicodemus with the phrase, "Behold the man."

Today everyone looks at Nicodemus as a hero because he later became a follower of Jesus, however, this pharisaical religious leader was steeped in ignorance that disqualified him as an authentic teacher regarding *Ish-rah-el*.

The point in the text is that Nicodemus did not have any clue whatsoever regarding what it meant to have been birthed into the spiritual realm in accordance with the experience of Jacob at *Peniel*. Jacob became *Ish-rah-el* because he saw God after he entered into the angelic realm. The term "Israel" merely references the nation whereas the phrase "*Ish-rah-el*" speaks of the namesake of the priesthood that God desired to raise up into His presence.

Today, well-intended Christians mutilate the narrative regarding Nicodemus in John's Gospel. He came to Jesus to discover precisely how it was that Jesus and His disciples were performing signs and wonders. And this is the ultimate focus of our discussion.

Even though the biblical text is clear about the religious leader's purpose in visiting Jesus under the cover of nightfall, well-intended but mistaken Christians twist the passage making it seem as if Nicodemus was looking for intellectual instructions on how to get into heaven after he died.

Well-meaning teachers in Christendom, who ignorantly rely upon the traditions in which they were raised, twist the Scriptures quite often—which is why we need to be empowered by skepticism and discernment and why each of us has to test what is taught by bringing all of this before the Lord. Oftentimes, priests, pastors, and teachers just reiterate what they were taught by their own religious traditions—demonstrating a lack of ability to critically read and properly apply the passage in the context wherein it was written.

So then, I want my Christian audiences to realize this mistaken interpretation and misdirection in spirituality and to realize the actual purpose of the passage.

Jesus was pointing the way back into the *aion* in order that Nicodemus would comprehend that it was through embrace of the *aionios* life that individuals could become empowered to perform signs and wonders.

It was that simple.

Just as human babies passed through their mother's water when being birthed into the world, so also birth into the realm of the spirit came by passage through water. Remember how Noah passed through the water and was raised up into the clouds in the ark. Recall the namesake of Moses as the one taken up out of the water. Think of Jacob who passed through the waters of the Jabbok River prior to encountering the Word of God. Observe that the Israelites passed through the Red Sea on their three-day journey into the wilderness, and that they cleansed themselves with water before gathering at the base of Mount Sinai where they encountered the Word of God. Think about Ezekiel who stood in or by the River *Chebar* when the heavens were opened and he saw the radiance of the Holy One of Israel with him in the clouds. Even passage through the cloud was a form of birth through water. And after this, consider what John the Baptist was doing in the wilderness at the Jordan. Individuals confessed their sins and were raised up above the water that represented a second birth. Just as they had come into the world through their mother's water, so also they were being born of the spirit or into the *aiona*, in the namesake of Moses—just like the priests in the ancient times who washed in the laver before entry into the holy place or the holy of holies.

Jesus taught that demons could not cross water. Although we may not fully see and comprehend what takes place in the spiritual world, cleansing and passage through water was and remains as a key component for preparation and entry into the kingdom. Furthermore, the case can be made that cleansing or passage through water provided spiritual protection for those who had confessed their sins.

Jesus taught,

When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. Then it says, "I will return to my house from which I came." And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and

the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation.²⁹⁵

Once a person confessed sins, the demonic influence which daily tormented and constantly brought the sin to remembrance and that maniacally re-enlivened the activity in their lives was forced out of and away from its earthly inhabitant.

As a side-note, we learn something interesting from Jesus—having cast a legion of demons out of a man and into a herd of pigs. The pigs thereafter ran into the water and drowned.

I have been told that pigs are very good swimmers, however after they were filled with demons, they perished under the surface of the water. Is it fair to observe that demons can't float?

I intended the last statement with some humor. Nevertheless, in the Scriptures, we take note that water provides a portal for birth through which entities in the demonic realm cannot follow.

Merely confessing the generality that one was a sinner according to the Fundamentalist Evangelical formula has no power to break spiritual bondage because choices, deeds, and character that have been hidden in darkness are never brought into the light. By specifically confessing your sins, you are taking responsibility and revoking the license you gave the enemy to deceive you and to take you captive. Know for certain that God is watching and listening when we go down to the river.

Darby's and today's Evangelicalism, which have focused upon telling oneself the truth that they had been forgiven in order to find freedom from guilt, and having to repeat this hour by hour and day-in and day-out and year by year, is just empty manmade powerless spirituality designed to make individuals feel better about themselves.

I was given a book by a friend who knew I was at seminary studying, and with kindness, she wanted to offer something encouraging. It was written by a popular Reformed author to help individuals who doubted their "eternal salvation" in the Orthodox context of discussion. Essentially, individuals were instructed to

²⁹⁵ Matthew 12:43-45 ESV

learn and re-learn and to repeat to themselves Reformed doctrine. It amounted to self-help.

Adherents to these kinds of humanly invented spiritualities might feel better for a moment or two, but then inevitably the tormenter returns to remind them of their evil choices and actions. And this will continue for the entirety of their earthly lives because this Evangelical counterfeit spirituality was never the actual means to freedom that was intended by God or that was taught and modeled in the Scriptures.

Some of you know exactly what I am talking about. Every day, again and again, you cannot help but think of those shameful acts over and over. Each new day is just another day when your sins are set before your eyes by the accuser of the brethren. You lie to yourself saying, "It's no big deal." And in so doing, you continually allow yourself to be robbed of tangible freedom. Your silence actually perpetuates the ongoing unending voice of Satan who is the accuser of the brethren. For some readers, the conviction of the Holy Spirit right now is undeniable. The good news is that you can become free once and for all. And although you think it may literally kill you to confess your most regrettable acts of wickedness, do so faithfully knowing that there is One who will resurrect you to new life in the *aion*. And then, in the namesake of Moses, go and be cleansed and be raised up above the water to a place of protection in the arms of God.

By contrast to the fraudulent facsimile of merely confessing that one is a sinner, confession of actual sins confronts the spiritual powers of wickedness who hold guilt and shame over our heads—which will do anything and everything to convince each of us that we do not need to embarrass ourselves by bringing these matters into light with another human being. However, by naming the wrongful actions we have done, we simultaneously name the evil spiritual authors of those behaviors which then must leave. It is our oath of secrecy that provides their legal right to abide within us. Comparatively, it is our verbal confession before another human being that tears down their home. When the secret oath to remain silent is gone, spiritual powers of wickedness have lost the right to inhabit their abiding places in our presence. And the accuser of the

brethren is silenced. His mouth is shut. This is how to permanently end guilt and shame. And it is what took place at the Jordan. Nevertheless, fear is a cruel dictator that will keep us imprisoned in silence all the way to the grave if it can.

Although confession forces the evil entity to leave, it is not dead. Instead, it travels about seeking someone else, who by their choices, behavior, and character, have given license to be inhabited by the power of wickedness. While it seeks another person to make its slave, interestingly it cannot pass through water. Ultimately if it finds no one else to inhabit, it will return to its original home. And in some cases, it will gather and bring other evil entities to once again take control of that person. Nevertheless, cleansing with water, and of course, future confession of sin with repeated cleansing with water, provided continual safety for those turning to walk in faith with the Lord.

The ancient priests in the temple sometimes used the laver more than once in the course of a day.

As often is necessary, confess, rinse, and repeat. Confess, rinse, and repeat.

Therefore, we understand that cleansing and passage through water not only provided entry into the *aionios* life, but it also provided protection. And this is why baptism followed confession of sins at the Jordan. Participants moved closer to entry into the *aiona*. Although Jesus did not need to confess sins, He understood the necessity of passage through water prior to His own entry into the spiritual realm that immediately followed His baptism. Luke 4 begins by explaining His experience. Recall that the term “wilderness” in Hebrew is “*midbar*” which can also be translated literally as “in the Word.” While Jesus may have departed into the desert, because of the visionary encounter He had, we do also see that He went into the spiritual realm of the Word.

Jesus told Nicodemus, unless a person is born again, she or he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Nevertheless, the inquisitive pharisee was clueless regarding the lost and forgotten faith and spirituality of the ancient *Ish-rah-el-ites* who saw beyond the veil of Earth into the hidden realm of the *olam* or the *aiona*. It was by faithfully carrying out what they

had seen and heard that individuals performed what they had received.

Rather than recollecting the ancient heritage of his forefathers, Nicodemus fumbled around commenting on entering his mother's womb a second time. And Jesus upbraided him for impostorously considering himself to have been a qualified teacher of Israel.

It is evident that the Second Temple leaders, having returned from Assyrian and Babylonian captivity, had lost touch with the ancient spirituality of their forefathers. And this is precisely why it came as such a surprise to the Pharisees and Sadducees that Jesus could perform miracles like those of the prophets.

Jesus and His disciples were just simply walking in the same spirituality as had the prophets.

However, as was demonstrated by Nicodemus, all of the Hebraic legacy from the time of Abraham had passed away into myth and legend. Israel had lost and forgotten how to embrace the treasure of Jacob.

Moses met with God in the cloud, and He desired for the nation to join Him there. Finally, at the start of what eventually became known as the first century A.D., the time had come for the baptism of the nation and for their birth into heaven.

The narrative of John regarding Nicodemus' inquiry was intended to explain how to become an *Ish-raah-el-ite*. And in actuality, this was the purpose for the composition of John's Gospel. However, churchianity perverted Jesus' and John's ancient interests by commandeering the text for a different use than it was intended. Intellectual theoretical salvation has been substituted for living encounter by birth through water into the *aiona*. And so the narrative of Nicodemus has been used to teach potential converts how to become born again, which in today's common definition means that they are ensured entry into heaven after death because of acquired knowledge and by praying a canned prayer.

Once again, nobody can ever say that this is wrong or that this is not used by the Lord as a stepping stone toward an authentic relationship with Him. The thief on the cross was assured entry into Paradise with Jesus, and he did even less than so-called "born-

again” Christians do in praying the sinner’s prayer. Although the text of John is misunderstood and incorrectly applied, God remains at work desiring that all would turn to Him in repentance. God is God—despite our ignorance. Thanks be to God for His throne, authority, and mercy!

Nevertheless, our desire is to discover the answer to Nicodemus’ actual inquiry.

We understand that it was through divine-human encounter in the mysterious hidden realm of the *aion*a that empowerment and authorization to perform miracles could take place. Jesus did what He saw the Father doing. He followed instructions that He had received in the *aion*a.

In an upcoming context following Jesus’ discussion with Nicodemus, while explaining His healings on the Sabbath, Jesus told the Jewish leaders:

I assure you that the Son can’t do anything by himself except what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. The Father loves the Son and shows him everything that he does. He will show him greater works than these so that you will marvel.²⁹⁶

In so many cases such as this, Fundamentalists, Reformers, and Evangelicals have caused Christendom to invent and to superimpose new foreign ideas over the texts of the Scriptures when they read, rather than looking inductively at the Bible without their theological biases and agendas. Sometimes they are far too afraid to admit that they do not measure up to the spirituality that the authors of the Scriptures actually intended. Therefore, they find creative ways to avoid taking Jesus’ teaching literally. In so doing, the well-intended pass along falsehood.

The traditional response regarding how it was that Jesus had performed signs and wonders has revolved around the doctrine that Jesus was God. What we take note of in this incorrect answer is that a shortsighted naïve connection has been made between a man-made religious doctrine and miraculous empowerment. Well

²⁹⁶ John 5:19-20 CEB

then, how did Elijah or anyone else in the Bible perform miracles? Suddenly, we find that the doctrine is not applicable to humans. However, Jesus was a human. He ate and drank and dwelt among the disciples. The woman with the flow of blood touched His robe while walking near Him in a crowd. She was healed. So then we apprehend that Jesus existed as flesh and blood.

People like to avoid answering difficult questions if they can get by instead waving the magic wand of religious doctrine. And herein we realize a philosophical controlling dynamic of religious tradition. Rule number one is that if people hope to be accepted within a religious tradition, they surrender any and all right to question said religious tradition. This unwritten rule shackles and gags students of Scripture. The tradition institutes control over its constituency fostering anti-intellectualism. To gain approval and membership in the religio-political party requires acceptance of the organization's intellectual conclusions. That is the end of the discussion. And so this explains, to a large degree, why this book was not written more than a hundred years ago.

In a reaction to their own ignorance, inexperience, fear, and insecurity, the forefathers of intellectual faith found it to be much easier to invent a safer form of religion. And quite sadly, this is what has been passed down throughout much of Christendom today. The mystery of encounter with *Yehovah* has been demonized and forbidden. Much of the Orthodox tradition prefers objective religion that it can control and submissive congregants who will behave as they have been told. Churchianity prefers a religion that lets people get on with their lives as they choose.

And on the matter of lacking experience, this is not a valid excuse that justifies invention of religious doctrines. Or rather instead, it should be stated that anyone has the freedom to assert whatever they want. However this does not mean that anyone's conclusions give them divine authority. This was one of the major problems shared by Second Temple Judaism and the Orthodox Christian movement. The collective ideas of humans who were filled with ignorance and religious bias supposedly empowered them to inflict physical punishment upon members of the community. Just because a majority rulership establishes itself does not mean that

its efforts are inspired by God or that its decisions have been divinely authorized. Earlier we brought to light how this vindictive and cruel behavior played itself out in the life of the Reformer, John Calvin.

Walking in the spirituality presented in the Bible has proven to have been far too overwhelming for most people to even consider. It was easier to say that all of the aspects of mystical divine-human encounter passed away with the apostles. And accordingly, the pathway of entry into the kingdom has also been obscured and forsaken.

Today we have a form of replacement spirituality. So-called “believers” are taught merely to confess that they are sinners. Confession of actual sins would be too awkward and could become messy. Actual confession of specific sins might injuriously cost individuals their polished reputations. And so tragically, much of Christendom has reformed and revised what was taught and modeled for posterity in the Bible.

The church developed schemes of dispensationalism in order to exonerate itself from pursuing that which Jesus asserted was the ancient life. And accordingly, those culpable have robbed posterity of the ancient inheritance of the faithful *Ish-rah-el-ites*. This was the tangible, visible, audible, palpable embrace of the Holy One of Israel along with the reception of His empowerment and authority to heal the sick, to overcome bondage, to cast out demons, and the list could go on and on.

Christendom needs to return to unadulterated reading of the Bible. If Jesus said we should be casting out demons, well then shouldn’t we be reading further in order to embrace our God-given responsibility? Essentially and unfortunately, denominationalism has invented new forms of hoodwinking religion that they all have fictitiously labeled as the most authentic forms of Christianity. As a matter of convenience, these ones have eradicated anything and everything that might be distasteful in the Bible.

I am going to be the first one to admit that confession of my sin is probably the hardest thing I have ever done. And I have found this to be of continuing necessity throughout my life. And if you have ever confessed your deepest, darkest most shameful secrets

to another living person, you know by experience just exactly what I am talking about. To confess your sins is to taste death. However, this is the path to freedom that allows one to dance before God and to raise holy hands in His presence in the acknowledgment that each of us has truly been forgiven.

And it does not matter if you say that you really don't want to be a dancer. Because when you become free from your past, so much weight is going to be lifted that you are going to jump up and down with joy. You're going to soar in the heavens. And you're probably going to cry. And you're probably going to be happier than you have ever been before.

The accuser of the brethren is silenced by the action of confession. And when individuals experience the actual relief of having brought darkness into the light, they also feel how the spiritual powers of wickedness are cast away from them. In one instance, I literally felt this happen. This is the starting point for reception of spiritual authority, for example in the casting out of demons.

Recall Clement's comment that preparation was required before some mysteries could possibly precede other mysteries. Undoubtedly, this had much to do with consecration that was needed in order to safely enter into the holy realm.

I heard a story recently about a missionary who had been called upon to cast out a demon. As the man began the exorcism, the demon spoke accusingly through the demoniac saying, "You stole a chicken." In fact, as it turned out, the man had actually stolen a chicken. Somehow, even though the people gathered round did not know about the theft, the demon knew about it. And the demon used this to defy the exorcism.

And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: insomuch that handkerchiefs or aprons were carried away from his body to the sick, and the diseases departed from them. And the evil spirits went out. But certain traveling Jews who were exorcists took it upon themselves to exercise the name of the Lord *Yeshuah* over those with evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by *Yeshuah*; Whom Paul preaches." And these were seven sons of a Jewish chief priest named

Sceva who did this. And the evil spirit answered and said to them, "Jesus I know, and Paul, I know; but who are you?" And the demoniac leapt on them, and mastered both of them, and prevailed against them; so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, that dwelt at Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. Many also of them that had already upheld faith came, confessing, and declaring their deeds.²⁹⁷

Note that the event even caused those who had already given their lives to the Word of God to come and to confess their sinful deeds. The lesson learned is that nobody should play around with exorcism without consecration. And it was not up to men to invent the means of consecration. God had provided the way.

Confession of sin is both very risky and very necessary if we are to pursue God according to His terms and so that spiritual powers of wickedness can be destroyed. You place yourself and your false reputation of perfection upon the altar of sacrifice, but then discover that Someone else, Who was actually blameless and perfect, was already sacrificed in place of you.

Although the practice began as a Jewish rite of passage, Christians might understand that when they confess their sins the sacrifice is re-enlivened in the spiritual realm so that they are made free of the accuser of the brethren.

Even though something might be messy, there is no excuse to avoid that which we are called to do. If we hope to authentically become *Ish-raah-el-ites*, it is time to rise up to the high ground of humility, courage, and obedience. It is time to sink our teeth into the feast of the bread of heaven. A supreme sacrifice was made on the mountains of Israel so that we could confess our sins, be cleansed with water, and become set free to enter into the *aionios* life in order to stand in the presence of the Holy One of Israel.

Do you want to prepare yourself as an *Ish-raah-el-ite* today? Take courage. Ask the Lord who you need to talk to. Let your tears flow and pass through the cleansing water into freedom.

²⁹⁷ Acts 19:11-18

As a side note, recall that Jesus went to John at the Jordan to be baptized. Although He had no sin to confess, but instead perhaps because of spiritual forces of wickedness in the world, it was still necessary for Him to pass through the water. And as He was raised up, the spiritual realm was opened.

It appears that our time on Earth is a time of sorting out who God's children really are. He caused us to be born into a world allowing for choice and behavior that would prove our character and that would test whether or not divine-human faithfulness existed within each individual.

And seeing the multitudes, Jesus went up into the mountain: and when He had sat down, His disciples came to Him. And He opened his mouth and taught them, saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the Earth. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when you suffer reproach and persecution, and when liars speak all manner of evil against you for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad. For your reward is great in heaven. Evil doers such as these persecuted the prophets that were before you."²⁹⁸

Despite those who made bad choices, there are others who would become changed in character as a result of personal volition. They would realize their need for God. And as humble seekers, they would possess the kingdom of heaven, be comforted, gain an earthly inheritance, and would be thoroughly satisfied with righteousness. Such people's lives would be characterized by mercy and walking in the namesake of their ancient ancestor of faith. They

²⁹⁸ Matthew 5:2-13 Paraphrase

too, like *Ish-rah-el*, would see God. These ones would be identifiable, not by their intellectually acquired theology, but instead by their choices, behavior, and character as the children of God. God's radiance would shine through them. And God would especially look after those torn asunder by persecution like Hagar, who was put out of Abraham's house and driven away from her earthly dwelling by manipulative jealous Sarah. Ones such as these would discover their spiritual abode in the *aion* of heaven while they yet sojourned in the world.

Jesus left the multitudes and each of us with a question that does not come across so clearly in the passage. "How bad do you want to embrace your heavenly reward?" This is really God's unwritten question between every line of Scripture, "How bad do you really want Me?" If anyone yearns to embrace God, this is the longing of the soul to become an *Ish-rah-el-ite*. And this remains as the legacy of the Abrahamic Hebraic tradition.

Many of us demonstrate by our choices, actions, and character that there are limits regarding what we are willing to do or become in order to embrace God.

Christendom has provided a substitute for tangibly embracing God which today is called "salvation." This is extolled as a "free gift." And of course, this is not the *Yeshuah* or *soteria* that was offered by God in the Bible—which was the availability of obtaining God's daily help and deliverance. The *soteria* or *yeshuah* of the Scriptures was very costly and came to those willing to make considerable sacrifices in their worldly lives. Christendom's evolved form of salvation is obtainable without any experience of divine-human encounter. Salvation allegedly takes place in the church today as ones intellectually embrace and confess doctrines that are correct. Supposedly, the firm acknowledgment of these will get anyone into heaven after they die.

Have you ever heard the warning, "If something sounds too good to be true, then beware."

Whatever happened to walking in a loyal faithful relationship with God where He is at work in our lives and each of us is at work in His life? How am I at work in the life of God today?

Rather than becoming faithful to God, or becoming those who “upheld faith,” Orthodox readers of the Gospel became so-called believers—resultant to an Aristotelian rendering of the concept of *pisteuo*. They were taught to seek religious truth instead of the divine being of God Who existed as the manifestation of Truth. They were trained using the narrative of Nicodemus to become born again through ascertaining knowledge about God instead of being born of the Truth into His presence in the *aion*. Much was lost and forgotten as the theoretical doctrinal concept of salvation usurped the tangible living manifestation of *yeshuah*—which had always been the product of divine-human encounter in the *aionios* life under the *chen*, *charis*, or grace of God.

Once again, the need exists to acknowledge that a high percentage of individuals who read this book actually came to the Lord based upon the Evangelical model of being born again from John 3 mentioned here. In no way should we ever discount God’s ability to accomplish anything He wants through any means He desires. I would never say that individuals like myself who came to the Lord by means of the story of Nicodemus or by the sinner’s prayer had not established the beginnings of an authentic relationship with God.

In fact, when I was in college, I carved a belt buckle out of cedar that said “Born Again” and happily wore this for many years. And it would be decades before I would learn Greek and even more decades before I would begin to decipher the concept of the *aion*. And you can bet that in every instance that I was able, I led willing souls into the sinner’s prayer.

However, the point needs to be made clear that in the plain reading of the passage regarding the Jewish Pharisaical Teacher, he did not come to find out how to get into heaven after he died. He plainly sought to understand how it was that Jesus and His disciples were performing signs and wonders. Therefore, it is our duty to make the correction and then to proceed in the direction John actually wanted to lead his audiences.

Our interest is to understand Jesus’ teachings, not vain philosophies and theologies that are the inventions and opinions of men. Moreover, where these have usurped the teachings of Jesus,

these need to be confronted as falsehood and torn down. Perhaps we as Evangelicals can offer people a relationship with Jesus in order that they will become worshipers who find His ever present help in time of need. And for my Jewish friends, perhaps we can present the Holy One of Israel to others for the same purpose. People need to experience divine love more than anything else in this world. They need to know that the Lord is with them, speaking to them and helping them to navigate a world that is eventually going to let them down.

Keep in mind that those who walk with the Lord in this manner during their earthly lives never have to worry about not going to heaven after they die. Samuel is a terrific example in the Old Testament. We learn something important about who he became in the spiritual realm after his death when Saul sought to consult him through the medium (see 1 Samuel 28).

So then, where is it exactly that Jesus taught this free gift of intellectual acquisition of supposed religious facts? And we want to hear this directly from the mouth of Jesus. Can anyone tell us? From Jesus' own teachings, what are the alleged religious facts we need to agree with to get into heaven after death?

Lo and behold, the silence is deafening.

The point here is that you can study Jesus' teachings all that you want but you are never going to discover that He taught doctrines—the intellectualization and confession of which might supposedly have gotten anyone into heaven after death.

And this unveils the practical problem that many well-intended Fundamentalists, Reformers, and Evangelicals teach doctrines about Jesus, rather than teaching the actual teachings of Jesus. And then, why should anyone wonder why there are so few miracles today if we are not teaching what Jesus taught?

Although today's Fundamentalists, Reformers, and Evangelicals argue that they are the authentic followers of Jesus, many among them teach strange ideas that have nothing whatsoever to do with Jesus' interest to raise up seekers of His reign—who would tangibly enter into the kingdom of heaven while they yet walked the Earth.

Isn't it just amazing how each of us can be conditioned to read the Gospels in such a way that none of us actually ever realizes what Jesus did or did not teach. It is truly amazing!

However, once our eyes and ears are opened, something completely new comes into focus. A whole new set of values and concerns are set before each of us. In all of this, a different message can be heard.

When we understand that Jesus could only perform the miracles that He had seen the Father performing, we subtly become aware of the fact that He was an *Ish-raah-el-ite*. When His disciples became equipped to perform signs and wonders, this authority and empowerment was given to them in the same manner. It was proven by their works that they too had become *Ish-raah-el-ites*.

As my Jewish friends choose to read the Gospels, they might actually have a solid advantage over Christians because their minds have not been errantly conditioned by some of the mixed up ideas of Christendom. For example, you are not going to read the narrative regarding the Pharisee Nicodemus having been beguiled by the preconceived notion that he was asking Jesus how to get into heaven after death. Moreover, Jesus was a Jew writing to other Jews who were interested in the ancient spirituality of the *Ish-raah-el-ites*. Jews may more naturally read about seeking and entry into the kingdom with the expectation that such a place exists. You already know that this took place in the holy of holies in the Jerusalem temple. And if you combine this with your formative Jewish understandings of the experiences of the Judges, Prophets, and the experiences of many individuals throughout the Old Testament who also entered into the presence of God, with whom you are also familiar, you may more immediately apprehend what entry into the kingdom and encounter with the Holy One if *Ish-raah-el* was all about.

A central interest of earlier sections of *The Lost and Forgotten Spirituality of Ancient Israel* concerned the errant development of Christendom—whereas we are now more practically separating the wheat from the chaff. We have to identify and throw out the chaff and burn it up so that it does not confuse our sight from seeing and harvesting the wheat.

This last week I was considering one of the points in the Reformed Westminster Confession, and I was glad that someone had thought of this and that it had been written down for posterity. However, even as valuable as this understanding might be, it may not have any tangible value to the promotion of seeking or entering into the kingdom for any who desire to become genuine *Ish-raah-el-ites*.

Hebraic John and the Miracles of Jesus

Today we understand that John was renowned as “the beloved disciple of Jesus” in his Gospel. His account differs from that of Matthew, Mark, and Luke as the collection of narratives was specifically intended to lead readers into the practicalities of Hebraic spirituality—and in particular to provide a demonstration of what it meant to be raised up into the *aiona* on the third day of the three-day journey. John wanted to convey what it meant to have become an *Ish-raah-el-ite*.

We recall from the discussion in previous sections that many individuals in the Scriptures embarked on the three-day journey. On the last day, in some mysterious form, each one encountered the Word or the manifest presence of God.

Abraham took Isaac on a three-day journey into the wilderness, in obedience to the Word of God, in order to sacrifice his son. It was a test to see if Abraham loved God or his son more. The text cryptically explains that when he had arrived, he saw the place from afar off.

In an earlier section, I mentioned this peculiarity which was also noted by the first century Hebraic author, Philo.

How is it that anyone arrives at a destination but then still only sees it from afar off?

In that mysterious location, God provided a different sacrifice in place of Abraham’s son.

Moses, took Israel on a three-day journey, out of Egypt in order to make sacrifices to *Yehovah* and the Lord caused a great wind to separate the waters and they passed through the sea on dry ground. By contrast, when Pharaoh’s armies attempted to cross this place, they were crushed by the collapsing seas. Later, as the

freed nation passed through the wilderness, another three-day journey was arranged. Members of the nation were cleansed with water, put on new clean clothing, abstained from even touching a member of the opposite sex, and they fasted. On the last or the third day of their journey into the presence of *Yehovah*, the Word of God became manifest before them atop Mount Sinai in a terrifying array of fire and storm.

Although God had desired to raise up a nation of priests, the *Ish-raah-el-ites* who witnessed the Word were afraid for their lives and begged Moses thereafter to be their mediator with the Word. This resulted in the temporary appointment and consecration of the Aaronic priesthood which endured until the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 A.D. Nevertheless, at Pentecost when the Spirit was poured out on not only the Jews but also the Gentiles who had gathered in Jerusalem, God's desire to raise up a nation of priests was re-enlivened. Whatever was left of the Levitical Priesthood disappeared when the wrath of *Yehovah* was poured out in that time of great tribulation a few decades later.

Queen Esther was tested to see if she would risk her own life to save the Jewish people from annihilation. She fasted and prayed three-days before entering uninvited into the presence of the king. Resultantly, the Jews were saved from the wicked intent of Haman the Agagite. Before Joshua led Israel into the Promised land, they waited three-days in order to consecrate themselves.

Jonah encountered the Word, and was called to service in Nineveh. But instead of obeying, he attempted to run away. Thus began his three-day journey in the belly of a great sea creature. And there were other three-day journeys during the period of the writing of the Hebrew Scriptures as well.

All of the references provide insight into the lost and forgotten Hebraic motif of the three-day journey.

In calling God's adulterous people back to the Lord, Hosea spoke of the renewal of the treasure of Jacob. *Ish-raah-el-ites* would once again stand in the presence of the Lord.

Come, and let us return to *Yehovah*; for He has torn, and He will heal us; He has punished us, but He will make us well. After two days He will revive us: on the third day He will

raise us up, and we shall live before Him. Therefore let us know, let us move forward to know and to follow *Yehovah*. His going forth is as sure as the sunrise; and He will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain that waters the Earth.²⁹⁹

This translation came from the Masoretic Hebrew text. However, the Aramaic Bible renders verse 1 as returning to the practice of the worship of the Lord.

The third or the last day of the journey was a day of encounter that included the Lord's intervention in the lives of faithful devoted seekers. Hosea spoke with certainty because this had been his heritage as an *Ish-raah-el-ite*. Although encounter with the Word and the reception of *yeshuah* had taken place because Israel had adulterously departed from the inspired *Torah* and the protective manifest presence of the Word of God, a day of restoration was foretold.

After fleeing from the Word of God, on the third day, Jonah remembered *Yehovah*. We realize from the study of *The Lost and Forgotten Spirituality of Ancient Israel* that the Hebraic concept of remembering from *zachar* was not the same as the western European concept of recollection. In other terms, Jonah began calling forth the presence of *Yehovah* because he was in peril. In worship he declared "*Yeshuah* is from *Yehovah*!" Accordingly, Jonah desired to be encompassed by *Yehovah's Yeshuah*. He needed the second power of heaven to become manifest as his divine Rescuer. And through this prayer, the text tells us that Jonah entered into *Yehovah's* holy temple.

We are going to reiterate a point of importance. To have stood in the presence of the Holy One of Israel was identical to standing in His temple. The second power of heaven existed as the temple of the *Ish-raah-el-ites*. To have encountered the presence of *Yehovah's Yeshuah* was exactly identical to being found in *Yehovah's Yeshuah*. As we will see, John emphasized this concern in his Gospel.

Another significant point we learn from Jonah in chapter 2 is that while beneath the surface of the water, he acknowledged his

²⁹⁹ Hosea 6:1–3 Paraphrase

departure from the presence of God. He described that he had gone “down into the Earth and was imprisoned from the *aiona*.”

Throughout history the vast majority of translators have not understood the concept of the *aiona*. Therefore they have commonly rendered the term as “forever.”

Once again, Jonah wanted to gain access into *Yehovah’s* temple.

“I called to *Yehovah*, in distress. And He answered me. Out of the stomach of Sheol I cried, and You heard my voice.”³⁰⁰

In light of all we have discussed, we take note of a contrast in the text. As a prophet, Jonah belonged in the *aiona* of God’s temple, but instead, look where disobedience got him.

Regarding use of the Sabbath, Christendom has lacked understanding. In an attempt to offer a corrective, we have made the case that the Sabbath was a day provided for entry into the *qodesh* realm—also spoken of as the *aiona*. In John 5:2-17, Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath. The Jewish rulers condemned the action due to their sterilized concept of the day of rest. In the process of manufacturing an objective religion of legalistic practice of the traditions of the elders, they had lost sight of the fact that their ancient ancestors of faith had used this time to enter into the *qodesh* realm. Later, Christians reading the pericope through the objectified lens of Orthodoxy would use this passage and others like it to support the errant idea that celebration of the Sabbath as a Jewish day of rest was no longer appropriate for the followers of Christ.

There are several layers of error here. First the Jews had changed how the time of the Sabbath was celebrated. What was intended to have been a time of miraculous empowerment was changed solely into a time of physical rest. This may have been part of Daniel’s concern regarding a future ruling regime that would change the times that had been established by God. Second, in their reading of the text, early Orthodoxy assumed that the celebration of the day of physical rest was what had been intended by God.

³⁰⁰ Jonah 2:2

They did not realize that the first-century Jews had changed how the Lord's day was to have been observed by entry into the holy realm. And then a third layer of error was Orthodoxy's naïve dismissal of the Sabbath on the basis that Jesus had not used this as a day of rest. And so it logically followed that if Jesus had not found the need to rest on the seventh day, then observance of the Sabbath was no longer necessary—or so it was thought. When all of these mistakes are placed on top of Christendom never having embraced the *kiddush* breaking of the bread in order to enter into the *qodesh* realm, God's intent for the Sabbath was further pushed aside.

In Mark 10 and in Luke 10 and 18, individuals came to Jesus seeking eternal life. In each instance Jesus directed them to the Ten Commandments and to works of righteousness. It was by God's observance of the deeds of individuals on Earth that He identified His authentic children. Ones who walked in the ways of *Yehovah* proved that they were faithful. The acts of faithfulness were the essence of faith. However, Orthodoxy changed the understanding of *pistis*, *pistos*, and *pisteuo* making these revolve around intellectual belief rather than the pledge of faith and acts of faithfulness. And as the development of Orthodoxy progressed through fundamentalist development by Reformed and Evangelical thinkers, actions, works, or deeds became increasingly less important. With dispensationalism, and by supposedly, "rightly dividing the word of truth" there was no longer any kind of "deed of righteousness." Pure intellectualization of the concept of salvation had finally gained supremacy. Here again, more error was introduced. So that eternal life became the product of intellectual belief.

Orthodoxy could never have made the case that eternal life had come from keeping the Ten Commandments, however, due to their error in understanding the concept of the *aionios zoe*, as eternal life, this change helped their agenda allowing them to substitute belief in doctrines as the primary means of entry into heaven after death.

In the Hebraic understanding, Jesus was offering the ancient or the *aionios* life of prophetic empowerment that we read about in

John 5. And the fourth commandment, to remember the Sabbath day and to keep it holy, being a time to re-enliven the sacrifice through the blessing and breaking of the bread, opened the doorway into the *aion* where individuals would discover the *aionios* life.

What both sides of Judaism and Christianity should have realized from the composition of John 5 was that Jesus demonstrated proper use of the Sabbath. This was a time to enter into the presence or the temple of God in the *godesh* realm. It was a time for encounter with God's Word in order to experience the *aionios* life and to receive instructions—as each person might carry out the commission of Abraham to bless or to good-Word the nations.

After these things there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep *gate* a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a multitude of people who were sick, blind, paralyzed, and withered. And there was a particular man there who had suffered for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him and knew that he had been lying there for a long time, He said to him, "Is it your desire to be made whole?" The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man, when the water is stirred, to put me into the pool: but while I am on my way, another steps in before me." Jesus said to him, "Arise, pick up your bed, and walk." And straightway the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked. Now it was the Sabbath on that day. So the Jews said to him who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to be carrying your bed." But he answered them, "He that made me whole, told me, "Pick up your bed and walk." They asked him, "Who is the man that told you, Pick up *your bed*, and walk? But the man who had been healed did not know Who it was; for Jesus had moved away, into the crowd. Later, Jesus found the man in the temple, and said to him, "Look, you have been made whole: sin no more, lest something worse falls upon you." The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus Who had made him

whole. And for this cause the Jews persecuted Jesus, because he did these things on the Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, "My Father works even until now, and I work." Because of this, the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only broke the Sabbath, but also called God his own Father, making himself equal with God.³⁰¹

There is nothing wrong with a day of rest. However, simply resting physically missed a primary intent for observance of the Sabbath. The blessing and breaking of the bread with the *kiddush* opened the doorway into the holy *qodesh* realm by re-enlivenment of the sacrifice. Using the Hebrew means of explanation, seekers were availed entry into the *olam*. They embraced the additional soul of the *neschama yeterah* with spiritual eyes and ears to see and hear the voice of God.

Although God established the seventh day to provide a time and place of rest for humankind to meet with one another, if there was no divine-human meeting, then the intentions of the Lord had been missed entirely.

Due to the Deuteronomists and the Second Temple's relegation of the secret things to the Lord, as they emphasized using Deuteronomy 29:29, the way into the *olam* was shut. The subjectivity of the prophets had gotten in the way of the religious leadership for far too long. And it had been shut down, partially by eliminating worship of the name of *Yehovah* and furthermore by using the verse to solely entitle the Aaronic priests with mystical experiences. None of the Levites would dare to defy the Jewish religious leadership.

The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.³⁰²

Instead, the verse should have been understood differently. In order to actually carry out the Law ones needed the guidance of the Word of God. And in order to obtain the Word of God, they had

³⁰¹ John 5:1–18 modified ASV

³⁰² Deuteronomy 29:29 KJV

to enter into the *aiona* or the *olam* of God's presence. Herein, we get rid of the word "forever" and instead translate the phrase literally in the passage as *eis ton aiona*.

The secret things belong to the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children in the *aiona*, [or the *olam*] that we may do all the words of this law.

It was by entry into the hidden realm of God's presence that specific guidance was given by the voice of the Lord in order that Earth's inhabitants might safely navigate life.

Moving ahead in the chapter, we note that the Jews habitually studied the Scriptures in order to find the *aionios* life, however they were mistaken in their vain efforts. The *aionios* life came by direct encounter with the Word of God. Looking back in the chapter at the Sabbath, the man's healing, and Jesus' explanation that He only did what He saw the Father doing, we get a more complete understanding of how the faithful were to have carried out the calling of Abraham.

By abolishing worship of the name of *Yehovah*, the way into the *qodesh* had been removed. And by taking away the mystical or secret things of the Lord from the common people and relegating divine-human encounter solely to the Aaronic priests, the Deuteronomist had sterilized the vibrant faith practices that were first known to Abraham by his participation in offering sacrifices through the Priestly Order of Melchizedek. Israelites no longer became *Ish-rah-el-ites*. However, Jesus was restoring these ancient understandings and faith practices. Although its purpose has been forgotten over the last 2,000 years, it may be interesting for Jews today to apprehend that Jesus restored the *kiddush*.

The early Orthodox bishops also gelded Christendom with their cessationist agenda. The entirety of entry into the Holy realm was discarded at the expense of satisfying the religio-political agendas of Orthodoxy. And the way into the kingdom remained sealed shut due to the western European concept of remembrance being superimposed over translation of *zachar* in the Hebrew and

anamnesis in the Greek.³⁰³ And because Christendom became focused on recollecting and commemorating communion, instead of understanding that they were intended to have re-enlivened the sacrifice, the entirety of entry into the *qodesh* realm was erased from the knowledge base of Christianity.

As information passed through the corrosive vortices of time, the way into the *aiona* and the experience of the *aionios* life, which was the central feature of the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace was lost and forgotten.

We are forced to confront the fact that an enduring problem of Christendom and Judaism has been their habitual practice of converting actual experienceable remembrances into ceremonial rituals. This is why very few among either constituency actually break bread in order to enter into God's very presence. Traditions have lied to their constituencies teaching them that this is not possible. And some among those who have experienced such mystical manifestations have lived in the fear of being discovered. They are like Clement who felt it was just safer and better for everyone if those having discovered the means of divine-human encounter were never to have written this down.

To a certain degree, I must agree with Clement. When we write something down, individuals who are unable to judge their own qualifications try things and fail. Such ones as these may lack real-time spiritual guidance. There can be longstanding lifechanging implications. This was Clement's concern. Moreover, he understood, as we have already explained, that it was possible for those not having lived lives of consecration to have brought very real harm upon themselves. Clement referenced this as putting a sword in the hands of a child.

New Testament writers spoke of this as "*aionios* judgment." Paul warned against this in 1 Corinthians 11. He spoke of those who were sick and dying due to this very predicament. In John 5:24 Jesus explained that approach to the *aionios* realm was safe for those having committed themselves in a faithful relationship to the Father.

³⁰³ ἀνάμνησιν

Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears My Word and upholds faith in Him Who sent Me has *aionios* life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life.³⁰⁴

In the sense of the potential for incurring harm, Clement's protective hesitancy, not wanting to put a sword in the hands of a child, can be understood. There is the sense that individuals who do not understand the holy realm, should not play games with the Gatekeeper. And on this matter, I want to say something very positive regarding the Reform movement. Many Reformed churches will not allow strangers to partake in communion. Although the celebration may have been ritualized, the knowledge that potential harm can take place is a valid part of their prohibition. Furthermore, having used the comment of "ritualization," I should note that this boils down to the being of each individual partaking. Many eat the bread and drink the wine just because they have come to that part of the religious ceremony. Therefore, I am not disparaging the practice of communion in a church ceremony or saying that all of this is empty ritualism. I would not want to discount God's ability to act in anyone's life simply on the basis that actions took place in the context of an institutionalized religious ceremony. Nevertheless, very few individuals alive today have any idea that the bread was broken so that we might receive ears to hear and eyes to see.

Jesus emphasized the re-enlivening of the sacrifice through the breaking of the bread at the start of the Sabbath. Although Christians memorialize this as the Lord's supper or the last supper, and this is the basis of ceremonial communion, I cannot think of any mainline denomination that teaches this had anything to do with entry into the holy realm on the Sabbath. For that matter, none that I know of teach that actual tangible entry into the holy realm is made possible based upon the blessing and the breaking of the bread. By and large, we are forced to acknowledge that these are points of ignorance in Christendom. We are not holding that against anyone, but instead hope to offer a corrective.

³⁰⁴ John 5:24 modified ASV

As I discussed the concept of the *kiddush* with my friend Loren Caudill, author of “The Messianic Matrix: A Theological Abstract of Pentecost,” he commented on the point that in Luke 24, the disciples who encountered the risen Jesus did not recognize Him as such until the very moment that He broke the bread. And shortly thereafter, the breaking of the bread was referenced a second time as they gave an account of their eyes having been opened to the other disciples.

Now that very day two of them were on their way to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking to each other about all the things that had happened. While they were talking and debating these things, Jesus himself approached and began to accompany them (but their eyes were kept from recognizing him). Then he said to them, “What are these matters you are discussing so intently as you walk along?” And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who doesn’t know the things that have happened there in these days?” He said to them, “What things?” “The things concerning Jesus the Nazarene,” they replied, “a man who, with his powerful deeds and words, proved to be a prophet before God and all the people; and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. Not only this, but it is now the third day since these things happened. Furthermore, some women of our group amazed us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back and said they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of those who were with us went to the tomb, and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see him.” So he said to them, “You foolish people—how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Wasn’t it necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and enter into his glory?” Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things written about

himself in all the Scriptures. So they approached the village where they were going. He acted as though he wanted to go farther, but they urged him, "Stay with us, because it is getting toward evening and the day is almost done." So he went in to stay with them. When he had taken his place at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. At this point their eyes were opened and they recognized him. Then he vanished out of their sight. They said to each other, "Didn't our hearts burn within us while he was speaking with us on the road, while he was explaining the Scriptures to us?" So they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem. They found the eleven and those with them gathered together and saying, "The Lord has really risen, and has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how they recognized him when he broke the bread.³⁰⁵

Just as Jesus taught the disciples to break the bread in order to re-enliven His presence, so also He demonstrated this for posterity. The disciples did not have eyes that could recognize the identity of the Holy One until the very moment that the bread was broken. We should probably take note of the fact that the event did not take place on the Sabbath. The implication was that entry could take place at any time of the week with the blessing or good-Wording and the breaking of the bread.

Whereas Orthodoxy taught that so-called "believers" would be resurrected after death, in actuality, the concept of resurrection included that individuals could be raised up to life in the *aion* while they yet dwelt upon the Earth. God had longed to gather His faithful children back to Himself just as a mother hen would gather her chicks under her wings. However, the Second Temple religious leaders would not have any of it. Instead they had invented an imposturous legalistic religion that dismissed obedience to elements of the inspired *Torah* of the Ten Commandments and that prohibited subjective experiential divine-human encounter with the Word. The forefathers of those leaders, who ruled during Jesus'

³⁰⁵ Luke 24:13-35 NET

lifetime, had murdered the prophets who had persisted in the more ancient spirituality.

John's immediate purpose in writing was to explain that access into the *aiona* had been restored. Entry into the *aiona* was Jesus' means of performing signs and wonders. And this happened specifically as He modeled the three-day journey for posterity—who might be led to become *Ish-rah-el-ites*. It was by seeing and by hearing what had been revealed in the *qodesh* realm, that His disciples and posterity would replicate even greater signs and wonders—thereby manifesting God's kingdom and rulership in the world.

Furthermore, we take note of the importance of breaking bread with respect to Paul's spirituality. While he and those aboard a storm tossed ship were destined for peril, he blessed and broke the bread admonishing that every man had to partake so that all could be saved. Although the ship was torn to pieces, every man made it to shore alive. Furthermore, Eutychus fell from a third-story window while the Apostle Paul was preaching in Troas. Although those gathered thought he had died, Paul laid himself over the man and prayed. In the context we are told that they also broke bread. So then it is important to ascertain that in the breaking of the bread, that the broken flesh of the sacrifice is re-enlivened and that the faithful have a means of calling forth revelatory grace or the miraculous reign of God.

It is valuable that the practice of communion was preserved to this day by ceremony so that it has become established sufficiently to be re-understood and can be re-appropriated. My own opinion is that we need not wait for the Sabbath to re-enliven the sacrifice so that we can enter into the kingdom of God and stand before His presence and throne. Moreover, I don't even think it matters that we use bread and wine to enter. Let each person be convinced in their own practices. But by all means, practice with the intent to enter God's presence. Just as Jesus instructed, wait for His presence to come upon you.

On this point, it is interesting to learn that the Essenes had a different kind of understanding about consecration. By having endured through the lengthy process of joining the Essene

community, these individuals understood that thereafter they continually walked in some measure of the *olam*—day in and day out. Nevertheless, they continued in the consecration of themselves with washing and by putting on clean white clothing before every meal. And it was at the apex of celebration of worship at Pentecost, which was recorded in “The Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice,” that they understood that their angelic transformation took place as they entered into the *davar* or the holy of holies in their visionary reconstruction of the temple.

Josephus on the Essenes

As we discuss ancient religious orders, it is easy to dismiss their relevance. However, when we read how the power of God worked through individuals and members of these communities, suddenly we find coherence between the Hebraic concept of becoming an *Ish-rah-el-ite*.

Herod had imposed certain rules upon his subjects, however the Essenes were exempted due to a prophetic Word given to him by one of them named Manahem. The early Historian Josephus, who lived between 37 and 100 A.D., recorded the story.

The Essenes, also, as we call a sect of ours, were excused from this imposition. These men live the same kind of life as do those whom the Greeks call Pythagoreans, concerning whom I shall discourse more fully elsewhere. However, it is but fit to set down here the reasons why Herod had these Essenes in such honour, and thought higher of them than their mortal nature required; nor will this account be unsuitable to the nature of this history, as it will show the opinion men had of these Essenes. Now there was one of these Essenes, whose name was Manahem, who had this testimony, that he not only conducted his life after an excellent manner, but had the foreknowledge of future events given him by God also. This man once saw Herod when he was a child, and going to school, and greeted him as king of the Jews; but he, thinking that either he did not know him, or that he was in jest, put him in mind that he was but a private man; but Manahem smiled to himself, and

clapped him on the back with his hand, and said, "However that be, you will be king, and will begin your reign happily, for God finds you worthy of it. And do remember the blows that Manahem has given you, as being a signal of the change of your fortune; and truly this will be the best reasoning for you, that you love justice [toward men], and piety toward God, and clemency toward your citizens; yet do I know how your whole conduct will be, that you will not be such a one, for you will excel all men in happiness, and obtain an everlasting reputation, but will forget piety and righteousness; and these crimes will not be concealed from God at the conclusion of your life, when you will find that he will be mindful of them, and punish you for them." Now at that time Herod did not at all attend to what Manahem said, as having no hopes of such advancement; but a little afterward, when he was so fortunate as to be advanced to the dignity of king, and was in the height of his dominion, he sent for Manahem, and asked him how long he should reign. Manahem did not tell him the full length of his reign; therefore, upon that silence of his, he asked him further, whether he should reign ten years or not? He replied, "Yes, twenty, nay, thirty years;" but did not assign the just determinate limit of his reign. Herod was satisfied with these replies, and gave Manahem his hand, and dismissed him; and from that time he continued to honour all the Essenes. We have thought it proper to relate these facts to our readers, however strange they be, and to declare what has happened among us, because many of these Essenes have, by their excellent virtue, been thought worthy of this knowledge of divine revelations.³⁰⁶

Although there has been great speculation, nobody has found evidence that Jesus or His disciples had any influence upon the Essene community. They were extreme separatists.

³⁰⁶ Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, in *The Works of Flavius Josephus*, trans. William Whiston (London: 1828), 15.367–379.

Josephus' testimony regarding Manahem and Herod, alerts us to the fact that Hebraic spirituality had continued among some of these people. This reinforces the idea that Jesus did not come to start a new religion, but instead came to restore the lost and forgotten *Ish-rah-el-ite* spirituality.

After having been confronted over the concern that His disciples were not observing the traditions of the elders in keeping the Sabbath, Jesus went into their synagogue. Finding a man with a withered hand, He asked, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?" The obvious answer was "No." And so Jesus continued to question, "If one of you had a sheep and it fell into a pit on the Sabbath day, wouldn't you reach down there and pull it out?" Of course, the answer to His rhetorical question was that nobody would neglect their livestock. And so He reasoned, "How much more valuable is a human being than a sheep?" And he continued by concluding, "Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day." Then Jesus said to the man with the withered hand, "Stretch out your hand." And it was restored just like his other hand." But the Pharisees went out and took counsel against Him plotting to destroy Him.

As Jesus perceived their evil, He withdrew. However many followed Him and He healed them all.

In response to the event, and in identification of the impartation of *yeshuah*, Matthew quoted the prophet Isaiah:

Behold, my servant whom I have chosen; My beloved in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall declare judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry aloud; Neither shall any one hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax he will not quench, until he sends forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles hope.³⁰⁷

While Matthew clearly intended for it to be understood that Jesus was being identified in the event as having fulfilled this prophetic Scripture, we have to come to grips with the fact that the reason God poured out His Spirit was for the recipients to carry out

³⁰⁷ Matthew 12:18–21 ASV

the commission of Abraham to bless the nations. The pronouncement of God's judgment in healing another person was done so that the nations might have hope. The metaphor about not crushing a broken reed or putting out a dim spark of flame further spoke of the character of ones who would approach the task in the same way as Jesus. Although He found Himself to be in the midst of conflict with those plotting to take His life, Jesus continued to pursue the needs of the broken man amidst danger. He stayed with the plan of the Father until achieving victory.

We covered the point earlier that Jesus did not simply perform miracles because He was God. And even though we have emphasized the importance of the *kiddush*, it is noteworthy to consider that just because a person celebrated the Sabbath and entered the *qodesh* realm, having received the second soul, did not mean that in every instance each and every one would be sent out to perform signs and wonders. The working of signs and wonders depended also upon the calling of each individual. Jesus made the specific point that although John the Baptist was a prophet, he never performed miracles—as was recorded in John 10:41. Although it is easy to get excited about receiving divine revelations, we also have to understand that the Lord might use the Sabbath for contemplation and prayer—and in order to bring healing and rest.

In Matthew 13:56 it was explained that Jesus did not do many miracles in His home town because of their lack of faith. Mark recounted in 6:5 that "He could do no miracles there with the exception of laying His hands on a few sick people and healing them."

We also learn from Luke in 10 that miracles were intended to stir up individuals to turn their lives to the Lord. It is valuable to understand that the intent of God was bigger than merely healing one person. It would seem rather instead that He was interested in raising up healers, in the plural sense of the term.

Jesus' Words and John's Three-Day Journey

In the book of John we get a glimpse of the spirituality that was lived out by Jesus.

One of the reasons we come across difficult passages in the Bible is that we lack background knowledge. Vital pieces of the puzzle are missing that the reader assumed his audience already knew. And then another problem is that we bring our own ideas with us when we read the Scriptures and superimpose these unfounded assumptions back over the text of the Scriptures.

A great example of reading our own assumptions back over the texts of the Bible that I like to give regards the definition of the term "Gospel." If you ask many Christians today, "What is the Gospel?" you are going to get different replies. However many individuals are going to tell you that the "Gospel" is "the story of the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus." However there are many reasons why this was not understood to have been the "Gospel" in the first century and even much earlier. Jesus did not openly disclose that He was going to the cross until perhaps a month or so before that event took place. Nevertheless, at the start of His ministry, He began preaching the "Gospel." Of course, Jesus was not telling anyone the story of His life, death, burial, and resurrection. John the Baptist preached the Gospel before he baptized Jesus, and so we find yet another logical problem with our common definition. But the logical dilemma worsens when we realize that the angels preached the Gospel before Jesus was born. Furthermore, the author of Hebrews reported that the Gospel had come to ancient Israel when Moses was alive—further explaining that the *Ish-rah-el-ites* who had been present had experienced the same Word Who had come to live among the faithful in the first century A.D. And what really adds difficulty is that Paul tells us that the Gospel first came to Abraham. This problem was the reason for the writing of *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom: A First Century Hebraic Perspective*.

Deciphering non sequiturs helps us to recover lost and forgotten background knowledge, which provides correctives to our reading of the Scriptures. One of the complications we have addressed in this book regards our common translation of the

phrase *aionios zoe* as “eternal life.” Even students of the Greek language accept this translation without question. However, most theologians would agree that nobody gains eternal life by observing the Law of Moses. Nevertheless, each time individuals asked Jesus how to obtain this life, He told them they needed to walk according to the teachings of the inspired *Torah* that was given during Israel’s three-day journey at Mount Sinai.

Part of the reason that I bring this up again is to point out our blindness when we read the Scriptures. Or perhaps instead, it should be more aptly stated that we typically are not reading the Bible as critical thinkers. We read one of these passages and never realize that any interpretive difficulty even exists.

Of course, when we become aware, we find ourselves in a dilemma that manifests itself with a question. “Am I going to stick with what I have been taught by my tradition, or am I going to perhaps go out on a limb and accept that my tradition has made what might be a big mistake. Almost nobody wants to upset the apple cart. That is normal. In this presentation, we have encouraged readers to walk in the Genius of Einstein—which is questioning the validity of the assumptions of our traditions. Because the scientist was not afraid to question and to confront the errant convictions of his peers and the scientific community, he made vast discoveries that changed his life and the world. The band, Eiffel 65, summarized the problem that is endemic to Christianity, and they challenge us to travel a path to rediscovery:

We live in a bubble baby, a bubble’s not reality,
you gotta’ have a look outside...
The bubble’s not reality,
but it’s inside your mind,
making you forget where you’re from and what’s behind.”³⁰⁸

Essentially, Einstein had stepped outside of the intellectual bubble that otherwise might have contained and limited his path of discovery. He was not afraid, and he pushed forward despite

³⁰⁸ *Living in a Bubble*, from “Europop” by Eiffel 65, Bliss Corporation, Universal Records, Republic Music, 1999.

tremendous ridicule. His detractors had settled comfortably into the accepted parameters of the bubble that fostered blindness in the scientific community. However, Einstein would have none of that. And so today, the world has atomic energy because one man was willing to stand up and courageously position himself outside of the bubble.

We have done quite a bit of this ourselves as we have moved along thinking through *The Lost and Forgotten Spirituality of Ancient Israel*. Now we are going to make some applications using our newly acquired background knowledge.

Jesus told Nathanael that he would see the angels ascending and descending upon the son of man. Although Christians typically attribute this title solely to Jesus, when individuals were subsumed into the Word, they were addressed with the title “son of man.”

Consider this passage from Ezekiel:

As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of *Yehovah*. And when I saw it, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking. Then He said to me, Son of man, stand on your feet that I may *davar* with you!”³⁰⁹

On a Sabbath, Jesus and His disciples passed through the grainfields and His disciples were picking heads of grain, breaking them in their hands, and eating them. But some of the Pharisees objected because the general rule of t/*Torah* did not allow for work on this day. They challenged Jesus. “Why are you doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?”

But Jesus replied,

“Have you not even read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him, how he entered the house of God, and took and ate the consecrated bread which is not lawful for any to eat except the priests alone,

³⁰⁹ Ezekiel 1:28-2:1 NASB

and gave it to his companions?” And He was saying to them, “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”³¹⁰

In Scripture, the title “son of man,” used to address David, was also given to Daniel, Elijah, John the Baptist, and Jesus.³¹¹ By implication in John 3 the title also was being applied to the disciples. The grace of miraculous encounter with the Word was a shared experience that changed the lives of these men—whereby they received spiritual authority. As ones who lived in the life of grace, listening to and obeying the voice of God, they were given jurisdiction over what they did with their lives and this also affected the Sabbath. What this means is that they had the responsibility to judiciously make choices based upon what God had revealed to each of them regarding what they might be doing at any time of the day, night, or week, etc.

And this was Moses’ point in Deuteronomy 29:29:

The secret things belong to the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children in the *aion*, that we may do all the words of this law.

We ascertain that the intended practice of *Torah* was subject to direction by the voice of God.

The Sabbath was never canceled, and moreover, anyone and everyone had to use common sense with regard to the Sabbath, as was demonstrated by Jesus’ rhetorical question, “Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well, will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?”³¹² For quite some time, the enemies of ancient Israel would attack on the Sabbath because many of the Israelites refused to fight on that day. They were easy prey. During the reign of the Maccabees, this changed. Practitioners of Judaism began using discretion weighing how they would honor God while at the same time preventing slaughter.

³¹⁰ Luke 6:3-5 NASB

³¹¹ Note Daniel 8:15-17, numerous examples throughout Ezekiel & the Gospels, Matthew 11:19, 16:13-14, etc.

³¹² Luke 14:5 RSV; Compare Exodus 20:16 and Deuteronomy 5:20 to the account in Exodus 1:15-21.

Earlier we mentioned the mid-wives Shiphrah and Puah who were told to kill the Hebrew baby boys by Pharaoh. They appear to have violated the ninth commandment in order to obey the sixth commandment. The fear of the Lord and the continual desire to walk in obedience to Him trumped any apparent precept of *Torah*. The midwives were guided by the determining factor of how they might best please *Yehovah*.

As they walked in reverence for the Lord, characters in the Bible were faced with decisions. There was a balancing act between life on Earth and life in the *aion*. The son of man David ate the bread of the presence, which was unlawful, although he was led by God to do so.

In the real ever-changing unpredictable world, individuals had to make these choices as ones who knew they would give an account for their actions. In the parable of the talents, one man who was entrusted with his master's money and simply buried it in the ground was reprimanded for his lack of wisdom. He should have at least put the money in the bank where his master would have earned interest. So then we understand that servants of the Word should always attempt to make decisions and act with discernment in accordance with the interest of the One we address suitably as "Lord." And in this lifestyle, by observing God's desire, we demonstrate that we love Him with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

As we make our way through John's Gospel, with respect to enlightenment regarding the title "son of man" from the Scriptures, we have to keep in mind that the title belonged to those in posterity who would also become *Ish-rah-el-ites*. In this sense, Nathanael was gaining the understanding that he would also share in the experience of Jacob. He should expect to have found himself also standing in the *aion* of God before the throne and the divine council. John used the title 13 times in his Gospel.

And for their own part, the Essenes lived in what we may describe as a realized eschatology and understood all of their contingency to have been the "sons of men." Their very existence was understood to have been for the purpose of having been continually led by God.

Although our presentation has been topical, as we move through John's articulation of the life of Jesus, we are going to shift to an increasingly sequential assessment. Therefore the concept of the son of man will be interwoven into other aspects of the narrative.

So then, earlier, I mentioned that chapter and verse divisions did not occur in the ancient texts of the Bible. These were added many centuries later. Therefore, these breaks in the text were not inspired and some of them actually separated thoughts that never should have been separated. This is the case in several instances of John's writing.

I have always struggled with the chapter division placement at the end of chapter 1 and have considered that Nathanael's expected encounter with the angels of heaven fit perfectly with encounter "on the third day," in accordance with the Hebraic three-day journey. For years, I pondered whether or not the phrase "on the third day," or a similar rendering of the idea, had existed in the oldest version of the Gospel. Perhaps it was understood as a copyist error and had been removed in order to smooth out the reading of the text. We do acknowledge from the multiplicity of differing ancient fragments and especially due to the ongoing work of the Nestle Aland project that editing of the biblical texts has taken place over time. So removal of a duplicated phrase could have been a possibility. More recently, however, as I have pondered the concept of missing background knowledge, I have come to a new hypothesis that may work best for interpreting the passage.

It was well established from Abraham's life forward that divine-human encounters took place after consecration followed by three-days of fasting and prayer. This was accentuated as the nation of Israel gathered at the base of Mount Sinai in preparation for encounter with the Word. They consecrated themselves to become a holy nation as they would be subsumed into the Word.

The Lord said to Moses, "Go to the people. Today and tomorrow set them apart to be holy. Have them wash their clothes. And let them be ready for the third day. For on the

third day people will see the Lord come down on Mount Sinai.³¹³

And we see from Hosea, that the third day was a day of being raised up into the presence of God.

Come, let us return to the Lord. He has hurt us but He will heal us. He has cut us but He will cover the sore. After two days He will give us new life. He will raise us up on the third day, that we may live before Him. So keep on trying to know the Lord. His coming to us is as sure as the rising of the sun. He will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain giving water to the Earth.³¹⁴

And this was explicated in cryptic terms with regard to Abraham having arrived at the location to which God had called him to perform the sacrifice of Isaac; and yet he could see the place from afar off.

The first century Hebraic thinker named Philo interpreted this as Abraham's encounter with the Word.

Although we pieced together several different references here, elsewhere in the Bible we see in a variety of references that individuals were raised up into the *aionios* realm on the third day—where they encountered some form of the manifest presence of God.

This ancient concept was lost and forgotten. To my knowledge, I am the first person in my own era to unfold the concept of the three-day journey. I am not making this point to brag about how smart I am or to somehow vainly lay claim to the notion that I own the idea. Rather instead, I am making the point to say that when we read that Nathanael was going to witness angels ascending and descending on the son of man, the first century readers were going to immediately make the connection between said encounter and the last day of the three-day journey. Therefore, John did not need to say, "Hey guys, this angelic encounter stuff is going to happen on the third day of the three-day journey." To have

³¹³ Exodus 19:10:11 NLV

³¹⁴ Hosea 6:1-3 NLV

done so might have insulted the intelligence of his Hebraic audience.

So then, even though we couldn't care less about chapter divisions, this background understanding allows us to freely apply the statement "on the third day" to the next statement "There was a wedding in Cana."

However, contemporary readers walking in the Genius of Einstein should again be perplexed, asking "Why in the world is John suddenly referencing the third day?" Well, that question at least applies to those who have never before heard of the concept of the "three-day journey." It really makes no sense at all why John is mentioning a third day when he hasn't already mentioned a first or a second day with respect to the third day at Cana. Readers should be asking, "What's up with that? John has just dropped a chronological connective on us that seems out of place."

However, those who are familiar with the background knowledge would more immediately expect to be reading about some kind of divine-human miraculous encounter. What we are doing here is examining the Scripture in light of Hebraic background knowledge.

So then, quite interestingly what followed in the passage was Mary's expectation to do something about the lack of wine at the wedding. It is almost as if she knew this was going to have been a problem and also realized that her Son was going to provide the remedy. We don't want to read too much into the text, however, she being an *Ish-raah-el-ite* helps us to make the connection that such prophetic knowledge regarding the event might have been revealed to her days or weeks before the wedding in Cana had taken place.

In light of understanding that there are layers of context which help us to interpret the Scriptures, what we are doing here is reading the Scripture in light of *Ish-raah-el-ite* insider background knowledge. It is evident that John was writing to train the *Ish-raah-el-ite* spiritual community and so we have to consider how such ones as these would have been thinking as they read the narrative.

So then, if we follow a plausible thread of understanding that Mary and Jesus both knew well ahead of time about the

dilemma that would occur at the wedding and that their heavenly Father expected Jesus to do something about it, it is conceivable that two days earlier He consecrated Himself and began the three-day journey. At the proper time, He could expect to render God's will from heaven into the realm of Earth to provide more wine.

Jesus responded to His mother's request as if it had come prematurely. In John 24 he told her, "Woman, what do I have to do with you? My hour has not yet come." In other terms, He was a little shy of reaching the third day.

Nevertheless, with the passage of an indeterminable amount of time, Jesus gave directions to the waiters to fill six stone water pots with water. They had to obtain those and get them filled, which allowed Jesus to complete the final hour or so of His three-day journey. We need to be careful about the appropriateness of logical inclusions that we read over the Scriptures, however, such inclusion helps us to make sense of John's use of the chronological connectives regarding the third day and the point that Jesus' hour had not yet come. And then the mysterious miracle occurred.

As we read John, we have to pause between some statements in order to contemplate the Hebraic and the *Ish-raah-el-ite* lost contexts of understanding that inform the passage. Bible researchers reference this as methodological approach to interpretation. Everyone uses some method to interpret Scripture. For example, a Reform thinker is going to examine how Calvin or other Reformers understood the verse and then apply those traditional conclusions over the texts of Scripture.

Our method begins with doing our best to identify traditional inventions of theology and guiding opinions that have shaped the church and then to remove these from our interpretive lens. With this, we inductively study the Scriptures, especially in the original languages. We make literary observations following the reasonable path of the discussion in that time of history—to the best of our ability. When it seems appropriate, we also introduce other contextual realizations as interpretive tools from what we have read elsewhere. While acknowledging the fact that it is impossible to completely identify and remove our own

preconceived notions, we attempt to do our best to not make the authors of Scripture appear to be saying things they never intended. In so doing, lost and forgotten information is recovered. Along the way, there is quite a bit of term study and analysis between the extant Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek Bibles. We also delve into other non-canonical historical writings to affirm or to correct our conclusions.

Consecration for Divine-Human Encounter

There were always important rules to obey when seeking divine-human encounter. This was never to have been taken lightheartedly and without the required observances and preparations.

The sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, offered strange incense before the Lord. In so doing, they violated a prohibition. Resultantly, they were consumed by fire from the Lord. The Ark of the Covenant was indwelt by the presence of the Lord and there were strict rules as to how it was to have been handled using long poles. However, Uzzah ignored these rules, touched the Ark, and was killed (see 2 Samuel 6:6-7, as well as 1 Chronicles 26:16-21). Note similarly that Korah, Dathan, Abiram and others among them participated in a rebellion against Moses and Aaron's priestly authority. And the Earth opened and swallowed some, while fire consumed others, (see Numbers 16, as well as 26:9-11). In the New Testament, Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Apostles and also to the Holy Spirit about proceeds from the sale of property. And each of them dropped dead (see Acts 5:1 through 11). Consider also that disobedient individuals died when they fashioned the golden calf in Exodus 32 and that many died because they rebelled and complained as Israel made their abode in the wilderness (see Numbers 14:36-38 and 16:1-50). Leviticus 16 prescribed the requirements of the High Priest prior to entry into the holy of holies.

If anyone truly desires to learn the repercussions of disobedience with respect to ignoring matters of consecration, or how this was properly to have been accomplished, study these passages.

What we learn is that seeking God's presence required authorization by individuals of good character who approached according to Truth and who were not motivated by malice or deceit. Those who ignored these concerns became the subjects of immediate divine judgment.

Previously, we mentioned that Satan entered Judas of Iscariot when he ate the bread at the *kiddush* meal, and that Paul similarly spoke of those who had brought harm, sickness, and death upon themselves as unworthy participants in the breaking of the bread with the re-enlivening of God's presence (note the admonition in 1 Corinthians 11:29 and the surrounding context of discussion).

So Moses went down from the mountain to the people. He set the people apart to be holy, and they washed their clothes. He said to the people, "Be ready for the third day. Do not go near a woman." On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning. A cloud covered the mountain, and a very loud horn sounded. All the people among the tents shook with fear. Then Moses brought the people from among the tents to meet God. They stood at the base of the mountain. Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the Lord came down upon it in fire. Its smoke went up like the smoke of a stove. And the whole mountain shook. The sound of the horn became louder and louder. Moses spoke, and God answered him with thunder. Then the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain. The Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and he went up.³¹⁵

Throughout the Bible, we take note that consecration for entry into the holy realm included purification, fasting, abstinence, and the setting of boundaries. Those preparing to meet God in similar ways did so in Deuteronomy chapters 4-5, 9-10, and 33-34. See also Joshua chapters 3 and 4 as Israel prepared to enter into the promised land and 1 Samuel 7 wherein the Israelites were also

³¹⁵ Exodus 19:14-20 NLV

called to repentance that we infer included confession of sin. Also examine 2 Chronicles 5-7. Moreover, see Ezra and Nehemiah with the reading of *Torah* and Isaiah 6 where prophetic preparation was discussed, also Ezekiel chapters 1-3, as well as 43. Also note Matthew 17 at the transfiguration and Acts 2 at Pentecost, along with Hebrews 12.

Readers glean different elements of preparation in each of these passages and the point was that consecration remained a component of entry into the *aiona* during the life of Jesus and beyond. We gain the insight that there were several human states of being which had to do with permissible entry. Recall that the Ammonites and Moabites were not permitted to enter the *aiona* for ten generations based upon the unconscionable evil they had committed. They were banned from coming before the divine assembly of the angelic realm. Although we view this as punishment, God was protecting them from incurring His wrath. Then there were people who walked in self-gratification and ignorance of the *aiona*. Unless God had business to complete that involved any of them, these ones just lived out their day to day lives. Such ones stood in contrast to those with knowledge of the *aiona*, who initiated themselves by turning from wickedness committing themselves to the Lord in faithfulness, who confessed their sins, were washed with water, and who were raised up from the water having prepared themselves for the Day of the Lord or for entry into the kingdom. And finally, there were others who had followed this path in order to become *Ish-rah-el-ites* that also washed their bodies, and put on newly washed clothing. They fasted, prayed, and exercised abstinence for three-days in order to encounter the Lord. Readers may discover other aspects of preparation in the aforementioned passages and elsewhere in the Bible.

Although we have stressed our interest to explain how it was that Jesus was able to perform miracles, that concern was perhaps only one of many accomplishments that took place in the *aiona*. We understand from John that entry into the *aiona* was the means of being raised to new life. Although Adam and Eve died when they ate the forbidden meal, partaking in the Word of God,

frequently described as the “bread of heaven,” this new meal in the *aiona* renewed each one back to life. And so it was called the “*aionios* life.” And the *aionios* life was a life of renewed fellowship with God. Furthermore, in some instances, those who encountered God were spoken of as the “sons of men.”

At the risk of being labeled as a “Platonist,” I want to make a remark about Plato’s work *Timaeus*. However, pre-emptively, I want to mention that Clement had stated that the Greek Philosophers plagiarized their philosophical insights, and especially their understanding of the *logos* from the writings of Moses (note Clement’s *Stromata*, chapters 17, 25, and 26). Clement labeled Plato as the “emulator of Moses—stating that when Plato wrote about the ancient Word, or the “*palaios logos*,” (παλαιός λόγος) he was actually referencing Moses’ understanding.

Keeping Clement’s perspective in mind, the Hebrew term *olam* derived from *alam* that traditionally can reference a place that has been hidden—something like a place that is just out of view or just over the horizon. This term was translated into various forms of *aiona* as the Bible was rendered in Greek.

Plato’s Understanding of the *Aiona*

In Plato’s *Timaeus*, the *aiona* was understood to be heaven, which was contrasted to *chronos*, or the existence of the physical world. All of creation, Earth, and its inhabitants were understood to have been imperfect representations of realities of the heavenly *aiona*. Plato was explicit about this and the concept was part of his basis for the philosophy of Forms. He understood that earthly realities were just shadows of what existed perfectly in the realm of the *aiona*, which he called heaven. For example, on Earth in nature there are circular objects but in all of the world there was no perfect circle. Plato concluded that the imperfect earthly representations were merely reflections or shadows of what existed in the spiritual realm.

When the father and creator saw the creature which he had made moving and living, the created image of the eternal gods, he rejoiced, and in his joy determined to make the copy still more like the original; and as this was *aionios*, he

sought to make the universe *aionios*, so far as might be. Now the nature of the ideal being was *aionios*, but to bestow this attribute in its fulness upon a creature was impossible. Wherefore he resolved to have a moving image of *aionios*, and when he set in order the heaven, he made this image *aionios* but moving according to number, while *aionios* itself rests in unity; and this image we call time [or *chronos*]. then, and the heaven came into being at the same instant in order that, having been created together, if ever there was to be a dissolution of them, they might be dissolved together. It was framed after the pattern of the *aionios* nature, that it might resemble this as far as was possible; for the pattern exists from *aionios*, and the created heaven has been, and is, and will be, in all time. Such was the mind and thought of God in the creation of time [or *chronos*].³¹⁶

Quite interestingly, in keeping with early Orthodoxy's conclusions, Plato also thought that individuals who walked in moral integrity could go into the *aiona* after death. By contrast, those who lived unruly lives would degrade into lower life forms. In order to make this point, Plato borrowed the understanding of Genesis with Abraham that his children would be numbered like the stars.

In the *Timaeus* the stars were understood to have been the *aionios* representations of humankind who are *chronos*. We might observe that the stars were the eternal or the angelic beings, the pattern after which humans dwelling on Earth were fashioned. Plato's cosmological design included that the *chronos* might potentially be restored to the realm of the *aiona*.

We see this in Plato's explanation of an after-life. In a context speaking of humankind's struggle with ignoble passion, Plato wrote:

³¹⁶ Plato. (1892). *The Dialogues of Plato* (B. Jowett, Trans., 3rd ed., Vol. 3, p. 456). Oxford University Press., *Timaeus* 37c5–7.

...if they conquered these they would live righteously, and if they were conquered by them, unrighteously. He who lived well during his appointed time was to return and dwell in his native star, and there he would have a blessed and congenial existence. But if he failed in attaining this, at the second birth he would pass into a woman, and if, when in that state of being, he did not desist from evil, he would continually be changed into some brute who resembled him in the evil nature which he had acquired, and would not cease from his toils and transformations until he followed the revolution of the same and the like within him, and overcame by the help of reason the turbulent and irrational mob of later accretions, made up of fire and air and water and Earth, and returned to the form of his first and better state.³¹⁷

Synonyms for *Aionios*

Both the Bible and non-canonical literature described the concept of “life” using the modifying terms *archaios* (ἀρχαῖος) and *aidios* (ἄϊδιος). More or less, *archaios* was used to indicate the cosmic origin of life, whereas *aidios* indicated the philosophical concept of an unbroken eternal life or a specific indestructible quality of life.

Philo heavily utilized the phrase *aidios zōē* to contrast earthly life with the life of the soul in the divine realm. True virtue and connection to the divine granted a soul, which was spoken of as the “*aidios zōē*.” This quality of life participated in God’s heavenly existence.

Just as spiritually minded Jews anticipated the reception of the “additional soul” during the Sabbath, Philo labeled this as the *aidios zoe*, which translates into English as the “ancient life.”

In *De Fuga et Inventione*, also known as “On Flight and Finding,” in sections 78 and 97 Philo explained the flight of the soul to the divine *Logos*—wherein the physical body was severed from

³¹⁷ Plato, *Timaeus*, in *The Dialogues of Plato*, trans. B. Jowett, vol. 2 (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, and Co., 1871), 42b–d.

the soul and united with the Word of God. Furthermore, The Word of God was the intended destination for the soul and the fountain of wisdom. Anyone who drank from the fountain was granted the *aidios zoe*. For Philo, the *Logos* was the fountain of life. In continuity, Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well that He could offer her living water springing up into the *aionios zoe*. Later, in John 7, Jesus offered the living water to those gathered in the temple. It is very difficult to separate Philo and Jesus' understandings—except with regard to the fact that Jesus identified Himself as the divine Source of the living water.

“...But the city of refuge which is the most ancient, and most secure, and most excellent, and which is not merely a metropolis but a whole continent, is the divine *Logos*, to flee to which first is a most advantageous thing. And the prize which is proposed to him who flees to the supreme word [translated from “*Logos*”] is a thing of great importance, namely, the ancient life (*aidios zoe*); and the word of God is the fountain of wisdom, from which, if any one drinks, he, instead of death, finds an everlasting life. But he [Moses] witnesses to this in another place, saying, “And they abandoned the fountain of living water.” And this fountain is God himself; for he is the most ancient of all things, from whom the streams of wisdom flow to the world. But he has now called the supreme *Logos* the fountain, because he [Moses] has written, “A river went out of Eden to water the garden.”³¹⁸

Note that I changed the term “eternal life” to read: “the ancient life,” not only on the basis of the precedent set by the Hebraic spirituality of Philo, but also on the simple contextual observation that Philo was speaking with a view to the past regarding the life from Eden.

³¹⁸ Philo, *De Fuga et Inventione [On Flight and Finding]*, 100–101, in *The Works of Philo Judæus, the Contemporary of Josephus*, trans. C. D. Yonge, vol. 2 (London: H. G. Bohn, 1855).

It is valuable to realize that New Testament concepts can be linked to specific Old Testament quotes by use of *Philo's* extensive set of writings.

The *Sibylline Oracles* which may date between 150 B.C. and 180 A.D. stated, "And the righteous shall inherit eternal life (*zōēn aidion*—*ζωὴν αἰδίων*) And they shall dwell in the luxuriant fields of Paradise...." ³¹⁹ Of course the English translation has been tainted by the theological influences of Orthodoxy causing *aidion* to be translated as "everlasting." It is up to the present-day reader to recognize this fact, reexamine, and reinterpret the passage from the Hebraic perspective.

From the Wisdom of Solomon 7:21:29 RSV we read:

I learned both what is secret and what is manifest, for wisdom, the fashioner of all things, taught me. For in her there is a spirit that is intelligent, holy, unique, manifold, subtle, mobile, clear, unpolluted, distinct, invulnerable, loving the good, keen, irresistible, beneficent, humane, steadfast, sure, free from anxiety, all-powerful, overseeing all, and penetrating through all spirits that are intelligent and pure and most subtle. For wisdom is more mobile than any motion; because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things. For she is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her. *For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness.* Though she is but one, she can do all things, and while remaining in herself, she renews all things; in every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God, and prophets; for God loves nothing so much as the man who lives with wisdom. She is more beautiful than the sun, and excels

³¹⁹ Sibylline Oracles 2.318-319, in *The Sibylline Oracles*, trans. Milton S. Terry (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1899), 46. Note the similar passage Sibylline Oracles 8.399–401.

every constellation of the stars. Compared with the light she is found to be superior.³²⁰

Note that after Jesus' disciples had been with Him, He having identified Himself as the light of the world, He newly regarded His closest followers as "friends" (note John 15:15).

From the Wisdom of Solomon then we see that the concept of "eternal life" extended far back in time before the composition of the New Testament. In fact, even Aristotle spoke of eternal life with respect to God being the "unmoved mover."

...and life also belongs to God; for the actuality of thought is life, and God is that actuality; and God's self-dependent actuality is life most good and eternal.³²¹

The quote is rendered to convey the understanding that before the architects of Orthodoxy were Christians, the longstanding concept of "eternal life" had been part of their cultural understanding.

Aristotle's philosophical reflections are valuable because of his association of reason as being the connection between the physical and spiritual worlds. He understood that God worked through the intellect of individuals as they interacted with each other and objects surrounding them in the physical world. And so we ascertain the necessity of wisdom or the influence of a cosmological divine Being of Wisdom, spoken of in the Bible and in the ancient Jewish writings Who intervened in the affairs of humankind so that they might receive direction in seeking God's Word.

Philo had embraced the concept that wisdom served as a teacher freeing human souls from earthly material passions into the *aiónios* realm of the *Logos*.³²² Wisdom led seekers into virtue,

³²⁰ Wisdom of Solomon 7:21:29 RSV

³²¹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. W. D. Ross, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 12:1072b18–30.

³²² Philo, *De Migratione Abrahami* [*On the Migration of Abraham*], 133, in *The Works of Philo Judæus, the Contemporary of Josephus*, trans. C. D. 852

divine knowledge, purifying and elevating the mind toward the goal of encountering the Word. Therefore, intellect was the gift of God.

Every man in respect of his intellect (*nous*) is closely connected with the divine *Logos*, being an impression, or a fragment, or a ray of that blessed nature...[God] looked upon this great gift, and deemed it worthy of a divine habitation.³²³

In his treatise *Quod Deterius Potiori Insidiari Soleat*, also known as "That the Worse is Wont to Attack the Better," section 83, Philo clarified that the intellect was not humanly generated possession, but instead an impartation from God:

The soul is divided into two parts, the rational and the irrational.³²⁴

For the mind (*nous*) is the ruler of the irrational part of the soul

"Our mind (*nous*) is an ethereal fragment bestowed upon us by God..."³²⁵

According to Philo, human beings had a duty to keep the intellect unpolluted because it was the gift of God's Word. The intellect was not anybody's own possession or independent power. To have concluded as much was arrogance. Therefore, humankind

Yonge, vol. 2 (London: H. G. Bohn, 1855). & Philo, *De Somniis* [On Dreams, That They are God-Sent], 2.242–245, in *The Works of Philo Judæus, the Contemporary of Josephus*, trans. C. D. Yonge, vol. 2 (London: H. G. Bohn, 1855).

³²³ Philo, *De Opificio Mundi* [On the Creation of the World], 146, in *The Works of Philo Judæus, the Contemporary of Josephus*, trans. C. D. Yonge, vol. 1 (London: H. G. Bohn, 1854).

³²⁴ Philo, *De Agricultura* [On Agriculture], 30, in *The Works of Philo Judæus, the Contemporary of Josephus*, trans. C. D. Yonge, vol. 1 (London: H. G. Bohn, 1854); see also *De Specialibus Legibus* 4.92 & *Legum Allegoriarum* 1.32.

³²⁵ Ibid.

was accountable for where they let their minds wander. We find this concept in the teachings of Jesus regarding adultery in Matthew's Gospel—wherein the sin had already taken place at the moment when the mind was first allowed to embrace the lustful idea.

What we see is that the human mind or intellect provided a bridge between the physical and spiritual worlds.

In the New Testament, somewhat mirroring Plato's concept of Forms which the philosopher had learned from His own study of the Old Testament, Paul spoke of God's *aidios* power—linking this to the source of life:

For the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, His *aidios* power and divinity.³²⁶

Regarding the term *archaios* (ἀρχαῖος), ancient texts use this to describe the quality of life that existed before the corruption of the world. Herein, the Hebraic worldview would explain this as life in Eden. In the Apocryphon of John or the pseudepigraphal literature, the “ancient life” specifically referenced life in Eden. It was the pure innocent life breathed into Adam, which righteous souls sought to embrace.

From The Apocalypse of Adam, which probably dates somewhere between 50 and 150 A.D., we read:

When God had created me out of the Earth, along with Eve your mother, I went about with her in a glory which she had seen in the *aeon* from which we had come. We knew the *archaios* God, and we were like the angels.³²⁷

³²⁶ Referenced from Romans 1:20.

³²⁷ *The Apocalypse of Adam*, trans. George W. MacRae and Douglas M. Parrott, in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. James M. Robinson, 3rd rev. ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1988), 278 (NHC V, 5: 64.6–19).

However, after they sinned, Adam explained: “And the primordial life that was in us died, and we were bound to material things.”

While we are making no assertion that The Apocalypse of Adam should be considered as inspired or placed on the same level with which we regard Scripture, the reference to the *archaios* existence in the *aeon*, from which the term *aionios* is derived is valuable to make sense that the biblical *aionios* life was the life of Eden.

Ancient writers mainly used *archaios* to speak of the Edenic source of life, whereas *aidios* spoke of the divine essence that maintained victory over death. *Chayei Olam* In the Hebrew and Aramaic languages the respective similar phrases were: *Chayei Olam* (חַיֵּי עוֹלָם) and *Chayei Alma* (חַיֵּי עֲלְמָא) were the respective Hebrew and Aramaic phrases that in Greek were rendered as the *aionios zoe* (ζωὴ αἰώνιος).

Many other ancient examples could be cited. However, our goal is not to provide an encyclopedia. We are only using these quotations from antiquity to substantiate the existence of a knowledge base that is valuable for interpreting Scripture which for all practical purposes has passed from use by churchianity. Within this body of knowledge the *aeon* was sometimes related to Eden which gave rise to the concept of the *aionios* life.

Jewish literature dating from the second century A.D. and extending back in time made a conceptual equation between Day-One, Eden, the temple or the holy of holies prior to the creation of physical. Barker emphasizes the connection in her research.

For our own purposes, we reference the book of Jubilees 8:19. “And he knew that the Garden of Eden is the holy of holies, and the dwelling of the Lord...” Jubilees 3:8:14 provided rules for consecration after childbirth which had to be observed by Eve before she could re-enter the sanctuary in Eden.

Philo set the stage for making these connections. Note ahead that when the term “intelligible” is used that this was the perfect world created at Day-One. Philo believed that individuals could re-enter the intelligible world by contemplation.

Now the image-maker, when he has determined to make a city, first outlines in his mind all the parts of the city...Then, just as if he had been engraved in wax...he carries the figure of it in his soul, and retaining the image vivid in his memory...he begins to build...We must think similarly about God, who, when He purposed to found the great city [the universe], first conceived the types of it, out of which He constituted an intelligible world (*kosmos noetos*), and then used that as a model for the visible world.³²⁸

And he [Moses] named it not “the first day,” but “Day One,” and he called it so because of the singularity and unity of the nature of the intelligible world, which has a natural kinship with unity.³²⁹

And the blueprint of Day-One was the Word of God.

If anyone were to speak in plain terms, he would say that the intelligible world is nothing else than the *Logos* of God when He is already engaged in the act of creation; just as an intelligible city is nothing else than the thought of the architect when he is already intending to build the city.³³⁰

Philo understood that the physical world was created to mirror the intelligible world and understood that the physical temple was metaphoric of the invisible holy of holies of the intelligible world of Day-One. Philo noted that the high priest ceased to be human when he entered into the spiritual or incorporeal world of the Word of God.

When the High Priest enters into the innermost sanctuary, the Holy of Holies, he shall not be a man. What then shall he be, if he is not a man? Shall he be God? I will not say so...but he is a mediator between God and man...For when he is in the Holy of Holies, he is not in the world of sense, but has

³²⁸ Philo, *On the Creation of the World*, 15.

³²⁹ Ibid, 35.

³³⁰ Ibid 24.

passed into the intelligible realm, being stripped of the garments of flesh and matter.³³¹

The high priest is a miniature of the universe... but when he enters into the inner sanctuary, he leaves behind the whole created order. He stands alone before God, stripping off all things that belong to the world of sight and touch, that he may contemplate the invisible reality.³³²

Therefore, Day-One was establishment of the intelligible world of the Word. This realm remained unseen by physical eyes and it existed as the reality from which the image of the physical world had been created. The temple, more or less provided a corridor from the physical world back into the incorporeal world of Day-One. When the priest stepped behind the veil, he departed from creation and went back into the realm of the Word.

Interestingly, Dr. Margaret Barker connected the second day of creation with the veil in the temple. In her 2017 lecture entitled "Entering the Temple," she stated:

The veil which separated the holy place from the most holy place corresponded to the firmament that separated the heavenly world from the lower world. If, as Philo and Josephus suggested, the veil represented matter, then the holy of holies represented the heavenly world hidden from human eyes by matter.³³³

In Barker's purview, the veil was the cosmic boundary between the world and the temple. Although Barker identified the days of creation, each having significance pertaining the temple, and the three-day journey can in some sense be interpreted as passage through this corridor, I have not read enough of her work to make a firm connection between her research and the specific

³³¹ Philo, *On Dreams, That They are God-Sent*, 2.231.

³³² Philo, *On the Special Laws*, 1.84.

³³³ Margaret Barker, "Papers," *Margaret Barker*, accessed July 26, 2026, <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/default.htm>.

three-day journey which I discuss in the Bible.³³⁴ However, an important connection between our thoughts is that Day-One was the place and time of the creation of the heavenly host. My own thought is that when we enter into the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace with *Yehovah*, we are invited to occupy a place of standing and rest in the *iona* of Day-One before God's throne where we find safety in the shadow of His wing. In connection with this, my interest is to unveil just exactly how the Hebraic three-day journey leads readers to an entirely different interpretation of the *aionios* life emphasized by Jesus in John's Gospel. This interest may have crossed paths with Barker's understandings of entry behind the veil.

The Essenes wrote:

You shall not slaughter a clean ox or sheep or goat in all your towns, near to my temple (within) a distance of a three-days' journey; nay, but inside my temple you shall slaughter it...³³⁵

Barker also highlighted a provision in the Essene writings which allowed people to perform certain animal sacrifices away from Jerusalem—but only if they were located further than a three-day journey from the primary temple.

There are two main reasons for providing quotes from antiquity. The first is to demonstrate that the *Ish-rah-el-ite* perspective contained herein is not a contemporary revisionist invention—as was the case with Orthodoxy's formulation of intellectual doctrinal salvation. Entry into the holy realm had been understood by Jews as far back as anybody can remember in Jewish literature—including the Bible. Moreover, *The Lost and Forgotten Spirituality of Ancient Israel* is aimed at both Jews and Christians. However, because some of those among the Jewish readership may

³³⁴ Barker did discuss Abraham's three-day journey in her book: Margaret Barker, *Time and Eternity: The World of the Temple and Temple Theology* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008).

³³⁵ Temple Scroll, column 52, lines 13 through 16. Referenced as: 11QT or 11Q19. Yigael Yadin, ed., *The Temple Scroll* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1983), 2:220–225.

not be so eager to consider reading the Gospels, it is inestimably valuable for those from this background to understand that Philo proved himself as being devoted to the teachings of Moses. Furthermore, because Philo was alive at the same time as Jesus, his understandings demonstrate that these thoughts were alive in the world during the first century A.D.

In Philo's book *On the Birth of Abel and the Sacrifices Offered by Him and His Brother Cain*), he spoke of the three-day's journey as representing the distance between God's goodness and those who had been spiritually cut off:

But the bad man has no eyes for the things that are near. And if he ever seems to look at them, it is like men who are heavy with sleep, who see nothing clearly, but take a fleeting and blurred image for a solid reality. Therefore it is said that they saw the place from afar off. And it is added, "on the third day." Why "on the third day?" Because a three-days' journey away is a distance well matching those who are far from a good life. For a journey of three-days means a journey through time, since time has three divisions—past, present, future. Now those who do not respect any of these divisions, who have spent the past badly, and pass the present basely, and lay up no hope for the future, are a parable which tells us that they were severed for all time from a good life. But the virtuous man, who is a lover of God, has a share in the unextended and timeless life. For he has passed beyond the three divisions of time and has arrived at the unalterable and stable archetype, which is eternity. For this reason, the one who has made progress is said to see the place from afar off, while the one who is perfect is already there.³³⁶

In Philo's quote the Greek term from which "eternity" was translated was "*aion*" (αἰών). So then, looking beyond the English

³³⁶ Philo, *De Sacrificiis Abelis et Caini* [*On the Sacrifices of Abel and Cain*], 128–130, in *The Works of Philo Judæus, the Contemporary of Josephus*, trans. C. D. Yonge, vol. 1 (London: H. G. Bohn, 1854).

translation, we understand that for Philo, the goal of the three-day journey was entry into the *aiona*.

Moving back to John's Gospel, and the topic of the three-day journey, we are not told how long after, however, following the event at Cana, Jesus confronted the money changers. He made a whip out of cords and went about overturning their tables and shouting at all of them. Jesus reprimanded the religious leaders for turning His Father's house into a marketplace. In this event, recall that the Essene Jewish constituency had moved out into the outlying regions of the Judean Desert in order to practice faith and spirituality in accordance with conscience. As Jesus had proven by His actions, it had been the Essene's conclusion that the sects of the Pharisees and Sadducees had defiled the temple. And as a part of their regular visionary worship, they would reconstruct God's temple and each week would make their way through the temple until a time of entry into the holy of holies on Pentecost. Jesus' disciples later remembered the Old Testament statement in Psalm 69:9 stating "Zeal for Your house will consume Me."

As we consider what made an *Ish-raah-el-ite* who or what he or she was in being, this had to do with having encountered the presence of God. This was God's intention for construction of both the Tabernacle, or Tent of Meeting, and later the temple.

The altercation reached a climactic moment in the literary rendering when the Pharisees confronted Jesus—demanding to know what He was doing. John's response was cryptic. In 2:19 Jesus replied, "Destroy this temple and in three-days I will raise it up." Original readers were again brought back to the concept of the three-day journey a second time in the narrative. Insider *Ish-raah-el-ites* were going to make sense of this. However, the religious rulers proved they were baffled by Jesus' response—exclaiming, "It took 46 years to build this temple. Who are you to think you could rebuild it in three-days?"

As was the case with Nicodemus, the minds of these critics were focused solely upon earthly realities.

While acknowledging the historical relevance that there were three-days between Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, we are able to use the devotional practices of the Essene's worship to help

us to better make sense of ancient insider knowledge. The temple was rebuilt repeatedly by those moving forward in the three-day journey. On the last day, they entered the holy place and stood before the Holy One of the *Ish-rah-el-ites*.

We might understand that the Tabernacle and the temple were divided into three chambers. Supplicants moved from one to the next each day. And while this sounds far-fetched or contrived, this reconstruction and journey through the temple was exactly what was practiced by the Essenes—with the differentiation that the journey took place over a 13 week period of time. In this yearly celebration, entry took place on Pentecost.

To have encountered the manifest presence of God was exactly the same as the goal of the priests in entering into the holy of holies.

The fact that today we have fragments of the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice helps us to understand that there had been an extant spirituality that revolved around visionary reconstruction of the temple. Just as there was a visionary, prayerful re-enlivenment of the sacrifice, so also the temple could be raised up—allowing for entry by the faithful. They did not need to be situated in Jerusalem, nor was there any need for mediation by the Levitical Priesthood.

What had been practiced by the Essenes was based upon the more ancient three-day journey. And this was a concern of John in referencing Jesus raising up the temple in three-days. Soon after Jesus' teaching or during the time of His appearance, and assuredly by the time John was writing, individuals were raising up the temple to enter into the presence of God.

Moreover, the presence of the second power of heaven was the temple into Whom the faithful entered.

At this event of the Passover, John recorded that many were upholding faith or were putting their trust in Jesus and that He performed many miraculous signs.

Next we come to the text of Nicodemus who sought to understand how it was that Jesus and His disciples performed signs and wonders. Initially, Jesus explained "I speak the truth, unless a person is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Herein we understand that Jesus was introducing the Pharisee to

the concept of becoming an *Ish-raah-el-ite*. Shortly afterward, Jesus further explained that individuals must be born again in order to experience the *aionios* life.

As Clement had remarked, some mysteries came before other mysteries. Ones must first understand entry into the *olam* or the *aiona* before they could realize for themselves the mystery of becoming divinely empowered. And even before this could happen, the preparation by confession of sins and by passing through water were necessary precursors to entry into the kingdom of God—in the Hebraic sense of actually entering into the holy realm.

The *aionios* life therefore was the means of empowerment with divine authority. Just ahead in chapter 3, this topic will be continued with more explication through the narrative of John the Baptist. For that matter, it is poignant to continue tracing this elemental concept through John's Gospel.

Quite often today, Christians are trained to read small bits and pieces of the Bible, and so with this, they end up being unable to follow threads of discussion from one end of a book to the other—start to finish. There are lots of pericopes that are going to break up the line of discussion and it is up to the reader to pull all of it back together. The interspersed dividing narratives support the thread, but if the reader misses out on comprehending the entirety of the package, their Bible study is reduced to apprehending only brief anecdotes without recapturing the whole picture.

Building upon the facets of John's presentation we apprehend that on the third day of the three-day journey, *Ish-raah-el-ites* could become prophetically empowered. And with this the Gospel of John begins to take on an entirely different meaning than has previously been derived by well-intended Fundamentalist, Reform-minded, Evangelical thinkers.

The narrative with Nicodemus reached another literary climax with the *chiastic* explanation in 3:14, "Just as Moses lifted up the bronze serpent on a pole in the *midbar*, so also the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who upholds faith in Him will have the *aionios* life."

As was stated previously, we are reaching back to understandings conveyed earlier in the book. Recall that the term

“wilderness” in Hebrew was “*midbar*.” The term can also be translated literally as “in the Word.” Jesus was raised up from baptism and immediately went into a visionary experience with Satan and the extant Greek text explains that He went into the wilderness. However, we know that Jesus spoke Hebrew and Aramaic. We also have learned from the writings of Papias, that the Gospel of Matthew was originally written in Hebrew, and that as many as were able translated this into their own languages. Therefore, to fully comprehend Jesus’ statements in John, we have to re-render the ideas as they would have been received by one speaking Hebrew or Aramaic.

As we interpret the *chiastic* statement we must endeavor to do so while recalling that *chiasms* were used to present insider knowledge.

In some sense, those bitten by snakes as they traveled in the desert following the cloud entered into the presence of God and received His *yeshuah* or healing when they looked upon the bronze serpent. In some sense, they found themselves standing before His throne or God’s throne came to them. In continuity, either they or their angels who were standing in heaven before the presence of God in heaven, qualified them as standing in His temple where they were healed.

All of what we have so redundantly walked through in earlier sections is pulled together in interpreting John. And the disciple continued to quote Jesus,

So also the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who upholds faith in Him will have the *aionios* life. Because God loved the world, He sent His unique Son so that all those who put their faith in Him will not perish, but will have the *aionios* life. God sent His Son into the world not to judge the world, but to *yasha* or to save the world through Him.³³⁷

The *aionios* life they were intended to receive was the restoration to that which had existed in Eden.

³³⁷ John 3:15-17 Paraphrase

The son of man being lifted up was joined to the idea of others upholding faith in him. Keep in mind that we are interpreting John as a set of instructions for posterity.

Readers of the written text of this book, rather than those listening to the audio version, are going to take note of the fact that I accentuated the use of lower-case lettering for “son of man” and “him” as the one in whom others will up hold faith. This is because, as we discussed earlier, the title son of man could apply to prophets who had encountered the Holy One in the *aiona*. Although it is with sacred reverence that we may have traditionally referenced Jesus solely as the Son of Man, it may be necessary for us to adjust our perspective to include that the title had been given to others in the Scriptures and in related historical literature. If there were those who prior to Jesus had been given this title, who can say that the title would not also apply to others in the future?

In John’s view of the future, there would continue to be ones raised up who could be entitled as the “son of man,” in whom others would put their trust in order to receive healing. Recall that due to a lack of *pistis* or faith in the hearts and minds of sick individuals, even Jesus could not heal them. Such ones would in no way be equal to Jesus, Who existed as the Word before creation. However, because they had seen and heard God’s direction while they were in the Word, like Ezekiel, Daniel, and John the Baptist, etc., these hypothetical sons of men would go on to perform the same and even greater works than Jesus. Keep in mind that the performance of even greater works were Jesus’ words, not mine.

Insofar as there was a dynamic relationship between entry into the *aiona*, or with reception of the *aionios* life, the title “son of man” could apply to those who brought prophetic Words or the ability to perform miracles into the world. No matter what, according to the Gospels, the ability to perform miracles depended in part on the disposition of those who were sick believing that such an individual could heal them. And as we explore this, the recognition is made that we are exploring uncharted territory.

By using the title son of man to apply to the disciples, just as this was used to address the identities of others in the Scriptures, we are not suggesting that they deserve the reverence given to

Jesus. They are not to be worshiped. However, we are allowing for the continuance of a model as it was understood as the intention of John. Just as Jesus was unable to perform miracles in some regions as we previously discussed, so also, the upholding of faith by those needing healing went together with the *Ish-raah-el-ite's* power to heal.

John and the other Gospels were written for posterity, and so we have to do what is reasonable in making connections that bring the reality of Jesus' teachings into the present world in which we live. We have every intention of reverencing the Lord, but at the same time, we honor Him by making His instruction practical to our contemporary world. And we do so in keeping with the admonition that humankind was not intended to live by bread alone, but by the Word of God. We cannot hope to bring healing and to feed the needy billions with sacrificial dollars alone. We are going to need to understand, as best as we can, how to miraculously carry out the commission of Abraham by re-enlivening the Sacrifice. Unless we gain eyes to see and ears to hear, none of us will ever feed 5,000 starving individuals with a few fish and loaves of earthly bread.

As we are skipping over segments in the narrative, it is noteworthy to mention that according to brief statements scattered throughout John's Gospel, much of what he wrote did not make sense until after Jesus' resurrection. Recall that on the road to Emmaus, when the lamenting disciples encountered Jesus, Whom they did not recognize until He broke the bread with them, He had explained to them from the Scriptures why the Messiah had to die.

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter His glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself.³³⁸

From the prophets, we understand that innocent blood had been shed by the wicked. And therefore, the debt incurred had to

³³⁸ Luke 24:25-27 NIV

be repaid with blood. Just as God explained through Ezekiel in chapter 39, God would provide His own Supreme Sacrifice on the mountains of Israel. For the nation themselves to have repaid the debt would have brought about their elimination. And so as God saw there was none who could repay such a debt, He gave this task to the Holy One of the *Ish-raah-el-ites*.

Although the Hebrew and Aramaic Scriptures never say that the Holy One or *Memra* would be sacrificed, *Memra* was spoken of in the context of providing redemption.

And I will set the *shekinah* of My Glory among you, and my Word shall not abhor you, but the Glory of My *shekinah* shall dwell among you, and My Word shall be to you for a redeeming God, and you shall be unto My Name for a holy people.³³⁹

There are many implications to this verse, especially in the context of raising up *Ish-raah-el-ites*. To have become a “holy people” implied the inheritance of a standing place in the *aiona*. However, redemption would come at a tremendous cost.

From Isaiah 45:17-25, Targum Jonathan, we understand the prophet’s insight:

But Israel shall be saved by the *Memra* of *Yehovah* with an everlasting salvation...In the *Memra* of *Yehovah* shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and they shall glory.

In Hosea 13:14, the Targum translation tradition provided the account that “The Lord, whose help is found in His people, will redeem them by His *Memra* from the hand of the grave, and deliver them from death.” In direct continuity, in John 5:24:25, Jesus stated:

Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live...for an hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come out.³⁴⁰

³³⁹ Leviticus 26:11-12 Etheridge Translation.

³⁴⁰ John 5:24:25 NIV

Later in John 11, Jesus similarly declared His identity: "I am the resurrection and the life."

New Testament texts like Mark 10:45 stating, "the Son of Man came...to give his life as a ransom for many," pull together the divine Redeemer of the Targums with the Word of God Who came in human flesh. It is also noteworthy that at Jesus' dedication in the temple as a baby, Anna also identified Him as the Redeemer.

Those who had been born into the world as the dead having been cast out of Eden were offered redemption into the *aionios* life.

The concept of redemption required that a debt must have been paid in order to redeem or take back someone or something.

Regarding other biblical references to consider, in Daniel 9:25-26, it was stated that after 62 weeks, an "anointed one" which translated into Hebrew meant "messiah," would be cut off and have nothing. From the text of Zechariah 12:10, we also read:

And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.³⁴¹

Perhaps Isaiah chapter 53 has been used as one of the most compelling prophecies regarding Jesus:

Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of *Yehovah* been revealed? For He grew up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He has no form nor comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as One from Whom men hide their face He was despised; and we esteemed Him not. Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded

³⁴¹ Zechariah 12:10 ESV

for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and *Yehovah* has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, yet when He was afflicted He opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so He opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for His generation, who *among them* considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of My people to whom the stroke *was due*? And they made His grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death; although He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased *Yehovah* to bruise him; He has put Him to grief: when You will make His soul an offering for sin, He will see *his* seed, He will prolong His days, and the pleasure of *Yehovah* will prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by the knowledge of Himself will my Righteous Servant justify many; and He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the spoil with the strong; because He poured out His soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors: yet He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.³⁴²

Once again, I reiterate the point that I am not writing to turn Jews into Christians—no matter how compelling Isaiah’s verses may be. However, we do agree that Isaiah was inspired and that as a prophet, he wrote down things that he had seen standing before the throne of heaven. Therefore, what he wrote has to be accounted for on some level, along with the other Prophets who understood that Israel had incurred a debt that they themselves could never possibly repay.

³⁴² Isaiah 53:1–12 paraphrased ASV

What we see in the passage are the Father's reflective thoughts concerning the second power—Whom He will allow to be sacrificed for the transgressions of the world.

No matter where anyone is at with Jesus, the case is made that for anyone to recapture and to maintain their intended identities as *Ish-raah-el-ites*, atonement was necessary. Since the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D., along with the end of the Levitical Priesthood, it does make sense, in light of the spirituality of ancient Israel, that of necessity, an enduring sacrifice had to be provided.

Although it is a common misconception among Christians that receiving correct doctrine as of necessity and priority in order to encounter God, this is not taught in the Scriptures. I am teaching the teachings of Jesus and Moses. Both of them instructed the Jews. Neither of them laid any prerequisite for intellectual acknowledgment of religious doctrinal facts. In fact, Jacob's life was a complete mess. And yet in *Yehovah's* vast mercy, He called the one known as a cheater into His presence. Instead, Moses and Jesus passionately compelled their audiences to become seekers—willing participants in the reign of God over the Earth with eyes to see and ears to hear the Words from the spiritual realm.

Is it possible to thank God for things we do not understand? Since it is, any and all of us can thank God for providing a sacrifice for each of us to enter into His presence—even if we are not actually able to make sense of this. And this is the celebration of the *kiddush*. Did the disciples really understand what Jesus was doing when He broke the bread? Quite often they were clueless, but He did explain that they would understand later. What we know is that experience can become a greatly revered teacher. Today we sum up the reflection by saying, "seeing is believing."

And so, my point herein is that even though any of us might not know Jesus or identify Him as the Messiah, Isaiah and others spoke of someone coming as a sacrificial redeemer. On that basis alone we have the right to thank God for His sacrifice even if we are unable to identify this one. The sacrifice is effectual regardless of our limited comprehension. God is not prevented from being at work in our lives as a result of being unable to confirm religious

facts as a matter of conscience. If that were the case we would all be doomed.

For those who continue to seek out the spirituality unveiled in this book, if and when the presence of God falls upon you, and you will assuredly know it when it happens, some questions you never thought of may be answered and some questions you thought were very important will very suddenly become completely irrelevant. And I am not only addressing a Jewish constituency here. Most Christians define themselves as such due to doctrines and passages like these which are used to teach that Jesus was the Messiah. And because the journey many among Christendom are actually on is comprised primarily of a religio-political informationally driven campaign, what I am saying here about the potential for a divine-human experience is completely off of their radar. Like devoted Jews, they may contend that God listens when they pray, thanks be to God; however, the idea of God's presence falling upon them so that they might not be able to stand or speak would be unfathomable—that is until it happens. Both sides of the Judeo-Christian movement need to apprehend that God's presence is a very real abiding place. We need to move beyond tradition and rhetoric in order to embrace all that God has for each of us.

It is likely that it was from the discussion recorded by Luke in 24:25-27 that the disciples were later able to make more sense of His actions and teachings with some of the Scriptures referenced here.

Nicodemus confused the discussion of a second birth with passing through mother's womb a second time. The passage through water was preparatory for consecration and entry into the divine temple. Accordingly, the next topic of concern in the narrative of John was Jesus' baptism. Again we reiterate that the passage through water was not just some metaphoric symbolic action. Rather instead, ascension into heaven by the son of man was made possible by passage through the water. In our limited understanding, being raised up above the water was a facet of opening the portal into the *aion*. We might say that this created an opportunity for those who had proven by their deeds in life that they were worthy.

This idea is from the context of John's Gospel just prior to Jesus' baptism following the statement that Jesus came into the world, not to judge but to bring the *aionios* life and *yasha* to the world.

For God did not send His Son *Yeshuah* into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might receive *yasha* through Him. The one who puts his or her faith in *Yeshuah* is not condemned. However, the one who does not uphold faith in *Yeshuah* has already been condemned; because he has not put his faith in the name of the unique Son of God. Now this is the basis for judgment. The Light has come into the world, but people of the world loved the darkness rather than the Light; because their deeds were evil. Those who do evil hate the Light and do not come to the Light; in order to hide their evil deeds. But the one who practices the Truth comes to the Light; so that it may be plainly evident that his deeds have been done by the leading of God.³⁴³

Although our approach is sequential, we have to move back and forth to a certain degree. Readers are encouraged to have the text of John open in order to follow along. As you do, keep in mind that some of the passages are going to be paraphrased with the intent of bringing out Hebraic and *Ish-raah-el-ite* understandings embedded within the narrative.

And so the problem of evil deeds committed in darkness set the stage for the necessity of baptism, which is equated in the text with ceremonial washing. And such cleansing allowed ones to enter into the Light. Recall that at Day-One of Eden light had been called forth which had nothing to do with creation of the cosmological luminaries on the fourth day. The Aramaic Bible talks about the brightness of the dwelling place of the *Shekinah* relative to encounter with *Memra*.

The synoptic Gospels contain the events of Jesus' baptism, but John used the topic in order to tell how the focus of the people shifted from the Baptizer to Jesus. With this, he recorded

³⁴³ John 3:17-21 Paraphrase

observations and insights of the one who heard confessions and who washed with water explain, “No one can receive anything unless it has been given to him from heaven.” Recall that Nicodemus was told that the performers of miracles first had to see the kingdom of heaven. Speaking metaphorically according to the understandings that Israel was the bride of *Yehovah* in the Old Testament and with the understanding that their divorce was being undone with Jesus coming as the Groom, we find further relevant information regarding the role of entry or seeing into heaven and hearing the voice of the Groom.

You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, “I am not the Christ,” but, “I have been sent ahead of Him.” He who has the bride is the Groom; but the friend of the Groom, who stands and listens to Him, rejoices greatly because of the Groom’s voice. So this joy of mine has been made full. He must increase, but I must decrease.³⁴⁴

In a sense, John had provided a priestly duty in making way for the Word of God. And as the Word of God increased, John knew that it was his obligation to stand aside. The baptizer was not trying to get a church position and therefore did not find it necessary to tout his indispensability.

He Who comes from above is above all; the One Who is *only* from the Earth is of the Earth and speaks of the Earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. What He has seen and heard, of this He testifies; and no one accepts His testimony. The one who has accepted His testimony has certified that God is True. For He whom God sent speaks the Words of God; for He does not give the Spirit sparingly. The Father loves the Son and has entrusted all things to His hand. The one who puts his faith in the Son has the *aionios* life; but the one who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”³⁴⁵

³⁴⁴ John 3:28-30 NASB

³⁴⁵ John 3:28-30 modified NASB

Whereas Matthew, in chapter 4, had recounted Jesus going into the *midbar* following His baptism, John skipped that portion of Jesus' life. Even though he was discussing ascension, he did not find that particular narrative to be of importance in his work. Those concerns had already been written in the synoptics before John wrote regarding Jesus.

Sometime later, Jesus went to Galilee, but the road He and His disciples traveled brought Him through Samaria where they stopped to rest at Jacob's well.

While the disciples departed to find lunch, Jesus spoke prophetically to a woman drawing water. She was surprised at the Jewish stranger's initiation of discussion and even more fascinated that He was able to recount her past. First with Nathanael and now with this woman, John has called our attention to Jesus' prophetic insight. By now we understand that these divinely discerned pieces of information were gained by prophetic encounter with the word. 2 Kings 6:12 spoke of the prophet knowing the secrets of the king that were whispered only privately in his bedroom. So then we take note of the fact that other humans had participated in the same spirituality as Jesus.

With the recognition that no person could have known her past, Jesus cryptically revealed His divine identity as the Word. "If you knew the gift of God, and Who it is that speaks to you asking for a drink, you would have instead asked of Him and He would have given you living water." Jesus explained the nature of this water. "Everyone who drinks the well water will thirst again. However, whoever drinks the water that I give will never thirst. Instead, the water I give will become a well of water springing up into the *aionios* life."

Due both to His prophetic understanding of her life and because of this mystical statement, Jesus had gained her full attention.

Within the discussion there is a *chiastic* structure transitioning from earthly to heavenly realities that again resulted in presenting the *aionios* life. And for readers who recollect our earlier discussion of *chiasms*, the ancient reader would have readied themselves for the conveyance of insider knowledge as the

chiasm was designed to sort out who had perception and to differentiate them from the deaf and blind. In this case, despite her adulterous relationships, this woman jumped to the point of asking the right questions.

Our fathers worshiped in this mountain but the Jews say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.³⁴⁶

She had a clear and repulsive understanding of the exclusivity of Second Temple legalism. Moreover, we infer the understanding by her people's continued worship in Samaria, that there was a time when the influence of the Aaronic Priesthood had not been permitted to dominate the land.

Although this comment has nothing to do with the three-day journey presented in John's Gospel, I find some humor and wisdom in that Samaria was roughly a three-day journey by foot from Jerusalem. The despised people of Sychar remained safely outside of the jurisdiction of the temple. In His own three-day journey, Jesus also removed Himself from the reach of those who proved they were not *Yehovah's* or Abraham's authentic children. He entered the *iona* of Day-One and raised up a new temple for the spiritual progeny of the Father and called workers into the field to harvest inhabitants to enter the house of God and the *aionios* life.

Sometimes it is wise to stay just out of reach of those who do not understand. We do not condemn anyone, but we seek the freedom to practice as we are led. The virtue of desiring not to harm or to be harmed is noble. Jesus offered worship with entry into the realm of the Spirit and according to God's Being of Truth which had been made alive in those who treasured His Word.

Jesus responded to the woman at the Jacob's well, "Trust Me, the hour is coming when worship will not be limited to this mountain nor to Jerusalem. Instead, true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. Ones such as these the Father also seeks to be His worshipers." And then He explained entry into the *aiona*, "God is Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship in

³⁴⁶ John 4:20 modified ASV

spirit and truth.” Herein, the audience was reminded that character, behavior, and decisions mattered to divine eyes that watched over them. Entry into the realm of the spirit was reserved for those who demonstrated that they bore the image of God—as was the intention for humankind at the foundation of the world.

Touting her awareness, the woman declared, I know that Messiah is coming and when He has come, He will declare all things to us. Jesus responded asserting this to have been His identity.

We are reminded that individuals throughout the Bible encountered the second power, not by means of the Aaronic Priesthood, but instead in the same fashion as Abraham. Although the Jerusalem leaders denied the authenticity of divine-human encounter that took place outside of the Levitical priesthood since the time of Josiah, the despised Samaritans were not going to put up with such nonsense. And they didn’t have ruling lawyers watching over their shoulders to reprimand them when they ignored Jerusalem’s legalistic rules.

The insider knowledge that John repeatedly confronted his astute listeners with was the necessity for entry into the *aiona*. This woman got down to the brass tacks immediately, and John used the discussion to convey the idea that when Jesus had initially spoken to the woman, and continuing in the historical present when he wrote the Gospel, that worshipers were worshiping everywhere. Accordingly, they were entering into the presence of God as His temple was re-established by their praise.

David had conveyed this understanding in the Psalms. In Psalm 22:3 he declared “You are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.”

We add this understanding to the developing concept of the three-day journey in John’s Gospel and take note of the fact that Jesus stayed in Sychar two additional days. This information seems to come out of the blue—lacking a context of understanding, that is unless we understand the Hebraic three-day journey. Jesus had a purpose to stay in order to demonstrate an understanding that had long since become lost and forgotten.

As One Who fasted from earthly food and Who feasted upon the Word of God, Jesus refused to eat the food which the

disciples had gone away to buy in order to permit Him in completing the journey.

The disciples urged Jesus to eat. But He replied, I have food to eat that you are unaware of...My food is to do the will of Him Who sent Me and to complete His work.³⁴⁷

Walking out the calling of the three-day journey was of more importance than eating. He further challenged participation by His disciples.

Don't you say, "There are still four more months, then afterward comes the harvest?" Listen to what I'm telling you. Open your eyes and see the fields. Behold, they are ready for harvest. The harvester is already getting his pay by gathering fruit of the ancient life. Therefore, the sower and the harvester can rejoice together. Here is an example where the saying is accurate, "One sows and another reaps." I sent you to harvest that for which you did not labor. Others labored, but you have benefited from their labor.³⁴⁸

In the interest of realizing the *Ish-rah-el-ite* perspective being conveyed, Jesus reprimanded the disciples to open their eyes and their ears. They understood earthly colloquialisms, such as the saying, "One sows and another reaps." However, they had missed something more important. In the quotation, again we take note of the *chiastic* structure. Although they were not physically blind, they could not see the harvest. earthly harvest was being compared to ones who would be birthed into to the *aiona* by an *aionios* harvest. Just as Jesus had elsewhere challenged the disciples to become fishers of men, in Sychar they needed to become *aionios* harvesters.

The uninitiated would walk away deaf and blind thinking Jesus had spoken about the dynamics of agriculture. However, Jesus was calling His disciples into labor. God had sown His Word for the purpose that individuals would inherit renewal to life as *Ish-rah-el-*

³⁴⁷ John 4:31, 32, & 34

³⁴⁸ John 4:35-38 Paraphrase

ites. The gateway of Melchizedek was reopened. Worshipers who approached in Spirit having been born of the Truth of God as bearers of His image would enter the gates of heaven anywhere and everywhere—just as had been the case in the most ancient times.

There was a job to be done in the world. A great harvest awaited. In the context of the Hebraic paradigm, this had begun with Abraham who first pledged his faithfulness to God Most High. John understood this would not be accomplished apart from divine empowerment. It was time to raise up a nation of priests—ones willing to give their lives to the task—walking in the necessary spirituality.

Before leaving Sychar, the woman remarked regarding Jesus' prophetic words, "We no longer walk in faith merely because of what You said, for we have heard for ourselves." Those who did not have ears to hear had gained *Ish-rah-el-ite* ears to hear. And they declared "We know that this really is the Savior of the world." Proof came by means of personal divine-human experience.

John did not provide any chronological connectives, but we understand that Jesus departed Judea for Galilee where He was welcomed and then moved on to Cana of Galilee. There he met an official whose son was very sick and dying. All of that might have been understood as three-days travel when John's Gospel was composed, however, this is merely speculation. Nevertheless, it seems to have been at least one day or more.

Google maps reveals that the straight distance was between 43 and 47 miles. Current roads make the distance to be between 59 and 68 miles. Walking this distance at a moderate pace would take about 24 hours. Considering the likelihood that such travel could only be done during cooler times of the day, it is reasonable to understand that this could have been a three-day journey.

The official pleaded for Jesus to come and heal his son, but Jesus appears to have tested the man. He replied, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not uphold faith." But the man persisted, "Sir, come down before my child dies." And so finally, Jesus told him, "Go; your son lives." The man upheld faith in the Word of Jesus and started on his way home. However, his

slaves were also on their way to find him. When they compared notes, they realized that the son had been healed at the same time Jesus declared the Word. As a result, the man's household came to faith. John recorded this as the second sign Jesus performed when He had come from Judea into Galilee.

Whether or not this had been the third day of a three-day journey, we understand from Jesus' own explanation that the signs and wonders He performed were first discovered before the earthly need was evident while He was in the presence of the Father. Therein, He received the empowerment and authority to speak forth the Word of God. And so, Jesus modeled the exercise of spiritual authority in calling forth the reign of heaven into the realm of Earth.

John tells us that sometime later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem to participate in a feast of the Jews where He healed the man who had been crippled for 38 years. And in reply to the demand of the religious rulers, Jesus explained that He had performed the miracle on the basis that since the Father was working, so also was He.

Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, except if it is something He sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does these in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, revealing all things to Him that the Father Himself is doing. And the Father will show Him even greater works than these, and you will marvel. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life [of the *aiona*], even so the Son also gives the same life [of the *aiona*] to whom He desires.³⁴⁹

This is the identical pattern in the Aramaic Bible that existed between *Memra* and God Most High. *Memra* served the wishes of *Yehovah*—Who sent the Word into the world to accomplish His will.

³⁴⁹ John 4:19-21 Paraphrase (note that the phrase "of the *aiona*" was used in order to clarify the specific kind of life about which Jesus was teaching because the *aionios* life was mentioned in the upcoming verses).

Memra served as a divine-human mediator in the same way as Jesus.

The Father judges no one, but has handed over all judgment to the Son, so that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. If anyone does not honor the Son he also does not honor the Father Who sent the Son.³⁵⁰

Very, truly, I tell you, He that hears my Word, and puts faith in Him that sent Me, has the *aionios* life. He will not come under God's condemnation but has passed from death unto life. Very, truly, I tell you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.³⁵¹

In these statements, the concept of the second power of heaven is unveiled in an identical manner in which it was conveyed in the *Targums*.

Just as the Father has life in Himself; so also He has granted the Son to have life in Himself.³⁵²

Therefore, to have encountered Jesus was to have encountered the Word or the second power of heaven—Whose very presence existed as the Source of the *aionios* life.

And with this, He has given Him authority to execute judgment because He is the Son of man.³⁵³

So then God had identified Jesus not only as His Son, but also with reference that pertained to identification of earthly prophets. And if any of the religious rulers thought that was big news, Jesus continued:

Do not be amazed, because a time is coming when those who are in the graves are going to hear His voice and they

³⁵⁰ John 5:22–23 modified NASB

³⁵¹ John 4:24–25 modified ASV

³⁵² John 4:26

³⁵³ John 4:27

will come out. Those who have done what is good are going to ascend and live, while those who have done evil will be resurrected to condemnation.³⁵⁴

Although Orthodox instruction has conditioned our mind to read these verses making us assign interpretation as having to do with going to heaven after death, we might additionally gain further insight from the Hebraic tradition.

Humankind died when they were cast out of Eden. The way back to life was provided by means of becoming an *Ish-raah-el-ite*. Those who lived by the grace of hearing God's voice, like Noah, Abraham, the Judges and the Prophets, and their spiritual children who continued in *Ish-raah-el-ite* faithfulness with *Yehovah*, found their way back to life in the *aiona*. Those who walked in the *Ish-raah-el-ite* lifestyle found peace with God. They were no longer under the wrath, judgment or condemnation of God, but instead became inheritors of the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace.

Just as Jesus went on to explain that He could do nothing in and of Himself according to the flesh, it was because of the *aionios* life that He had the potential to be empowered with divine authority. The NIV explains the point succinctly "By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me." As an *Ish-raah-el-ite*, Jesus could hear the voice of the Father. He being a man, had gained ears to hear and eyes to see. The miracles were a work of God that took place through Him—involving divine perception and His own volition. Part of this included making the personal sacrifice to fast from earthly food. The three-day journey was not only a means of obtaining the bread of heaven, but also the spiritual step toward empowering others.

Continuing forward, the point of verses 31-34 were a contrast between Jesus and the religious rulers. They did not hear or live by the Word of God but instead were motivated by human affirmation and direction—just like devoted Facebook, YouTube,

³⁵⁴ John 4:28 and 29

Instagram, and other social media platform users are today.³⁵⁵ Jesus, however, having found the life of God in the *aiona* had become enabled to bring *yeshuah* to humankind. There is an implication here that others could do the same, but the religious leaders were willfully ignorant and had rejected this ancient path.

Whereas the attention of the Jewish people was shifting from John the Baptist to Jesus, and the Pharisees might have argued that Jesus' identity was rooted in the Baptizer's testimony about Him, He explained:

the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish, the very works that I do testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me. And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form.³⁵⁶

Jesus did not need to receive earthly glory from men because His Father manifest His divine Glory through the miracles and prophetic words.

Jesus condemned the religious rulers because although they had descended from the loins of Abraham, they had not become seeing and hearing *Ish-raah-el-ites*.

You do not have His Word abiding in you, and you do not uphold faith in Him Whom the Father has sent. You study the Scriptures because you think that in them you will obtain the *aionios* life, but in reality, it is these that testify about Me. However, you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have the *aionios* life...I know you, and recognize that you do not have the love of God in yourselves.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁵ Note that "Facebook," "YouTube," and "Instagram" are the registered trademarks of their owners.

³⁵⁶ John 5:36-37.

³⁵⁷ John 5:38-40 & 42 Paraphrase

In comparison to the Ammonites or Moabites who had lost entry into the *aion*a for ten generations, the Jews of the Second Temple had completely forsaken their intended standing places in the Word. Rather instead, they had substituted a counterfeit spirituality. The Scriptures served as the roadmap to a specific destination in the Word. However, if a person never applied the roadmap and actually traveled to the destination, they could never claim to have arrived.

Neither did Jesus entrust Himself to men because He knew what evil abode in each member of humankind, nor did He receive accolades of glory from men—as was the case with the religious rulers.

I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me. But if another comes in his own name, you will receive him. You do not seek the glory that is from the One and only God. How can you uphold faith in God, when you are consumed by receiving glory from one another? So then, do not think that I will accuse you before the Father. Moses himself is your accuser, in whom you have put your hopes. For if you upheld the faith of Moses, you would uphold faith in Me. Moses wrote about Me.³⁵⁸

Once again, Jesus had identified Himself as the Holy One of Israel. There is no other way to reasonably explain the last statement of Moses having taught about Jesus. Moses had encountered the Word and taught the Israelites to seek the Word—however as Philo commented earlier, Israel had forsaken the fountain of living water.

Moreover, a lesson in the narrative which contributes to actually making the journey revolved around the fact that those whose lives were consumed by pleasing others to gain their approval were going to miss the target of entry into the *aion*a.

The Second Temple Jews had set aside Moses' instruction. In the same way, many Fundamentalist, Reformation-minded, Evangelical communities today set aside Jesus' teachings. They

³⁵⁸ John 5:43-46 Paraphrase

ignore the priority of pursuing righteousness in thought and deed with respect to entry into God's Kingdom. In all practicality, the vast majority of individuals who define themselves with these labels do not know that it might even be possible to tangibly enter the realm of the Spirit.

The Jews had their beloved scrolls and the *takkanot*, but they had forsaken a tangible subjective divine-human relationship with the abiding Word of God. And with this they had forsaken their abiding places in the *aiona*.

The church thinks that it does the things of Jesus in the same way that the Jews thought that they followed the teachings of Moses and did the deeds of Abraham. The fact of the matter is that by and large neither the Jewish religious leaders Jesus addressed nor have many contemporary church leaders carried out what they have claimed. If it were so, Jews and Christians alike would teach how to wait upon the Lord in order to encounter the living active Word of God.

In the synoptic Gospels, this instruction was summed up with the topic of "entry into the kingdom."

Abraham entered into the presence of the Word of God. Resultantly, He manifested God's rulership in the world. So also, Moses and Jesus compelled listeners, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God."

Therefore, in verse 47, Jesus confronted them with the problem, "If any of you do not faithfully embrace Moses' writings, how will you find the means to uphold faith in My Words?" Jesus left the religious leaders with the question, also pointing posterity to understand the continuity between His identity and the teachings of Moses. Our take-away is that Moses taught that Israel's living Teacher was the Word of God.

Christendom has tried to explain the case that Moses taught about Jesus with foreshadowing. For example, the giving of the *manna* foreshadowed Jesus as the bread of life. However, only in rare cases has developing Orthodoxy ever connected the bread of life to the *davarim* of the Hebrew Scriptures. Much of what was written in *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom* on this

connection has not been any significant part of the knowledge base of Christendom since the first or second centuries A.D.

But if we read Deuteronomy 18:15-19, we take note of Moses' explicit prophetic instruction.

The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. This is what you requested from the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, "Let us not continue to hear the voice of the Lord our God or see this great fire any longer, so that we will not die!" Then the Lord said to me, 'They have spoken well. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. I will hold accountable whoever does not listen to my words that he speaks in my name.'³⁵⁹

At the time that Israel rejected the opportunity to become seeing and hearing *Ish-rah-el-ites*, as the Word of God thundered from the mountain, he let them have their way. However, Moses prophetically understood that a future day was coming. A prophet would be raised up among the Israelites. And prophets are recognized as such because of their prophetic words. John highlighted this both through Nathanael's reaction to being seen under the tree and through the woman at Jacob's well, who was identified as having had five husbands and as not being married to the man she was with now. Jesus had proven His identity not only with these Words but with the miracles of healing themselves.

According to John, in keeping with the statement of Moses in Deuteronomy 19, God's Words were being manifest by Jesus. And with this the topic of accountability went along with Jesus' explanation of judgment and condemnation. In John 5, if we widen our perspective, we understand that study of the Bible apart from listening to the voice of God can be fruitless. Although the religious leaders were tremendous students of the Scriptures their forefathers had rejected the Word along with anything having to do

³⁵⁹ Deuteronomy 18:15-19 CSB

with mystical subjective divine-human two-way communication. The mindset of legalistic objective religious practices had contained their minds in an impenetrable bubble. Although it is anachronistic to make the observation, none of them seem to have been able to have walked in the genius of Einstein. And to have called into question the counterfeit emphases of Second Temple Judaism probably would have gotten dissenters killed, as was the case with Jesus.

In John 6, Jesus had departed for the other side of the sea of Galilee which was also identified as the sea of Tiberias. But large crowds were following because they saw the signs He had been performing on those who were sick. Jesus went up a mountain and sat with His disciples. The time of the Passover Feast of the Jews was near. When Jesus looked up and saw the multitudes coming up the mountain to find Him, He asked Philip, "Where are we going to find food for these people to eat? But He had only asked to test the disciples because He already knew His plans. Philip incredulously replied that two hundred denarii worth of bread might not even be enough to satisfy their hunger. But Simon Peter's brother Andrew interjected, "there is a boy here with 5 barley loaves and 2 fish, but what good is this in light of the size of the crowds?

Jesus ordered to have the crowds sit in the green grass and there were about 5,000 men. And when they were seated, He took the bread and called forth grace. Then the food was distributed and everyone took as much as they desired. After they were full, Jesus commanded that the broken pieces be gathered up so that nothing was lost and they counted twelve baskets full. If we carefully examine the text of John, there is no indication of anything to do with a three-day journey. However, in a strikingly similar occurrence that included 4,000 men in addition to other women and children, Matthew and Mark did reference that the crowds had been with Him three-days. It was on the third day that He multiplied the bread. We are not making the case that the events somehow became mixed up, but instead it is just valuable to find continuity in the third day motif.

There is something of particular importance in the feeding of the 4,000 to mention:

Jesus left there and went along the Sea of Galilee. Then he went up on a mountainside and sat down. Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them. The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.³⁶⁰

Recall David's understanding that the Holy One became enthroned by the praises of His people. Reading the passage from the Hebraic perspective allows us insight as to what was going on in the realm of the Spirit. And in this case, the result was that people were being restored to physical and spiritual sight.

Afterward, John recorded in 6:14, when the people had witnessed the sign which Jesus had performed, they claimed, "Truly this must be the Prophet Who is to come into the world."

And so while I am attempting to make the case that it seems that there may have been a three-day continuity shared between the feeding of the 5,000 and the 4,000, John instead appeared to have been making the point that the religious leaders had not recognized Jesus as the prophet foretold by Moses; however these common people recognized His identity.

Jesus realized God's calling upon His life because of time invested in the *aiona* beholding the Father. Consequently, He was warned in His Spirit to withdraw into the recesses of the mountain so that He would not be taken by force and made king. However, that evening, His disciples gathered in a boat to head back to Capernaum. It seems that they waited until after dark, but Jesus had not shown up for the ride back across the lake.

When they were three or four miles across the lake, a storm came up and the boat was tossed by the waves, And they were terrified when they saw Jesus walking toward them on the water. But he called out to them, "It's just me, and they were relieved and took Him into the boat, but then mysteriously found themselves at landfall. The next day, the crowd wondered how Jesus had gotten there because He did not get into the boat with His disciples. There

³⁶⁰ Matthew 15:32-38 NIV

were other small boats from Tiberias near to the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks; so the crowds used these to follow Jesus to Capernaum. When they had found Him they asked how He had gotten there, but He answered a different question.

Jesus answered them and said, "Very truly, I tell you, you are not seeking Me because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. There is continuity between these individuals and the woman at the well when she first wanted Jesus to give her living water to forever satisfy her physical thirst. Both were initially focused upon the flesh.

Jesus similarly shifted the conversation toward focus upon the spiritual world warning the crowds,

Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to the *aionios* life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on Him the Father, God, has placed His seal.³⁶¹

Just as these ones had understood that Jesus was the prophet, they also comprehended the corrective offered by Jesus. And so they asked, "Then what shall we do, in order that we might work the works of God?" Jesus replied, "This is the work of God, that you uphold faith in Him Whom He has sent." They also knew that signs provided a reason to establish a commitment of faith. However, it seems incredible that they neglected consideration of the sign Jesus had performed just one day before. So the crowd asked Jesus, "What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform? Our fathers ate the *manna* in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" Jesus appeared not to have been flustered by the question, even in light of the events of the previous day and remarked, "Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is My Father Who gives you the True Bread from heaven. The bread of God is that which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world." Had they themselves been more familiar with the teachings of Moses and the prophets,

³⁶¹ John 6:27

they would have apprehended that Jesus was identifying Himself as the Word of God. Moses had referenced this as *davar* in two different statements. And Moses also taught that members of humankind were not intended to live or to find life by earthly bread alone, but by the Word of God.

Like the woman at the well, they too were still focused on the wrong concern and they asked, "Lord, always give us this bread." Taking them by surprise, Jesus responded, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who upholds faith in Me will never thirst. But it is clear that even though you have seen Me, still you are not responding with faith. All of those who the Father gives Me will come to Me, and those who come to Me I will certainly not cast any of them out of My presence. I have come down from heaven, not for the sake of doing what I want, but instead as a servant of Him Who sent Me. And this is the will of Him Who sent Me, that out of all of those He has given Me, I should not lose any of them, but instead I should raise them up on the last day. It is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and puts faith in Him will have the *aionios* life. And I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

Despite Jesus clarity, the crowd remained baffled. Because of this the Jews grumbled about what Jesus had said, claiming "I am the bread that came down out of heaven." And so they objected "Isn't this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he tell us 'I have come down from heaven?'" Jesus patiently answered, "Stop grumbling," but instead understand that "Nobody can come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me draws him. I will raise ones such as these up on the last day. Just as it was written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught of God.' Therefore, everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me. Not that anyone has seen the Father, with the exception of the One Who is from God; He has seen the Father."

And so again the concept of the second power of heaven is underscored. From the Scriptures it appears that individuals could not, because of their condition, directly encounter God Most High. However the Holy One of the *Ish-rah-el-ites* served as God's Mediator. And as John had explained in chapter 1, with His

incarnation, Jesus was a new kind of manifestation of the Word of God. As such, He was also the Holy One their ancient ancestors of faith had encountered and pledged loyalty to in the matrimonial *Aionios* Covenant of Peace.

And so Jesus affirmed,

Very truly, I tell you, whoever puts his faith in Me has the *aionios* life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate *manna* in the wilderness and yet they died. But this is the Bread Who came down from heaven. Anyone may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will be made alive in the *aiona*. Understand that the bread that I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.³⁶²

With Jesus' plain explanation, the Jews were completely confused. They were unfamiliar with Ezekiel 39—wherein the prophet foresaw God's sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, a day when they would eat flesh and drink blood—the time at which God would also pour out His Spirit. Although Jesus was disclosing His intent to serve the will of His Father, their eyes and ears and minds were closed. All of that Bible study in which they had invested their lives had come to nothing. It was only from empowerment of the Word as ones had been drawn into the *aiona*, that individuals received eyes to see and ears to hear. The objective of faith was not meant to be the acquisition of literary or gnostic information, it was the embrace of the Being of the Living Word of God. It was only by breaking the bread for themselves at the entrance to the *qodesh* with the *kiddush* and through reception of the second soul or by connection to each of their angels who beheld the face of God that they also might have the ability to see as *Ish-raah-el-ites*.

And so the Jews began to argue amongst themselves, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat? Jesus persisted, "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has the *aionios* life, and I will raise him up on the

³⁶² John 6:47–51

last day. My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.”

Herein we make the connection that Jesus, or the Holy One of the *Ish-raah-el-ites* Himself. was their temple. Through worship they called forth His presence. In the understanding of David, God’s temple was raised up through praise by *Ish-raah-el-ites*. He declared, “You are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.”

By praising the Holy One or by calling on His name, the Word of God would come to them. By feasting on the flesh of the *qodesh* sacrifice He would enliven them

Recall from Micah,

But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *too* little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the *aionios* days. Therefore, He will give them *up* until the time when she who is in labor has borne a child. Then the remainder of His brethren will return to the sons of Israel. And He will arise and shepherd *His flock* In the strength of *Yehovah*, In the majesty of the name of *Yehovah* His God. And they will remain, Because at that time He will be great to the ends of the Earth. And this One will be *our* peace.³⁶³

We pause here to make a brief connection with the concept of the sacrificial redeemer previously referenced. Israel had set themselves at enmity with *Yehovah*. Redemption was required for restoration. Micah’s coming Ancient One Himself would be the provider of peace—implying personal repayment of the debt.

Micah envisioned not only the coming of the Ancient One, Who formerly helped Israel and Who would again restore the sons of Israel, but also the place He would come from. The Spiritual Being of Day-One would come into the realm of Earth to establish His rulership through all who would become *Ish-raah-el-ites*. And specifically, He would enter the earthly realm through Bethlehem, which literally meant “house of bread.” The connections between this passage with John’s Gospel are compelling. Yet, those in the

³⁶³ Micah 5:2-5a modified NASB

crowd confronting Jesus were unfamiliar with the eschatological understandings that had been written for posterity in their own Scriptures.

Jesus continued:

As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so also he who eats Me, will also live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live in the *aion*a."

All of this discussion had taken place at the synagogue in Capernaum. When many of His disciples had heard this, they decided that the conversation was far too difficult to allow them to proceed. It was entirely incomprehensible because they knew nothing of their intended ancient eschatological heritage. So then, because Jesus was aware of the grumbling of His own disciples, He asked, "Does this discussion cause you also to stumble? But then He upped the ante so to speak by asking "What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?" With this statement, John took his readers back to what he had told Nathanael. And this is essentially what happened at the transfiguration where Peter, James and John were drawn up into the cloud.

It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh does not really matter. However, the Words that I have spoken to you are Spirit and are life. But there are some of you who do not have faith." Jesus knew from the beginning those ones who did not have faith, and who it was that would betray Him. This is why He had said, "nobody can come to Me unless the Father draws him."³⁶⁴

As a result of not comprehending all of this, many of His disciples turned away and no longer followed Him. So then Jesus challenged the twelve, "Do you also want to leave?" But Simon Peter responded, "Lord to whom shall we go. You have the Words of the *aionios* life. We have come to faith and know that You are

³⁶⁴ John 6:63-65 Paraphrase

the Holy One of God. This was an astounding realization in light of the fact that the religious leaders of the temple, who were also Bible experts, could not come to the same realization.

Although the Jewish leaders who ruled the Second Temple could not make sense of Jesus association of Himself being the Word with the concept of the bread of heaven, Philo, who was alive at the same time, very clearly made this association.

What then is this food? See, it is the Word of God...his is the heavenly food, and it is mentioned in the sacred Scriptures, where it says, "He fed thee with manna...that He might make thee know that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord."³⁶⁵

And again we read similarly in Philo:

The soul, when it sees it, asks "What is this?" because it does not recognize it...But it learns from the teacher Moses that "This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat." This is the Word of God, distributed in equal portions to all who are capable of receiving it. And this is the heavenly stream of divine instruction, which flows down from the fountain of Wisdom, filling the souls that love virtue with an immortal and incorruptible food. For the rock from which the stream breaks forth is the Wisdom of God, which He has cut out as the highest and chief of all His powers, and from which He gives drink to the souls that thirst for God.³⁶⁶

Because Moses referenced the *davar* as *manna* in two instances and Philo repeatedly used "*Logos*" to reference the *manna*, we understand that Philo's Word was not the Word of the ancient philosophers. Instead, Philo was very familiar with the Word of the Scriptures. Herein, Philo combined two miraculous events in ancient Israel that each turned out to be prophetically fulfilled by Jesus. In 1 Corinthians 10:4, Paul spoke of ancient Israel, "for they

³⁶⁵ Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation*, 3.173–175.

³⁶⁶ Philo, *On Flight and Finding or A Treatise on Fugitives*, 25.137.

drank of a spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ.” In John 7:37, Jesus again identified Himself as the source of living water.

Philo asked the rhetorical question “Who, then, can feed the soul except the Word of God, and His Wisdom? For it is written: ‘Behold, I rain down upon you bread from heaven.’” Philo noted Exodus 16:4 and continued “This is the food of the soul, which is given by God...Namely, the heavenly Wisdom, which He sends from above upon those souls which have a longing for virtue.”³⁶⁷

As we interpret Philo’s “heavenly wisdom,” we can understand that for him, this embodied prophetic Words.

A prophet says nothing of his own, but another speaks through him, another who is playing upon him...The Divine Spirit [of] Wisdom enters into him and inhabits him, and it moves the organization of his voice to utter words which declare the things to come.³⁶⁸

For no pronouncement of a prophet is his own...He is an interpreter, with Another prompting all that he utters, at a time when he is entirely swept out of himself, his own reasoning power having ceased to exist...But divine Wisdom has moved into the dwelling of his mind, bringing a most radiant light.³⁶⁹

Philo spoke of prophecy (*prophēteia*) not simply speaking of the future, but as a state of being wherein human intellect was replaced by divine wisdom.

At the end of chapter 6, John shifted the discussion toward the topic of betrayal. “I chose all twelve of you and yet one of you is a devil.” He knew that it was Judas the son of Simon Iscariot who would turn Him over to those that desired to kill Him. And this fit the context leading up to the understanding that Jesus would

³⁶⁷ Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation*, 3.162–168.

³⁶⁸ Philo, *Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres* [Who Is the Heir of Divine Things?], 53.265-266, in *The Works of Philo*, trans. C. D. Yonge.

³⁶⁹ Philo. *The Special Laws*, 4.49.

provide the sacrificial bread of the *kiddush*. At the start of chapter 7, we see that Jesus was avoiding travel in Judea because the Jews were actively seeking to kill Him.

The Feast of Booths was at hand and Jesus' brothers appear to have been mocking Him by pressuring Him to go up to Jerusalem in order to demonstrate His miraculous works openly before His disciples. They wanted Him to prove Himself to the world. And John explained that they had not actually put their faith in Him. Because Jesus listened to the voice of His Father, He knew that the time was not right and commented that any time was always opportune for His brothers. The world could not hate any of them because they lived as conformists. By contrast, because He was courageous enough to confront the evil deeds of the world, His life was in jeopardy. And so Jesus remained in Galilee until later, and then He went up to Jerusalem in secret.

The Jews had been expecting Jesus, but were surprised not to find Him. And there was quite a bit of debate going on in the crowds there—some thinking He was good but others asserting that Jesus was a deceiver. Yet fear was silencing many of their opinions from being expressed openly before the Jewish leaders.

Jesus made His public appearance at the middle of the festival teaching in the temple. And the Jews were astonished by His teaching—wondering how a man without formal education could ever pass along such insights.

Jesus' response in verse 17 is very important. But in order to more fully apprehend what Jesus was conveying, we have to put on the Hebraic *Ish-raah-el-ite* mindset.

The NASB translates, "If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself."

Unpacking the first clause "If anyone is willing to do His will," we have to understand that Jesus taught the Ten Commandments. Within these was the fourth commandment to keep the Sabbath holy. We might infer that the statement meant that the Sabbath was intended for entry into the *qodesh* by means of the *kiddush*. Those who did the will of the Father in following this

instruction would encounter the manifest presence of God's grace and would be taught by the Father.

The second statement "he will know of the teaching" was not any sort of gnostic secretive knowledge. But the statement had to do with recognition of the source from whence Jesus' instructional ability had come. He had learned these things from waiting upon the Lord.

And to interject a side note, I do not know how Jewish worshipers wait on the Lord today, but it seems that in the Christian world, this is not a dominant practice. When Jesus introduced the *kiddush*, shortly before His crucifixion, He remarked that those remembering or rather re-enlivening the sacrifice to enter into the *qodesh* holy realm should wait for Him to come. Christendom, not having any understanding of entry into the *qodesh* realm, by the *kiddush*, to keep a holy Sabbath has instead assumed that Jesus' statement had to do with continuing the practice of communion with bread and wine until His second coming. Very few individuals that I personally know actually spend an appreciable time just waiting on the Lord in quiet worship—especially in the celebration of the eucharist also known as Communion. Churchianity encourages "quiet time" which quite often has to do with Bible study. I would not want to discount the fact that the Lord speaks to people while they study the Bible, but here again in the context of the passage, Jesus did not gain His knowledge from merely studying the Bible. Otherwise the religious leaders would have just said something to the effect, "Oh, we can see that you have studied the Bible quite well." However, the magnitude of what Jesus had taught was off the chart of mere study of the Scriptures. And in continuity with what He had already stated about having been taught by the Father, we further make sense that what He taught came by divine impartation.

Just as it was John's concern, in the composition of his book, to raise up *Ish-rah-el-ites*, so also in the first part of the book Jesus was his model. Later we can expect more explicit instruction directed toward the disciples which would serve posterity. And for any who might argue that these mystical concerns only belonged to the disciples, John had not written his book until after all of these

things were said and done. Pentecost and the outpouring of the Spirit had long since taken place. John was writing for the benefit of posterity.

And so the last clause in 7:17 stated, “whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.” In other terms, those who engaged in the practice of waiting upon the Lord in the *qodesh* holy realm were going to encounter the manifest presence of God’s grace. He would speak to each individual who was gathered into His presence. Such ones would recognize for themselves the origin of the teaching; “whether it is My own or God’s.”

Furthermore, those who speak on their own initiative seek their own glory; whereas those who “seek the glory of the One Who sent them is True and there is no unrighteousness in Him.” In other terms, Jesus was not living life according to His own agenda. Rather instead He was serving the agenda of His Father. Glorifying the Father was accomplished by carrying out whatever the Father had shown Him to do. Whereas the Father Glorifying the Son was accomplished through the prophetic Words and miracles.

Jesus questioned them further on this exact matter, “Has not Moses given you the Law? Yet none among you actually observes the Law.” We understand that if they had truly kept the Law and had kept the holy Sabbath, that they would have immediately understood the origin of Jesus’ instruction due to their own personal encounters with the voice of God.

Having said as much, Jesus turned the tables on the religious leaders, asking “Why do you seek to kill Me?”

Note specifically that Jesus confronted their violation of the sixth commandment from the inspired *Torah*. The Deuteronomist hatred from the time of Hezekiah and Josiah lived on as a virulent poison in the lives of the leaders of Second Temple Judaism.

But the ignorant crowd argued, “Who is trying to kill you?”

Pushing further, Jesus asserted based upon His healing on the Sabbath,

I did one work and you marveled. Moses gave you circumcision, not that it was actually from Moses, but instead it came from the fathers, and yet you violate the

Law by circumcising a man on the Sabbath.” In other words, the religious leaders were hypocritically accusing Jesus of violating the Sabbath. If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath in order that the Law of Moses may not be broken, how can you be angry with Me because I made a man’s whole body well on the Sabbath?³⁷⁰

Jesus continued correcting them to the effect that they needed to judge with righteousness and forget their legalistic nit picking.

Moving ahead through 7:26 and following, the debate about Jesus’ identity continued and the intensity of the Jews increased in their desire to kill Jesus. Some had difficulty making sense how a common man born among them could be the Messiah. We will touch upon a few verses. In 28-36, as Jesus taught in the temple, speaking somewhat cryptically, He asserted that he had come from the Father.

The *Ish-raah-el-ite* Perspective

John’s Gospel was written to resurrect the concept of what it meant to become an *Ish-raah-el-ite*. In his introduction we read:

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth...For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.³⁷¹

Although the concept that the Father in heaven having had a Son who dwelt by His side, was excised from the knowledge base of Judaism, because this was being used for proselytization of the Jews, He was known as the Word. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the Father sent the *davar* into the world to accomplish His will and to manifest His reign. In the Aramaic Bible, the *davar* was personified

³⁷⁰ John 7:21–23

³⁷¹ John 1:14 & 16-18 ESV

as *Memra* who intervened in the affairs of humankind. The Word became manifest in many different forms and by many diverse means. Due to His being born into the world through flesh and blood, the Word of God could actually become a sacrifice.

He was referenced as a Redeemer, perhaps for more than one reason. The Word of God had come to settle accounts. Ancient Israel had brought God's wrath upon themselves by forsaking the marriage covenant with *Yehovah*. Their separation from God was gradual. Although God would send His Son, the Word, into the world to bring help which was called "*yeshuah*," over time, the Word appeared less and less as Israel's leaders on the throne and in the Jerusalem temple turned toward idolatry.

The kings did not like being hampered by the prophets who pointed out their sins, so they were killed. When God kept raising up prophets from the worshipers of *Yehovah*'s name, as was the pattern set by Moses, Hezekiah tore down their altars. Finally, those guiding the child King, Josiah, influenced him to think that all of the outlying high places, many of which served the needs of the Priestly Order of Melchizedek, were evil—probably because they did not submit to the Jerusalem temple. And so Josiah's forces moved out and many were killed. Priests were sacrificed upon their altars. And all who were able fled to Arabia with the realization that the Jerusalem temple, which had instigated the pogrom against them, had become completely defiled.

The divided nation of Judah and Israel became so weak that they were all eventually conquered and the people were taken captive to Assyria and Babylon as slaves. During Hezekiah and Josiah's reign, the Deuteronomists assumed absolute control. Eventually, worship of the name of *Yehovah* that had been instituted by Moses in order to call forth the presence of the Word and His *yeshuah* was banned on the basis that speaking the actual name of God was too sacred for the average person. Speaking of His name was reserved for the Priests. Many man-made rules and regulations were added to Moses' Law to the point that some of these made it impossible to obey the inspired *Torah* that had been given when the nation of Israel encountered the Word from atop Mount Sinai.

When adulterous Israel was set free from captivity and returned to rebuild the temple, what emerged was a counterfeit religion that had nothing to do with Moses' intentions. Second Temple religious leaders had lost sight of all of the eschatological prophecies of the Old Testament. If this had not been the case they would have recognized Jesus as the Holy One or as the Word of God Who stood by the side of the Father in heaven—based upon the writings of Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Micah, and others.

The Word of God had been born into the world in Bethlehem. How fitting that the Word would make His appearance in the "house of bread," as in the Hebrew Scriptures the Word had always been compared to bread. Micah foretold this location as the birth place of the Messiah.

Although the nation had been punished during the captivity, the problem remained that Second Temple Judaism was not a valid representation of the teachings of Moses or the prophets. And Even as Ezekiel and others foretold the corrupt religious regime's destruction, Jesus also pronounced this, and it was accomplished in 70 A.D.

Nevertheless, another problem would be created by destruction of the temple. There would be no place for sacrifices. Melchizedek's priesthood was gone, although as an ancient manifestation of the second power of heaven, this would be restored through Jesus as a righteous king would again rule Israel—or so it was thought.

Herein it is necessary to understand a difference between the nation and actual *Ish-raah-el-ites*. The namesake of Jacob as the "man who saw God" spoke of the kind of people God had hoped to have raised up from the nation. There were many worldly minded Israelites, however, some of them followed in the experience of Jacob and became renowned as "seers," "oracles," and "prophets." God's kingdom or reign came into the world through ones such as these.

The worldly minded Second Temple worshipers expected the coming of a Messiah who would show up, amass a vast army, and who would defeat Rome, Assyria, Babylon and anyone else who dared to raise their ugly heads against the nation of Israel. The

problem was that ones such as these had the taste of vengeance on their lips and were thinking according to the flesh.

Isaiah had admonished the nation,

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not my ways,” says ADONAI. “As high as the sky is above the Earth are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”³⁷²

Thinking according to the Spirit, God’s messianic rulership would be established through manifestation of the Word of God Who had been active in the life of ancient Israel all the way back to Noah—and even in the Garden of Eden.

Isaiah continued:

For just as rain and snow fall from the sky and do not return there, but water the Earth, causing it to bud and produce, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so is my word that goes out from my mouth—it will not return to me unfulfilled; but it will accomplish what I intend, and cause to succeed what I sent it to do.³⁷³

And the world would be changed by ongoing divine manifestations of the Word, which as an *Ish-raah-el-ite*, had been the treasure of David.

Yes, you will go out with joy, you will be led forth in peace. As you come, the mountains and hills will burst out into song, and all the trees in the countryside will clap their hands. Cypressess will grow in place of thorns, myrtles will grow instead of briars. This will bring fame to ADONAI as an *aionios*, imperishable sign.³⁷⁴

And the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace that had been celebrated by David would be restored.

³⁷² Isaiah 55:8-9 CJB

³⁷³ Isaiah 55:10-11 CJB

³⁷⁴ Isaiah 55:12-13 CJB

Open your ears, and come to me; listen well, and you will live—I will make an *aionios* covenant with you, the grace I assured David. I have given him as a witness to the peoples, a leader and lawgiver for the peoples. You will summon a nation you do not know, and a nation that doesn't know you will run to you, for the sake of ADONAI your God, the Holy One of Isra'el, who will glorify you.³⁷⁵

God had given this grace to David.

And it came to pass, when the king dwelt in his house, and *Yehovah* had given him rest from all his enemies round about, that the king said to Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within curtains. And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in your heart; for *Yehovah* is with you. And it came to pass the same night, that the Word of *Yehovah* came to Nathan, saying, Go and tell My servant David, *Yehovah* asks, Will you build Me a house to dwell in? I have not dwelt in a house since the day that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a Tabernacle. In all places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel, have I spoken a Word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to be shepherd of My people Israel, asking, Why have you not built a house of cedar for Me? Now therefore you will tell My servant David, Thus says *Yehovah* of hosts, I took you from the sheep pen, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over My people, Israel; and I have been with you wheresoever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a great name, like the name of the great ones that are in the Earth. And I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place, and be moved no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them anymore, as at the first, and as from the day that I commanded judges to be over My

³⁷⁵ Isaiah 55:3-5 CJB

people Israel; and I will cause you to rest from all your enemies.³⁷⁶

The grace of David can be understood in several ways. First of all, this Word of *Yehovah* came through a vision given conveyed by Nathan, the prophet. David heard God's voice through a human intermediary. Furthermore, the place God had chosen to make His abode with Israel was the tent of the Tabernacle. This is where *Yehovah* was known to have spoken with Moses. Again, the Tabernacle was the location of God's grace for those who sought His voice. However, God had a bigger vision for the *Ish-raah-el-ites*. He intended to give them a dwelling that could not be made with human hands or materials of the temporal physical world.

Moreover, *Yehovah* tells you that *Yehovah* will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled, and you will sleep with thy fathers, I will set up your seed after you, Who will proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish His kingdom. He will build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom in the *aiona*. I will be his father, and he shall be My son.³⁷⁷

Herein the concept of divine son was introduced into the eschatology of ancient Israel. Whereas Israel interpreted the significance of *Yehovah's* narrative concerning the promise that the House of David would continue to rule the nation, in actuality it was also true that *Yehovah's* divine Son would assume rulership of the world through the *Ish-raah-el-ites*. Nathan's prophetic Word continued.

If He commit iniquity, I will chasten Him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men; but My lovingkindness shall not depart from Him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before you.

It is important to see that it would be possible for this divine Son to be punished by the rod of men. Such an understanding

³⁷⁶ 2 Samuel 7:1–11 modified ASV

³⁷⁷ 2 Samuel 7:11b–14a modified ASV

makes the incarnation of the Word of God plausible. And remember that we are examining this passage in order to understand Isaiah's passage where he was speaking of the coming of the Word to a hungry and thirsty people. Nathan continued:

And your house and your kingdom shall be made certain in the *aion*a before you: your throne shall be established in the *aion*a.³⁷⁸

Keep in mind that Isaiah was testifying about the reestablishment of "an *aionios* covenant" which had been the grace *Yehovah* assured to David. Isaiah's *aionios* covenant had everything to do with a dwelling place wherein the faithful could approach the throne to hear God's voice—just as had been the case with Moses and the tent of the Tabernacle.

According to all these Words, and according to all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.³⁷⁹

Besides learning divine chastisement vicariously through the experience of Nathan that even known prophets should not speak prematurely before receiving the Word of *Yehovah* on any matter, the narrative helps students of the Scriptures begin to see from whence the concept of a divine Son originated. This was not the invention of Christians. The idea was rooted in the Old Testament judges, seers, oracles, and prophets. And these were the very ones who were rejected and murdered by the evil kings who also controlled the Jerusalem temple.

It is by connecting the text of Isaiah 55 with the material he referenced in 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17 that the whole picture of the Word of God also being the divine Son comes together. Therefore, for Jesus to have been identified as the Word of God Who brought David's reign into the world was also the same as identifying Him as the Divine Son elucidated by the prophet Nathan.

Because of all of the harm that they and their murderous forefathers of corruption had brought upon the nation and the

³⁷⁸ 2 Samuel 7:16

³⁷⁹ 2 Samuel 7; note the parallel discussion in 1 Chronicles 17.

worshippers of *Yehovah*, the institution of the Second Temple and its people had brought upon themselves deserved divine retribution. Just as they had shed blood, so also their blood was required. Nevertheless, because all were guilty of the scourge that had infected those who were once God's people, such deserved punishment would mean the elimination of the entire nation.

Therefore God would pay the price Himself by using His Son, the Word of God made flesh to suffer instead for the sins and wickedness of the nations. And so Jesus would become the sacrifice that God would provide to be offered on the mountain of Israel. His coming as a Prophet had been foretold by Moses. And His Glory would be on display for the nations to see. And *Ish-raah-el-ites* would eat flesh and drink blood. And the Spirit would be poured out once again, as was explained by Ezekiel,

And this one would restore the grace that had been experienced by David, as had been reference by Isaiah. With this, the nation of *Ish-rah-el-ites*, who God had desired to raise up as priests in the lifetime of Moses, to stand before Him in His presence and before His holy throne, would be made alive in the *aiona*. They would see and hear God's voice and would bring the messianic rulership of God back into the world after standing in His temple—which each of them could raise up by praising His name. Each one would walk in the spirituality of David.

And they would gather together in the realm of the spirit in praise and learn to call forth God's grace into every circumstance. And they would increase in the grace of God as they learned to live by His voice—just like King David.

Such ones as these would be raised up to life in the *aiona* and live as *Ish-raah-el-ites*, waiting upon the manifestation of the Word of God, seeing what the Father was doing and hearing His voice. They would walk in obedience to the Word, obeying and carrying out what the Father had shown each of them. They would perceive through heavenly ears and eyes what lie ahead and what they should do. This was the practical prophetic walk of the *aionios* life. A place of standing in the spiritual realm had been saved for the contrite who pledged and proved their faithfulness to *Yehovah*. With this, they would become His servants in the world. By re-

enlivening the sacrifice of the Holy One, through the breaking of the bread and by partaking in the bread and wine, each one would live—seeking and serving God’s Word.

Although the ancient sacrifices, were re-enlivened through praise of *Yehovah’s* name, and by the breaking of bread in the *kiddush* in order to open the doorway into the *qodesh* realm, none of these could ever represent a perfect sacrifice comparable to the Holy One of the *Ish-raah-el-ites*. Just as He had been sent to manifest the Father’s *yeshuah* in the world, so also the angel Gabriel named Him *Yeshuah*. To have cried out His name was the same as shouting, “*Yehovah*, help me!” And to call upon the Lord by the name of His Son, the second power of heaven Who was at the side of the Father, was a means of honoring the Father for the sacrificial Gift of His Son.

Furthermore, *Yehovah* intended to increase the number of *Ish-raah-el-ites* whom He would gather into His presence over time.

In the continued interest of making sense of the practice of breaking the bread with the *kiddush* in order for *Ish-raah-el-ites* to enter into the *qodesh* realm on the Sabbath, Isaiah encouraged those who had been made eunuchs. In the context of his instruction, he wanted them to know that even though they might not bear children on Earth, they still had an incomparable inheritance in the experience of the holy realm. He also wanted foreigners who had joined themselves to *Yehovah* to understand that the inheritance of a *qodesh* habitation before the throne of God also could be found by them on the Sabbath.

He wrote,

Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man that holds fast to keeping the Sabbath from profaning it, and who keeps his hand from doing any evil.³⁸⁰

We have already emphasized that those referenced with the title “son of man” were understood to have become inhabitants of the holy realm—having found places of abiding before God’s presence in His holy temple.

³⁸⁰ Isaiah 56:2, ASV

The Sabbath was a day consecrated by God which He set apart to meet with those who proved themselves as belonging to Him. And ones who by choice, action, and character kept themselves from doing any evil had prepared themselves for the *kiddush* and to enter the hidden realm. In Hebrew, this realm was the “*olam*” where as in Greek entry was made in the *aiona* as was noted with the phrase “*eis ton aiona*.”

For this is what the Lord says:

For thus says *Yehovah* of the eunuchs that keep my Sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and hold fast my covenant: To them will I give in my house and within my walls a memorial and a name better than of sons and of daughters; I will give them an “*olam*” or an “*aionios*” name, that shall not be cut off.³⁸¹

Recall that Abram and Jacob were given new names in the *olam* or in the *aiona*.

Also the foreigners who join themselves to *Yehovah*, to minister to Him, and to love the name of *Yehovah*, to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath from profaning it, and holds fast my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. The Lord *Yehovah*, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, says, Yet will I gather *even others* to him, besides his own that are gathered.³⁸²

It is important to make the literary connection that in the previous chapter Isaiah was speaking about restoration of the *aionios* covenant and for *Ish-raah-el-ites* to receive an *aionios* dwelling wherein they might stand before the presence of God. Now as the prophet moved the discussion forward, he conveyed a major thesis of *The Lost and Forgotten Spirituality of Ancient Israel*.

³⁸¹ Isaiah 56:4-5 modified ASV

³⁸² Isaiah 56:6-8 CJB

Those who respected and revered the Sabbath, would ascend the Holy mountain of the Lord and enter into God's house of prayer—especially the lowly and the outcast would be gathered together in *Yehovah's* temple.

God intended to raise up more *Ish-raah-el-ites* to be gathered into His presence.

Moving Forward in John

In John 7:30-32, we note that the chief priests wanted to arrest Jesus; however, they were divinely prevented. Many in the crowd began professing faith in Jesus based upon His signs. These ones specifically recognized His Messianic identity, and this angered the priests all the more. In verses 34-36, Jesus asserted that soon He would be going to a place where none of them would be able to follow. This perplexed the religious leaders. Later, He disclosed to His disciples that He was going back to His Father.

On the last day of the feast, Jesus stood up and shouted, "If anyone is thirsty, come to Me and drink. Just as the Scripture says, those who put their faith in Me, from their innermost being, springs of living water will flow out."

Note that the Essenes had a strong understanding that it was by passage through living or moving water, that they could be cleansed to enter into the presence of God. Many among them had pools called *mikvahs*. Following the pattern set by Moses prior to Israel's encounter with the Word on Mount Sinai, and in keeping with an understanding of the *kiddush* and entry into the *qodesh* realm, the Essenes would take off their work clothes and would wash in the water of the *mikvah*. When they would come out of the water, they would put on white clothing before partaking in a communal meal together. It was as if every single time that they broke the bread, it was a sacred event that necessitated consecration.

The Essene documents of the Dead Sea Scrolls referenced the Hebrew term "*olam*," which was translated into Greek as "*aion*." Just as this book has been primarily focused upon the *Aionios* Covenant, the Essenes considered themselves to have been participating in the "*Berit Olam*." Joining their community was

considered to have been the beginning of a mystical life with God. And so as often as they ate, they prepared by consecrating themselves for encounter with the Lord by passage through the water of the *mikvah*. Before the breaking of the bread that would open the veil, they prepared themselves to walk on holy ground in *Yehovah's* presence.

When we study the Dead Sea Scrolls and scholarship surrounding their interpretation, we have to keep in mind that modern thinkers have rendered their conclusions without apprehension of the Hebraic perspective. Therefore, historically speaking as we examine scholarship on the topic, "*olam*" will almost always, without exception, be discussed theologically as having to do with eternity rather than a heavenly holy location in God's presence. Therefore, in order to make proper sense of the usage of "*olam*" each of us is going to have to filter biblical quotes, as well as scholarly discussion.

As a reminder, the Hebrew term *olam*, which was derived from *alam*, was translated into Greek as *iona*. Although Jewish and Western scholars have associated the term with eternity, we understand that the location where eternity exists is in God's presence. "*Alam*" can refer to a hidden place just over the horizon. This provides the basis for *iona* to be understood as the spiritual realm where seekers of God's reign find places of standing before His throne amidst the angelic heavenly host.

There are several components of understanding that are worth mentioning from the Dead Sea Scrolls concerning the *Aionios* Covenant. These demonstrate that the spirituality described in this book was alive for centuries before the coming of Jesus. In fact, we are not going to be able to cover the Essene Hymns of Thanksgiving. However, I encourage interested readers to find those and to read their way through them. You will see what was of great value to those who became separatists in the wilderness.

He filled them with knowledge and understanding, and showed them good and evil. He set his eye upon their hearts to show them the majesty of his works. And they will praise his holy name, to proclaim the grandeur of his works. He bestowed knowledge upon them, and allotted to them the

law of life. He established with them an eternal (*olam/aionios*) covenant, and showed them his judgments. Their eyes saw his glorious majesty, and their ears heard the glory of his voice. And he said to them, "Beware of all unrighteousness."³⁸³

Note that participants were given eyes to see and ears to hear corresponding to their choice to pursue goodness and their worshipful praise of *Yehovah's* name.

The Rule of the Community taught similarly that participation in the *olam/aionios* covenant belonged to volunteers joining the *Yahad* as those *who dwelt together in unity*. The Essene Community agreed to "turn back from all evil and to hold fast to all that He, by His good pleasure has commanded."³⁸⁴ They agreed to follow the instruction of the Wise Teacher.

The Master shall teach the saints to live according to the Book of the Community (*Yahad*) Rule, that they may seek God with a whole heart and soul, and do what is good and right before Him, as He commanded by the hand of Moses and by the hand of all His servants the Prophets...³⁸⁵

The *Yahad* understood that the coexisting spirits of falsehood and truth could rule over members of humankind depending upon the volition of each individual.

Then God will refine by His truth all the deeds of man, purifying for Himself the human frame, snatching away every spirit of falsehood from the midst of his flesh. He will sprinkle over him the spirit of truth like purifying water to cleanse him from all abominable deceit and the defilement of an unclean spirit. He will instruct the upright in the knowledge of the Most High and teach the wisdom of the angels to those whose way is perfect, for those God has

³⁸³ Sirach 17:7-14 RSV

³⁸⁴ Community Rule (*Serek HaYahad*) 1QS 5:1

³⁸⁵ Community Rule (*Serek HaYahad*) 1QS 1:1–3

chosen for an eternal (*olam/aionios*) covenant, and all the glory of Adam shall be theirs.³⁸⁶

It is notable to observe the embedded understanding of the second power of heaven with the statement, “He [God] will instruct the upright in the knowledge of the Most High...” 11QMelch similarly references the heavenly exalted Melchizedek or King of Righteousness.

The *Yahad* viewed their unified community as the temple of God’s habitation dwelling among them. This was similar to Jesus’ explanation that where obedient seekers gathered together in His name, He too was also in their midst. David’s understanding from Psalm 133 was that when brethren dwelt together in unity, the *aionios* life came down upon them. Nevertheless, English translations do not convey this point clearly due to the imposition of Orthodoxy’s stress of the heavenly afterlife with use of various forms of the term *iona* upon translations of the Scriptures.

This helps readers to understand the admonitions of Jesus regarding harboring anger toward another person and against disparagingly referring to such ones as “empty-headed” or as “fools.” In so doing, those vocalizing such remarks shut the gates of heaven upon themselves. The condition of one’s heart needed to be purified in order to enter the *olam*. The penitent who had been washed with water were allowed entry. The praise of hypocrites was not going to get them anywhere. And in fact, it would be dangerous for the unrighteous to enter into the *aionios* realm. The traitor and thief Judas Iscariot was overtaken by Satan when Jesus broke bread, opening the veil, and when he ate the bread and the sop. Although the disciples’ feet had been washed by the Master in preparation to walk on holy ground, Judas brought divine condemnation and spiritual ruin upon Himself by partaking in the meal.

In the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, it is clear that members of the *Yahad* understood their gathering with the angels as they worshiped. This document also preserves the understanding of the ongoing *Merkavah* or the Chariot tradition from Ezekiel. As

³⁸⁶ Community Rule (*Serek HaYahad*), 1QS 4:21-23
910

participants were raised up into the heavenly *aionios* realm, they both heard and saw the glory of God's Kingdom.

Praise the God of exaltations you who are exalted among all the divine beings of knowledge. How shall the offering of our mortal tongue be considered among the knowledge of the angels? What is the utterance of our lips of clay compared to the knowledge of the godlike spirits? How shall we be reckoned among them?...Praise the God of exaltations, the majestic King, for all His holy ones and for those who enter His covenant, with the tongue of all who enter the community of His divine council."³⁸⁷

The *Yahad* understood that they entered into the divine council of God's throne room when they worshiped. "All the spirits of the angels and all flesh of the righteous together..." allowing for the understanding that humans became participants in the divine council.³⁸⁸ Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice along with the Hymns of Thanksgiving are primary sources of Dead Sea Scroll information regarding the *Yahad* understanding of the divine council's existence and their divine-human participation in the holy angelic realm of the *olam*.

In this brief sample of Carol Newsom's translation, which includes several broken fragments from 4Q405 Fragment 23, we take note of the worshipers' observation of what takes place in the *olam*.

...with a voice of joy. Whenever the gods of knowledge enter by the portals of glory, and whenever the glorious godlike beings enter the stations of...

³⁸⁷ *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* (4Q400 fragment 2), in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, ed. Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 2:805. This work was also known as "*The Angelic Liturgy*."

³⁸⁸ *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, (4Q403 1 i 38–39), in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, ed. and trans. Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 2:822–823. 14

...their entry, they do not turn aside from any path of the holy of holies ...

...the spirits of the most holy inner shrine...

...in the midst of the spirits of knowledge...

...praised Him with a voice of glory, and blessing, and joy, and thanksgiving...

...all their service...

...The cherubim fall down before Him and bless. As they rise, the whisper of divine silence is heard, and there is a storm of praise as they stretch out their wings...³⁸⁹

Because the scrolls by nature consist of rolled literary material, in some cases one side of the scroll deteriorated through several layers allowing for only partial translation. Nevertheless, some of these scrolls were discovered not only at *Qumran*, but also at locations such as Masada, allowing for enhanced reconstruction of the texts.

The Dead Sea Scrolls used the term *olam* (עֲלָמָא) to describe the heavenly realm in which the divine council operated. Scroll 4Q405 23 comments on “the holy ones of the *olam*” (*qedoshe olam*),” and 4Q403 1-2 explains that “the dwelling of the King of glory [is] in the heights of the *olam* (*marome olam*)”³⁹⁰ Those gathered together in this place became the recipients of divine revelation. Note the comment from 1QH (*Hodayot*) “You have revealed to me the judgments of Your truth.”³⁹¹ There are many instances in these hymns where individuals receive revelation as they give themselves in worship and find themselves in the presence of God.

³⁸⁹ *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, 4Q405 frag. 23 i 1–14, in Carol Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: A Critical Edition*, Harvard Semitic Studies 27 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 303–305.

³⁹⁰ *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, (4Q403 1 i 38–39), in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, ed. and trans. Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 2:804–37.

³⁹¹ Thanksgiving Hymns (*Hodayot*), 1QH

Those keeping *Yehovah's* statutes were allowed entry into the *olam* realm as they worshiped His name. The second power speaks in Psalm 12 saying, "Those who walk on the path of your heart have listened to me, they have aligned themselves before you in the council of the holy ones."³⁹²

Earlier, we brought together the concept that those who walked in righteousness were prophetically entitled as the "sons of men." These individuals entered into the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace. Therefore, they experienced the *aionios* life. The same parallel understanding regarding the *brit olam* was alive among the Essenes to an incomparable degree. This was demonstrated by desire to abide in harmony with one another, by their worship, and as mentioned, with their consecration before every meal. Just as Jesus had taught that only those whose hearts became like those of children, so also the *Yahad* sought their return to original innocence in so far as they related to one another and the world around them.

Just as we have made the case that the faithful were gathered together in the heavenly realm of the *aiona*, we read: "For this is the time and the appointed season when the righteous are to be gathered into the congregation forever (*l'olam*)."³⁹³ If we strike the term "forever" and instead understand the Ancient Hebraic concept that "the *olam*" (עולם) was the ancient mysterious hidden place, just over the horizon where God dwelt, we find coherence with the existence of the concept of the divine council among the Essenes.

It has been well established that the Essenes understood that when they entered into worship, they were made alive in the angelic realm and dwelt among the presence of the angels. Jesus taught about His disciples who gathered together in His name standing in the Holy realm and being able to obtain things they

³⁹² Florentino García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition, Volume 1 (1Q1–4Q273)*. Edited by Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar. Leiden: Brill, 2000., 1:168–69 (1QHa 12:24–25). P. 169.

³⁹³ Cairo Damascus Document, CD 5:6–8 (later column). Historically speaking, note that this has also been referenced as the "Damascus Rule," the "Zadokite Fragments," or as "Fragments of a Zadokite Work."

needed from heaven. Although Jesus taught these concerns, the practice predated His earthly birth by thousands of years.

Jesus taught,

Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on Earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on Earth shall have been loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on Earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father Who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.³⁹⁴

Ancient Jews believed that when they gathered together to pray that the *Shekinah* came to dwell in between them. In Aramaic, *Shekinah* was translated as *Shekinta*. In Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on Genesis 33:10, we read: “I have seen your face, and it is as though I have seen the face of the angels of God, and the *Shekinta* of the Lord has dwelt between us.” In the context of Targum *Onkelos* on Exodus 33:14-16, Moses would not take the Israelites into the promised land unless *Yehovah* went with them. The Lord said, “My *Shekinta* shall go, and I will give you rest...For how shall it be known that I have found mercy in Your sight, I and Your people, is it not in the walking of Your *Shekinta* among us?” Generally speaking, the *Shekinta* was known to have dwelt among individuals who lived in harmony, gathered together in prayer, or who lived having become reconciled to one another. Because Jesus was the Holy One of Israel, He personalized the understanding for His disciples. He Himself had been the divine One Who had dwelt in the midst of worshipers in the era of the Old Testament.

In 1 John 5:13-15 the disciple taught regarding the faithful:

I write these things to you who uphold faith in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have the *aionios* life. And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we

³⁹⁴ Matthew 18:18-20 modified ASV

know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.³⁹⁵

Note that in the Hebraic tradition, individuals had to be counted among the faithful and asking according to God's will. We also make sense that if individuals were not walking according to righteousness, they should not expect God to answer their requests. In Psalm 66, 18, the psalmist said, "If I had treasured iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened" when she or he prayed. In Proverbs 28:9 it was understood that the prayers of one who turned his or her ears away from hearing the Law were an abomination. In Isaiah 1:15, God told the disobedient nation, "When you hold out your hands to pray, I will not look upon you. Even though you offer many prayers, I will not listen because your hands are full of blood."

It was in the days of Enosh, when the Earth was filled with wickedness, that individuals began to call upon the name of the Lord. We understand from this and all of the Bible that God would let people have their own way, but He would also rush to help those who sought after His will.

In John 8, the religious leaders brought a woman caught in adultery to Jesus in order to entrap Him with respect to violating the teachings of Moses. Would He obey Moses and agree with the stoning of the woman or would He forgive her? Before answering, He knelt down and wrote in the sand. My college pastor who actually taught the teachings of Jesus speculated that Jesus probably took a moment to pray. In His humanness, He did not presume to know everything. However, He knew the One Who could disclose whatever was needed. Jesus answered, "Let him who has no sin be the first to cast a stone." After each one of her accusers had dropped their stones and departed, Jesus said that if they were unwilling to condemn her, so also was He. With this, He instructed her to go on her way with the warning to depart from her sin.

Some people courageously confess their sins, whereas God also mercifully allows others to get caught in the act.

³⁹⁵ 1 John 5:13 ESV

After dealing with the woman, Jesus went back to teaching in the temple with a crowd who had sat before Him and declared, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but instead will have the light of life.” Referenced from John 8:12. John used this passage and others to link Jesus to the *shekinah* in the Aramaic Bible. Although “*shekinah*” meant “dwelling place” in Hebrew and Aramaic, this was characterized by a manifestation of bright light. This could also be described using the term “glory.” Recall that the second power of heaven manifest Himself as a bright light in the pillar of cloud to ancient Israel.

From the book of *Ecclesiasticus*, also known as “Sirach” in the Apocrypha, we read from the Revised Standard Version, that wisdom, whose source was from the mouth of God or from the Word also dwelt in the cloud.

Wisdom will praise herself, and will glory in the midst of her people. In the assembly of the Most High she will open her mouth, and in the presence of his host she will glory: “I came forth from the mouth of the Most High and covered the Earth like a mist. I dwelt in high places, and my throne was in a pillar of cloud. Alone I have compassed the circuit of heaven and have walked in the depths of the abyss. In the waves of the sea, in the whole Earth, and in every people and nation I have gotten a possession. Among all these I sought a resting place; in whose territory should I lodge? “Then the Creator of all things gave me a commandment, and the one who created me assigned a place for my tent. And he said, ‘Make your dwelling in Jacob, and in Israel receive your inheritance.’”³⁹⁶

Herein, we find the same concept of the second power, personified as wisdom, finding a dwelling place among men.

Note Exodus 13:21 where the Holy One became manifest as fire. He literally kept Israel from walking in darkness. But the *shekinah* of the Lord was also understood to have been the divine dwelling presence of God Who gathered together in the midst of

³⁹⁶ Ecclesiasticus 24:1–8

the faithful while they worshiped. Whereas Exodus 29:45 of the Hebrew Bible reads, “I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God,” the Aramaic Bible (Targum *Onkelos*) reads, I will cause my *Shekinah* to dwell in the midst of the children of Israel, and I will be their God.³⁹⁷ Nevertheless, He would only dwell in the midst of those who had purified themselves (note Numbers 5:3). In the Hebrew text, a singular deity spoke while in the Aramaic text, the deity spoke of the distinct manifestation of the *shekinah* as a separate divine entity. Targum *Onkelos* reads “You shall send them away, that they defile not their camps; for My *Shekinah* dwells among you.” The Hebrew text of Joshua 12:6 said, “Cry aloud and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee, whereas Targum Jonathan read: “Cry out and shout, congregation of Zion, because He is great that promised to cause His *Shekinah* to dwell in the midst of thee, the Holy One of Israel.” Zechariah 2:10 reads “Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord”—whereas the Aramaic explained, “Sing and rejoice, congregation of Zion; for behold, I reveal myself, and I will cause my *Shekinah* to dwell in the midst of thee, says the Lord.” Moreover, Leviticus 26:11-12 in the Hebrew text reads: “I will put my dwelling place among you...And I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be my people—whereas the Aramaic Bible (Targum *Onkelos*) explained, “I will place my *Shekinah* among you...And I will cause my *Shekinah* to dwell among you, and my *Memra* [Word] shall be your redeeming God...”

At the start of John 1, we read in verses 1-14:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was fully God. The Word was with God in the beginning. All things were created by him, and apart from

³⁹⁷ I have always appreciated the Cyclopedic Bible reference series by Strong and McClintock. For a valuable discussion on the shekinah, see: McClintock, John, and James Strong, eds. "Shechinah." In *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, 9:651–653. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1880. Digital edition hosted on *Biblical Cyclopedia*. <https://www.biblicalcyclopedia.com/S/shechinah.html>.

him not one thing was created that has been created. In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind. And the light shines on in the darkness, but the darkness has not mastered it. A man came, sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that everyone might uphold faith through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify about the light. The true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was created by him, but the world did not recognize him. He came to what was his own, but his own people did not receive him. But to all who have received him—those who uphold faith in his name—he has given the right to become God’s children—children not born by human parents or by human desire or a husband’s decision, but by God. Now the Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We saw his glory—the glory of the one and only, full of grace and truth, who came from the Father.³⁹⁸

Note that John presented Jesus, not only as a manifestation of the divine light, but coterminously as the Word—just as was the case in the Targums. Moreover, both He and *Memra* dwelt with the *Ish-rah-el-ites* and provided a temple for them in His presence. We take note of this specifically in John 3 where Jesus said He could raise up the temple in three-days, which was a divine-human dwelling place. His declaration bore significance with His discussion with the woman at the well who would be able to worship in any place she desired.

Although the event with the woman at the well may have taken place near to the time of 30 A.D., by the time of the actual writing of John’s Gospel, it is likely that the Jerusalem temple had already been destroyed. Therefore it was apropos that God’s temple of worship could be raised up in any location as had been the case prior to the reign of Josiah.

A plethora of scholars identify John’s statements regarding Jesus being the light of the world dwelling among humankind with

³⁹⁸ John 1:1-14; NET; note that “believe” was changed to “uphold faith.”

the ongoing presentation of the *shekinah* that is prevalent throughout the Aramaic Targums.

Following Jesus' statement regarding being the light of the world at creation, we apprehend the connection between the Light Who He was and that He provided in Day-One of Genesis.

Recall that the Word is constantly compared to bread in the Scriptures. Jesus taught His disciples to pray, by starting with praise or hallowing of the name of the Father. Presumably this included waiting for the presence of God to fall upon them. Then He modeled the request, "Give us this day our daily bread." Herein there is a connection to the sustaining Word at Day-One of creation.

He continued, "Forgive us our sins just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Forgiveness of others was necessary in order to continue abiding in His presence. And abiding in His presence, having arrived at the light of Day-One, was the fulfillment of all needs. Jesus taught that God knew the needs of each person—even before they asked.

The Light of Day-One was the temple of God. John intended for His audience to experience this Light. Whereas the world was plentiful with its darkness, God's Light came into the world, and as John said, the darkness could not overwhelm or overcome it (note 1:5).

As Jesus asserted, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but instead will have the light of life," the declaration was parallel with His identity as the bread of heaven or every person's daily bread. Herein, we also find embedded within the statement the identity of the Word in the creation of humankind.

Following this proclamation of His identity as the Light of the world, the religious leaders scorned Jesus for testifying of Himself—as if such personal testimony could not be possible. And the English text appears to shift, because Jesus began to speak cryptically about a place He was going where the Pharisees could not follow.

Jesus answered and said to them, "Although I bear record of Myself, yet My record is true: for I know I came from, and

where I am going. But you cannot tell where I came from or where I am going.”³⁹⁹

Part of the significance of these discussions regarding the *Shekinah* being a light and a dwelling place was that the *Shekinah* shined in the Tabernacle and in the temple. And Jesus was speaking at the Feast of Tabernacles. After their departure from Egypt, Israel lived in tents alongside *Yehovah*—Who dwelt in the Tabernacle. And the people stood at the doorway of their own tents and saw His manifestation in the pillar of fire.

Note that in the rabbinic understanding, the phrase “cloud of glory” was expressed with the term *Shekinah*. As the case was made that prophets met with God in the cloud, so also the statement from the Aramaic Bible regarding the *Shekinah* coming down to dwell with men provides substantial interpretive meaning to the manifestation of the cloud in the transfiguration. With this realization, in each instance of the Targums where *Shekinah* was mentioned, we infer divine-human fellowship taking place in the cloud. Of course, after Jesus’ resurrection, He went back into the clouds. And the promise was made that He would gather the faithful into the clouds.

and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other⁴⁰⁰.

John Nelson Darby and others mistakenly conditioned the minds of students of the Scriptures to read this passage thinking of Jesus’ second or third coming—depending upon anyone’s particular embrace of the theory of the rapture. Recall that for there to have been a supposed rapture of the church as the second coming of Jesus, of necessity, there also had to be a later third coming. However, from the Hebraic perspective, meeting in the clouds was how encounter with the Word of God had typically taken place.

³⁹⁹ John 8:14 Paraphrase

⁴⁰⁰ Matthew 24:30-31 ESV

Jesus discussing His identity as the light of the world and as the Word of God also spoke of the dwelling place of Day-One. Interpreters of Genesis have concluded that the darkness which was over the face of the deep indicated clouds or a cloudlike mist. Coterminously, the Spirit was over the water. Job 38:4-9, set the precedent for this understanding:

Where were you when I laid the foundations of the Earth? Declare, if you have understanding. Who determined the measures thereof, if you know? Or who stretched the line upon it? Whereupon were the foundations thereof fastened? Or who laid the corner-stone thereof, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it broke forth, as if it had issued out of the womb; when I made clouds the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling-band for it.⁴⁰¹

In St. Ephrem the Syrian's Commentary on Genesis 1:3-5, probably written sometime between 363 and 373 AD, he wrote:

At the end of the twelve hours of that night, the light was created between the clouds and the waters and it chased away the shadow of the clouds that were overshadowing the waters and making them dark...The light then was like a bright mist over the face of the Earth. It did not have a concentrated sphere like the sun, but it was spread out like a vapor over the Earth.⁴⁰²

What we know from the ensuing texts of Genesis is that humankind had departed from the temple of Day-One or the Light

⁴⁰¹ Job 38:4-9 modified KJV

⁴⁰² St. Ephrem the Syrian, "Commentary on Genesis," in *Selected Prose Works*, trans. Edward G. Mathews Jr. and Joseph P. Amar, ed. Kathleen McVey, The Fathers of the Church, vol. 91 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1994). Pubic domain versions are available online.

of God in the Garden of Eden; yet the Lord desired to bring each one back to that place of dwelling in His presence.

The place that Jesus was headed back to was the temple of Day-One, where He would draw those who became faithful *Ish-raah-el-ites* back to Himself.

With this, there is the sense that the three-day journey culminated with being drawn up into His presence. Just as members of humankind were given life in Eden, so also they would be renewed to the *aiionios* life in His presence.

In verse 21 Jesus said, “I go my way, but you shall seek Me, and you will die in your sins. Where I am going you cannot come.”

If the temple leaders had understood the Abrahamic faith and spirituality, they would have connected Jesus’ statements with Day-One—as the place from which the Word of God originated. However, their fathers were the ones who had killed the prophets, vehemently attempting to destroy the more ancient spirituality of the *Ish-raah-el-ites*. They knew nothing of what Jesus was speaking.

And Jesus drew a contrast between Himself and the religious leaders.

You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. Therefore I told you that you will die in your sins. If you do not believe and become faithful realizing that I am *He*, you will die in your sins.

Of course, they asked Him once again to more clearly identify Himself. Jesus responded,

I have been telling you this from the beginning. I have many things to say and to judge regarding you. He Who sent me is True; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him.⁴⁰³

Nevertheless, they could not comprehend that Jesus was speaking about the Father.

Then Jesus said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am *He*, and *that* I do

⁴⁰³ John 8:25b–26

nothing of Myself; but as my Father has taught Me, I speak these things.”⁴⁰⁴

Recall that dark clouds gathered over Golgotha with Jesus’ first earthly departure.

There are two ways of making sense of Jesus’ statement regarding the necessity of His being lifted up. This could be a reference to Him being raised up on the cross, or lifting up His name in worship. Here again the dual significance of John 3:14 is reiterated. “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have *aiōnios* life in Him.” And continuing through the book the idea continues to be conveyed (note John 14:13-14): “And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”⁴⁰⁵ “If you remain in Me and my Words also remain in you, ask whatever you want, and it will be done for you.”⁴⁰⁶ Again, in John 15:16, Jesus emphasized, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that remains, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you.”⁴⁰⁷ And also note, 16:23-24:

And in that day, you will no longer ask Me for anything. Very truly I tell you the solemn truth, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Up to this point you have not asked for anything in My name. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete.”⁴⁰⁸

Although we may think of the phrase “in that day” as a time period, we can also understand according to Genesis that this is the place of Day-One. This is justified because these statements revolved around abiding in Jesus—Who the Scriptures identified as

⁴⁰⁴ John 8:28

⁴⁰⁵ John 14:13-14 NIV

⁴⁰⁶ John 15:7 CSB

⁴⁰⁷ John 15:16 NET

⁴⁰⁸ John 16:23-24

the Word that was present at creation. And here we come back to the significance of abiding in the vine—which was also an element of Clement’s concern.

So then the point was that when individuals realized that the Day of Day-One had dawned in the breaking of the bread and found themselves in some way, shape, or form standing in the presence of God, God would read their hearts and would know their requests and alleviate them of their burdens.⁴⁰⁹ Jesus continued speaking about His intimate relationship with the Father.

He Who sent Me is with Me: the Father has not left Me alone; for I always do those things that please Him.⁴¹⁰

As He continued teaching, many believed and put their faith in Him. Jesus instructed these ones, “If you continue in My Word, then you are My disciples.”

Notice that there was a cause-effect relationship that resulted in identification as a disciple. Orthodoxy taught us that the activity of abiding in the word referenced reading and studying the Bible. Notwithstanding those importances, “continuing in the Word” was entry into the holy realm wherein ones received eyes to see and ears to hear the True and Living God. In John 5, Jesus confronted the Pharisees because they errantly thought that study of the Scriptures was the means of obtaining eternal life. Christian Orthodoxy, to a large degree, has followed in this same mistake and what we have to show for it today are legalistic fundamentalists. Fundamentalism is just another form of Second Temple Judaism along with its *takkanot*. Such ones as these polish the outside of the cup while the inside is full of corruption and dead men’s bones.

By continuing in the Word or with continued entry into the Word—which again we underscore was the exact same as entry into the holy of holies—*Ish-raah-el-ites* would personally know the Truth, and the Truth, Himself would make them free from death and the entanglements of the world. Jesus further explained that

⁴⁰⁹ John 29:8

⁴¹⁰ John 8:29

individuals who committed sin likewise became the slaves of sin. This was the freedom they needed.

A spiritual world existed, wherein unseen powers might ensnare them and take them as captives. And we come back to the point of the model of confession and washing as preparation for entry into the Word or the *aiona*, wherein God's miraculous *yeshuah* could bring tangible freedom.

Those not having experienced these matters probably have no idea that God can turn off addiction in the same way that anyone flips a light switch. This happens. When a person steps into the *aiona*, God deals with the spiritual forces of wickedness. He has made a way for each of us to be freed.

Each individual serves as a house for spiritual entities—good or bad. Jesus explained that when the Son of God comes in, those which caused slavery are forced out. The fantastic news was that if the Son made anyone free, they would indeed be free.

I told a friend once, who was addicted to lust, to think back to the very moment he had first looked at pornography. He thought his way back in time and remembered that very moment. He recalled how lust filled his heart. In that moment he had made a covenant with darkness. But in that moment of remembrance, as He renounced what he had done, he was completely delivered.

I had a friend who similarly recalled his first cigarette and perhaps the rebellion which filled his heart as he engaged in the forbidden choice. As he repented, he was delivered. He had no desire whatsoever to smoke again. However, on a whim one day, for no apparent reason, he made the decision to have another smoke. He told me that afterward, he was no longer able to shake the addiction. When I think of his testimony, Jesus' instruction to "go and sin no more," comes to mind. I also recollect Jesus' testimony about a demon, after having departed from a man and after having traveled through waterless places, finds seven more demons worse than itself returns to the man—taking possession of him once again.

It seems to be the case that by willfully disregarding the divine supernatural deliverance a person receives, that returning to the practice re-opens the door for the dominance of wickedness.

Problematically for some Christians, many have constructed all kinds of doctrines about who can be possessed by demons and who cannot. Many such ideas are formed in ignorance. Typically, those who have received and have intellectually accepted the correct doctrines, supposedly, can never again be afflicted by a demon. However, it seems from the teachings of Jesus that demons are permitted to afflict those who give them license by their choices, deeds, and character. These seem to identify, in some measure, the one to who holds power over us.

Getting back to the text of John, not all of those listening believed, nor did they pledge faith as father Abraham had done thousands of years earlier. Jesus identified the spiritual condition of a person by their deeds. And so He contrasted those who sought to murder Him with Abraham. Although the Patriarch was their forefather according to bloodline, what mattered was spiritual progeny—which was only proven by the condition of one's heart and deeds.

I know that you are Abraham's seed; but you seek to kill me, because My Word has no place in you.⁴¹¹

Just as the faithful entered the Word of the holy of holies, so also the Word of God, Who was the being of God entered each of them. Herein we apprehend a reciprocal understanding regarding the Word of God. Ones who entered the Word were also filled with the Word. If anyone did not enter, neither were they filled.

Jesus did not judge the murderous religious leaders based upon His intuition, but instead He explained "I speak that which I have seen with my Father: whereas you do that which you have seen with your father."

And they argued with Jesus, asserting "Abraham is our father." However, since a person's deeds defined their identity, Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham.

Abraham pledged his loyal faithfulness to *Memra*, the Word of God. And thereafter he sought to walk in righteous ways that

⁴¹¹ John 8:37

pleased the Lord. Abraham was not a murderer, however the Jewish religious leaders were seeking to kill Jesus, and He again told them that His Father had revealed this to Him. Jesus had eyes to see and ears to hear what the Father knew that He needed to know.

Although they claimed to be the children of God, Jesus challenged them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me: because I proceeded forth and came from God. I did not come on my own initiative, but He sent Me.”

And this is how it had been since the time of Noah and throughout the era of the *Ish-rah-el-ites*. When they cried out to the name of *Yehovah*, the Father sent His Word to bring *yeshuah* to those in need.

Nevertheless, these spiteful wicked-hearted Jews who now in two instances had mocked Jesus as being an illegitimate son could not understand what He was saying to them.

Although they looked all fancy and clean on the outside, they were full of corruption—as was evidenced by what proceeded out of their mouths. In their being, they were far from the original innocence of Eden. They could not hear or recognize God’s Word Who was speaking and standing in their midst—just as the *Shekinah* had dwelt in the midst of their spiritual forefathers of faith.

Jesus spoke plainly: “You are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do.” They were blind about their own bondage to sin. Religious fundamentalism had not changed the condition of their hearts, nor had it freed them from spiritual bondage to sin. Children are the products of their author. Since Satan was a murderer from the beginning, and did not abide in the Truth of God’s being, there was no Truth in him.

Here again there is a reciprocal concept mirroring that of the Word. God was understood to have existed as Truth. It was the very nature of His being. Humankind as well as beings in the spiritual world, were intended to have been born of the Truth. This was accomplished by obedience to God’s voice. Ones who did the deeds of God were identifiable as the authentic children of God. However, Satan rebelled, and the Truth of God no longer abode in him. And because he severed himself from God, he became a liar and murderer. In fact, as Jesus explained, for Satan to have even spoken

meant that he had lied, because, in stark contrast to Jesus, Satan spoke on his own initiative—not having been motivated to do so by God.

Herein there is a lesson. If God hasn't told us to say something, what are we doing when we speak without His direction?

Satan was the father of lies as well as the author of murder, lust, adultery, greed, jealousy and every other form of evil. And those who lived life on Earth in bondage to these concerns were not ones who had found their ways into the Word of God. And the Word of God had not been properly invited into each of them. Instead, they served the wicked desires of their father the devil.

The arguing went on for a while, and Jesus observed, "Very truly, I tell you, If a man keeps my Word, he will never see death." Although humankind had died when they ate the forbidden meal, Jesus Himself provided a new holy meal in the *aiona*. Those who broke the bread and entered were raised up to new life. And just like the prophet Samuel, who found His permanent abode in the spiritual realm among the *elohim*, so also those who partook in the Word of God would be raised up to life after their bodies died.

The evil ones did not have eyes to see and ears to hear so that they might have known that their ancient ancestors of faith had entered into the holy realm and continued in life before the presence of God.

Jesus said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw *it*, and was glad." Just as *Memra* visited Abraham on more than one occasion, so also Abraham had entered into Day-One. He stood before the heavenly host of Day-One. When he took Isaac on the three-day journey, intending to sacrifice Him to the Lord, he saw Day-One from afar. And when the Lord provided a substitute sacrifice, Abraham rejoiced. And there were perhaps many times that Abraham rejoiced in the presence of God.

Of course, those without spiritual eyes and ears were limited in their apprehension and so they were confounded as to how Jesus might have seen Abraham who had lived several millennia earlier. "Jesus said to them, Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I

am.” With the assertion of being equal with God, Jesus left their midst before they could stone Him.

Later, on a Sabbath, Jesus healed a man who had been born blind. He explained,

I must work the works of Him Who sent Me, while it is day: the night is coming, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.⁴¹²

Just as Day-One was entered into by the faithful, so also Day-One came into the world. And so the quality of life which was the life of Day-One imposed itself upon the man who had been born blind, and he regained His sight. The intention of Eden was restored.

Tremendous arguing arose among those having witnessed the miracle. Again, the religious leaders had wrongly interpreted practice of a counterfeit Sabbath through their *takkanot*. Had they actually known how to keep it holy, and had they knocked on the gates of heaven, worshiping the name of the Father, and had they blessed and broken the bread, and had they entered into the *aiona*, and had they received the soul which could see and hear the Father, they would have known better. But instead, because of legalistic fundamentalism, they were deaf and blind.

So then, much debate ensued regarding Jesus’ identity. Because he did the deeds of the prophets, some could not deny that His works were from God.

Later in John 10, Jesus told them,

If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do *them*, even though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father.⁴¹³

At the beginning of John 10, Jesus began to pass His own spirituality on to the disciples—which had been that of Noah, Abraham, the *Ish-raah-el-ites*, the Judges and the Prophets.

⁴¹² John 9:4–5

⁴¹³ John 37-38 NASB

Jesus had taught in John 3 that unless one had been born a second time, they could not see the kingdom of God. they had to be birthed into the *aion*. Each individual had to receive the *aionios* life. They had to be born of the water and the Spirit. They needed to be liberated from the powers of darkness. They needed to come into the light. And like Father Abraham, they needed to see Day-One and rejoice. Or in other terms, they needed to become *Ish-rah-el-ites*. As had been explained to Nathanael, they needed to become witnesses of the realm of heaven as ones having seen angels and perhaps the majesty of God's throne like the prophets.

Using a parable, Jesus explained these concerns; but His listeners had difficulty in making sense of what He was telling them.⁴¹⁴

Very truly I tell you, he who does not enter by the doorway of the sheep pen, but instead climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. However, the one who comes in by the doorway is the Shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the door to Him, and the sheep hear and obey His voice. He calls each of His sheep by name and leads them. When he has led all of His sheep, He goes before them. His sheep follow because they distinguish His voice. They will never follow strangers, but instead will run away, because they do not trust the voice of a stranger.⁴¹⁵

However, because they had not understood, Jesus proceeded to explain more plainly,

Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before Me were just thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear or obey them. Because I am the gate, if anyone enters through Me, he will be kept safe. And He will come in and go out of the gate; finding abundant pasture on which to feed. By contrast, the thief attempts to come in only because he desires to steal, kill, and destroy. But instead, I have come so that you may have life, and so that

⁴¹⁴ John 10:1-18 Paraphrase

⁴¹⁵ John 10:1-5

you may have it abundantly because I am the good Shepherd. And the good Shepherd lays down His life for His sheep. By contrast, the hired hand does not authentically care for the sheep like a shepherd who owns the sheep. Therefore, when the hired hand sees a ravaging wolf charging in, he abandons the sheep and runs to save his own life. He leaves the sheep to be scattered and attacked by the wolf. He is just a hired hand. And so, he runs away because he is not genuinely concerned about the sheep. Because I am the good shepherd, I know those who are My own and those who are My own know Me. In the same way that the Father knows Me and I also know the Father.⁴¹⁶

And because they were not ready to receive such matters, Jesus continued cryptically foretelling His sacrificial death.

So then, I lay down My life for My sheep. And there are even more scattered sheep who I need to gather into My sheep pen. I need to get them and they also will hear and obey My voice. Eventually, there will only be one Shepherd and one flock. The reason the Father loves Me is because, unlike the hired man, I lay down My life so that I can take it back up once again. Understand that nobody takes My life away from Me, but I willingly lay it down. I have the divine authority to lay it down and to take it back up again. I received this from My Father.⁴¹⁷

So then we understand that Jesus Himself was the gateway into the Word where obedient listeners would find sustenance. Recall Moses and Jesus' shared instruction that members of humankind were not intended to live by bread alone, but by the Word of God.

Jesus lived by entry into the Word of God and by the divine feast provided by God. He told the disciples, who had returned with food to Jacob's well that He had food to eat of which they had been unaware. The food of the Word was to do the will of the Father.

⁴¹⁶ John 10:7–15

⁴¹⁷ John 10:15b–18

Following more debate about His identity in verses 19-24, Jesus was at the temple for the Feast of Dedication in the winter. He entered at Solomon's porch and was confronted by the Jews to explain His identity. With this, John continued with Jesus' parable.

Jesus replied, I told you who I am but you refuse to believe. The works I perform in My Father's name testify of My identity. Nevertheless, you stubbornly refuse to believe because you are not My sheep. I know My sheep and they follow Me hearing and obeying My voice. In this, I give them the *aionios* life, and they will never die and nobody will steal them out of My hands. My Father, Who gave them to Me, is more powerful than anyone and nobody could possibly steal them out of My Father's hands. I and the Father are One.⁴¹⁸

And the lack of innocence in the questioning by the Jewish religious leaders was unveiled by their reaction. Once again, they picked up rocks with which to stone Him. However, Jesus responded,

"I have shown you many good works that I performed having received these from the Father. Which one of these are the reason you intend to stone Me?" The Jewish leaders answered, "It is not because of your works, but instead we intend to stone You for blasphemy. You, being just a man, make Yourself out to be God."⁴¹⁹

Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, "You are gods?"' If He called them gods, to whom the Word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken; do you say of Him Who entered the holy realm that He blasphemes because I said I am the Son of God sent into the world? If I do not the works of My Father, then don't believe Me. But if I do these works, although you refuse to believe what I say, then instead, believe because of the works themselves so that you may know, and believe, that the Father is in Me,

⁴¹⁸ John 10:25–30

⁴¹⁹ John 10:32–33

and I in Him.” Because of this, they sought again to take Him, but He escaped out of their hands and went away again beyond the Jordan into the place where John at first baptized. And there He remained and many came to Him. John had not performed any miracles, but everything John had spoken about this Man was true. And many put their faith in Him there.⁴²⁰

On this point of entry into the holy realm, referenced as being “sanctified” and coming back into the world to manifest a miracle, a sign, or a wonder, consider the following examples:

Moses went atop Mount Sinai and came back with his face glowing because of His encounter with Light in the spiritual realm (note Exodus 34:29-35). Due to His continuing encounters with the Word of God, Moses was able to hit the rock and miraculously bring forth water (note Numbers 20:11). He also raised the bronze serpent in the wilderness through which those who were bitten by poisonous snakes could be healed (note Numbers 21:8-9). The day after Jesus had encountered Moses and Elijah in the cloud of transfiguration, He was able to heal a demon possessed boy who the disciples were unable to help (note Luke 9:37-43). Paul performed extraordinary miracles after being caught up into the third heaven so that even handkerchiefs he had touched healed others. Although John was called into the heavenly realm in Revelation 4, he did not perform miracles but instead provided abundant enduring revelatory material. In verses 1-2, John saw a door, entered and was transported into the heavenly throne room. We see this same kind of entry into the spiritual realm with the prophets of the Old Testament.

After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like *the sound* of a trumpet speaking with me, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things.” Immediately I was in *the Spirit*; and behold, a throne

⁴²⁰ John 10:34-42 Paraphrase

was standing in heaven, and *someone* was sitting on the throne.⁴²¹

Abiding in the Vine

Jesus taught,

I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener. He takes away every branch that does not bear fruit in me. He prunes every branch that bears fruit so that it will bear more fruit. You are clean already because of the word that I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it remains in the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me—and I in him—bears much fruit, because apart from me you can accomplish nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown out like a branch, and dries up; and such branches are gathered up and thrown into the fire, and are burned up. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want, and it will be done for you. My Father is honored by this, that you bear much fruit and show that you are my disciples.⁴²²

Many Old Testament passages make use of the metaphor of the vine.⁴²³ With this discussion, John had transitioned the understanding of readers. Whereas Jesus has set an example of His own relationship with the Father as an *Ish-raah-el-ite*, so now He was conferring the same mantle from Himself to each of them.

Starting in chapter 11, we read that Martha and Mary lived in the town of Bethany and their Brother Lazarus was very sick. Therefore, his sisters sent for Jesus. Although Jesus greatly loved this family, He announced, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified.” And so,

⁴²¹ Revelation 4:1-2 NASB

⁴²² John 15:1-8 NET

⁴²³ See: Psalm 80:8-16, Isaiah 5:1-7, Jeremiah 2:21, Ezekiel 15:1-8; 17:5-10; 19:10-14, and Hosea 10:1. This list is from the study notes of the NET.

after Jesus had heard about the illness, He remained where He was for two more days. Afterward, Jesus told His disciples “It is time to go to Judaea. But they feared great harm from the Jewish religious leaders. Nevertheless, Jesus insisted, “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees by the light of this world. But if a man walks in the night, he stumbles, because there is no light in him.

Note the *chiastic* structure. Natural light keeps a man who travels safe because he can see the path. So therefore we should walk not only in the physical light of day, but moreover we need to walk in the light of the Lord. Because when men walk in darkness instead of in the Lord, they stumble. In other words, the time which we choose to do things should be ordained by the Lord. And we know when to go or not to go, because we walk in the Light of God’s guidance. In the simplest terms, we have to listen to God’s voice, not the voice of others. Jesus modeled this earlier when His brothers wanted Him to go up to Jerusalem with them.

Jesus further explained figuratively that “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but we must go now to awaken him.”

The disciples were bewildered about the insignificance of Lazarus having fallen asleep—especially while the Jews were plotting to kill Jesus. However, Jesus knew Lazarus had died.

Thomas, who was called Didymus, resolved, “Let’s also go with Jesus so that we too can die with Him.”

Note that Lazarus had fallen ill and John reported that Jesus waited two additional days. Then on the third day, they went to Bethany. Herein we understand according to Hosea, that it was on the third or the last day when individuals having consecrated themselves would be raised up into the presence of the Lord.

Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away. Many Jews had gathered with Martha and Mary consoling them and lamenting their loss. When Martha heard Jesus was on His way, she went out to meet Him and said, “If you had been here, our brother would not have died. But even so, I know that God will give you whatever you ask.”

As an aside, I have heard comments all through my life extolling Mary for sitting and listening to Jesus teaching, while

Martha ran to-and-fro to serve. And her desire to serve was good and proper. What wasn't good was the bit of jealousy that caused her to complain. Nevertheless, here she demonstrated tremendous faith—while perhaps Mary had stayed home because she had already given up hope.

Jesus assured her in faith, "Your brother will rise again." With this, Martha responded, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."

As readers, we have been given privileged knowledge that it already was the "last day" of Jesus' three-day journey. And with this, Jesus proclaimed His identity as the resurrection more immediately because He knew what to expect on the third day. He would be raised up into God's presence.

Hosea said:

He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day, that we may live before Him...His appearance is as sure as the dawn.⁴²⁴

John made it clear that there was a different last day than the last day of the world. There is a resurrection that is not the final resurrection. Those who walk in the Light will discern the proper times, in contrast to those who do not seek to walk in the Light.

John had resurrected the legacy of the three-day journey which he hinted at with Nathanael, the wedding at Cana, with Jesus' stay in Sychar, and perhaps even with the estimated travel time preceding the healing of the official's son.

With Nathanael, Jesus introduced the concept that those who were raised up into the spiritual realm saw the activity of the angels. In the Hebraic tradition, this happened on the last day of the three-day journey. The third day was a day of empowerment and so Jesus received divine authority to change the water into wine. Just as Jesus would raise up the temple in three-days, so also this was the time period of consecration (cleansing with water, putting on washed clothing, fasting, prayer, abstinence, and waiting upon the Lord). After having spent one day with the people of Sychar, "He

⁴²⁴ Hosea 6:2-3b.

stayed there two additional days and many more came to faith because of His Word.” Then he departed for Galilee, which judging by the distance given by John required three-days travel. At this point His timing was perfect to meet the official whose son was sick. “Go; your son will live.” The official believed Jesus’ Word and departed for home—having also determined that his son was raised up at the precise hour when Jesus had spoken life and healing back into the boy’s body. Although the man had gone out looking for Jesus, it seems rather instead that Jesus had gone looking for him. And now with Lazarus, John has continued to develop the concept directly in keeping with Hosea’s understanding.

Those who are called and walk out the three-day journey are ones who will encounter Day-One and will walk in the Light because they abide in the temple that has been raised up. They too have been raised up into that temple.

And ahead, Jesus was going to build upon the concept of being raised up into the temple of Day-One.

For my own part, I have accepted that this is the message hidden in John’s Gospel which Clement understood but was reticent to write out plainly. Nevertheless, as he also referenced the Vine of the Husbandman, those who sought to make their abode in the Vine would walk in times of preparation and experience mysteries that preceded other mysteries. And ahead, Jesus was going to teach about abiding in the Vine—a concept that was also pervasive insider knowledge in the Old Testament.

Allowing the Husbandman to clear away the thorns so that one can abide in the vine, was the activity of inviting wisdom to dwell within oneself so that a person did not walk in sin. This was as much a choice as it was the indwelling work of wisdom. And it was this mystery which made way for the mystery of becoming caught up in the experience of the heavens being rolled back to reveal the *aionios* dwelling place before the throne of God in the Vine which was experienced by Peter, James, and John in the transfiguration. Peter later experienced this heavenly location while fasting when he was praying on the roof top.

To apply a parable, ones who choose behavior and make decisions guided by the Spirit of God and whose character was

being reshaped by wisdom invited the indwelling of the Spirit of Wisdom. They were likened to fish caught up in a net who the angels raised up into the realm of the spirit. The first mystery precedes being raised up into the second mystery. And all of this was preceded by entry through confession of sins and by passage through cleansing birthing water.

The final mystery was transfigured resurrection into the House of the *Ish-raah-el-ite*. Moses taught:

The secret things belong to the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children in the *aiona*, [or the *olam*] that we may do all the words of this law.⁴²⁵

The House of *Ish-raah-el*

When Jacob was raised up into the realm of the spirit, is it fair to say that he dwelt in the house of *Ish-raah-el*? In Ezekiel 37:23, the prophet explained,

“I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord,” declares the Lord God, “when I show Myself holy among you in their sight.”⁴²⁶

Insiders who read, apprehend that vindication of God’s holy name, had to do with restoring the house of Israel. In verse 22, Ezekiel said that for the sake of the house of Israel, *Yehovah* was going to vindicate His holy name. The consistent enduring understanding of the Old Testament was that worship of God’s name was the means of calling forth His presence and entry into the gates of heaven. It was the means of entry into the holy realm. Ezekiel must have used the phrase “house of Israel” more than 20 times.

As we read how Ezekiel continued, think of the “house of Jacob” and the “land” as a spiritual dwelling place in the *aiona*.

⁴²⁵ Deuteronomy 29:29

⁴²⁶ Ezekiel 37:23 NASB.

For I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the lands; and I will bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and bring it about that you walk in My statutes, and are careful and follow My ordinances. And you will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God... "On the day that I cleanse you from all your wrongdoings, I will populate the cities, and the places of ruins will be rebuilt... And they will say, 'This desolated land has become like the Garden of Eden... Then the nations around you that are left will know that I, the Lord, have rebuilt the ruined places *and* planted that which was desolated; I, the Lord, have spoken, and I will do it."⁴²⁷

The house of Jacob or the house of Israel was the house of *Yehovah* for those who were raised up into God's temple.

Immediately thereafter, the hand of the Lord was on Ezekiel, lifting him by the Spirit of the Lord and setting him down in the middle of a valley filled with dry bones. God asked, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

Like Martha, who testified that Jesus could do anything, Ezekiel replied, "Lord God, You Yourself know."

Again He said to me, "Prophecy over these bones and say to them, 'You dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord.' This is what the Lord God says to these bones: 'Behold, I am going to make breath enter you so that you may come to life.'"⁴²⁸

Herein we understand that the Word of God brought resurrection. In one sense the house of Israel as a body of people would be raised up, but in another sense they were raised up into the house that

⁴²⁷ Ezekiel 36:22-28 with excerpts from verses 33, 35, 36 NASB

⁴²⁸ Ezekiel 37:4-5 modified NASB

Jacob discovered when He became an *Ish-raah-el-ite*. This was God's house.

And so we want to draw a parallel in John's writings.

In 2:16, the temple which was figurative of God's house had been turned into a marketplace. It was defiled and needed to be cleansed.

As it seems that life in this world had turned against David, and in a context where he longed for God's presence, he lamented, "Zeal for your house has consumed me." He longed to be raised into the presence of God.

John recollected this verse in light of Jesus overturning the tables of the money changers. With the quote, Jesus pointed onlookers to God's intention for each one in posterity to seek their spiritual places of habitation.

In John 8, the sons of God were intended to have dwelt in the house of God—where they should have found freedom. The authentic offspring of Abraham would replicate his deeds—the most important of which was entry into the Word. Later, in 14:2, Jesus explained that there were many dwelling places prepared for the faithful in God's house. And through His death, He was going to prepare the way for entry by His children. In the breaking of the bread, the sacrifice would be re-enlivened and the doorway would be opened. And Jesus had identified Himself as the doorway into the sheep pen in John 10. On this note, many would proceed through life only breaking the bread of Earth and eating, while others would break the bread of the sacrifice again and again with each Sabbath in order to enter and to feast upon the Word of God. Unlike the Pharisees of John 8, in whom was no place found for the Word of God, those who broke the bread and entered would be filled with the Word of God.

Jesus taught that just as He was in the Father and the Father was in Him, so also He would be in the lives of His seekers and they would also be in Him—their temple. And the point is reiterated that the Word of God, was the holy of holies.

Jesus Who existed as the Word of God had raised up the temple of His body so that *Ish-raah-el-ites* would dwell in Him.

In John 11:34, Martha took Jesus to Lazarus' tomb and asked that the stone be rolled away. Although she had spoken in faith regarding Jesus' divine empowerment as had been witnessed before, she appears to have lacked insight regarding what Jesus was about to do. Nevertheless, Jesus reminded her that if she had faith, she would see the glory of God. In other terms, the Life of heaven was going to invade the death of Earth. The time had come for those in the tombs to be raised again into life.

And Jesus lifted His eyes upward and prayed to His Father in heaven, Father, I call forth Your grace. You have heard Me. I know that You always hear Me, but I say as much for the benefit of those listening that each one may come to faith.⁴²⁹

After this, Jesus commanded with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!"

Many came to faith when they saw the sign that Lazarus had been raised, however the rulers of the Sanhedrin became increasingly insecure and reacted by plotting to do away with both Jesus and Lazarus. And for His safety, Jesus departed for Ephraim.

Briefly returning to address the mistaken notion that Jesus performed signs, merely because He was God, it is noteworthy to mention that He constantly had to hide Himself out of the reach of the religious leaders in order to protect His life. He did so as a human being. If He simply had the unlimited power of God at His disposal, He would have just supernaturally held them at bay. Instead, He had to resort to the human solution of physical separation. However, even this was done by the leading of His Father.

In John 12:1-8, Jesus had returned to Bethany and was anointed by Mary in preparation for His burial. Judas' evil character was revealed in his complaint that this expensive commodity should have been sold to provide money for the poor. He was the treasurer for the group and used to steal money from what they had collected.

⁴²⁹ John 11:41b-42

When Jesus and the crowds who had gathered to see Him went up to Jerusalem, they took palm branches and went out to meet Him, shouting: “Hosanna!” “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Blessed is the King of Israel!” John understood prophetic fulfillment taking place when Jesus rode on a donkey.

Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is righteous and endowed with *yeshuah*, humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.⁴³⁰

Zechariah’s prophetic passage continued with more pertinent information regarding this king.

And His dominion will be from sea to sea; and from the Euphrates River to the ends of the Earth. As for you also, because of the blood of My covenant with you, I have set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. Return to the stronghold, you prisoners who have the hope. This very day I am declaring that I will restore double to you...And the Lord their God will save them on that day. As the flock of His people; For they are like the precious stones of a crown; sparkling on His land. For how great will their loveliness and beauty be! Grain will make the young men flourish, and new wine, the virgins.⁴³¹

Two things stand out which are the blood of the covenant and the grain and new wine. Jesus was about to become the enduring sacrifice so that individuals could enter the presence of the Holy One or the Word of God, and they would do this by partaking in the bread and wine of the *kiddush* as they entered the holy *qodesh*. In accord with John’s interests, because of His *yeshuah*, the coming king would provide deliverance from the pit and freedom and He would give them a safe dwelling place—returning them to the stronghold.

⁴³⁰ Zechariah 9:9

⁴³¹ Zechariah 9:10b, 11, 12, 16, and 17 ASV

David repeatedly spoke of God's provision of a stronghold where he found his divine abiding place. Note the following references from the King James Version:

The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.⁴³²

Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for a house of defense to save me. For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.⁴³³

I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust.⁴³⁴

Here in Psalm 59, we take note of the second power. The God Whom David encountered and took refuge in was dichotomized from *Yehovah* Who gave strength to David's God.

*Because of His [Yehovah's] strength I will give heed unto You; For God is my high tower. My God with his lovingkindness will meet me.*⁴³⁵

And in Psalm 144, David called forth God's presence from heaven that He would come down.

Blessed be *Yehovah* my rock...my lovingkindness, and my fortress, my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and He in whom I take refuge; Who subdues my people under me. Oh, *Yehovah*, what is man, that you acknowledge him? Or even, the son of man, that you take any account of him? Man is like to vanity. His days are as a shadow that passes away. Bow thy heavens, O *Yehovah*, and come down.⁴³⁶

⁴³² Psalm 18:2

⁴³³ Psalm 31:2-3

⁴³⁴ Psalm 91:2

⁴³⁵ Psalm 59:9-10a

⁴³⁶ Psalm 144:1-5a

The point of referencing these verses is that David celebrated the faith and spirituality of Abraham. In so doing he discovered that God was a refuge and a spiritual dwelling place. In John, Jesus was about to convey this same understanding in chapters 14 and following.

At the feast, Jesus declared that the hour had come for the Son of Man to be glorified explaining that unless a grain of wheat fell to the ground and died, it could not bear fruit. He as the grain of wheat was going to bear the fruit of the bread of heaven so that faithful seekers could break the bread, feast and enter into the Word.

Whoever loves his life will lose it, but whoever hates his life in this world will keep life in the *aion*. If any serve Me, they must follow Me. Where I am found, my servants will be found as well. And if anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. I admit that My soul is troubled about this, but I know that this is why I came into the world. Therefore, I will not ask My Father to save Me. Father, glorify Your name.⁴³⁷

When Jesus said these things, a voice came from heaven “I have glorified it and will glorify it again.”

The question comes to mind, as Christians, do we ask the Father to glorify His name in each of us? Perhaps I need to consider praying “Father, please glorify your name in me today”—each morning.

When they heard the voice, not all discerned this in the same way. Some heard thunder and others thought it was the voice of an angel.

Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the Earth, will draw all *men* to Myself⁴³⁸.

Then Jesus said to them, “For just a little while longer, the Light is with you.” He was the *Shekinah* dwelling in their midst.

⁴³⁷ John 12:25-27 Paraphrase

⁴³⁸ John 12:31-32

“Walk in the Light while I am here to prevent darkness from overtaking you. People who walk in darkness do not know where they are going.” If individuals did not believe and start walking faithfully with Him, they would not find their ways into the *aion* where they could personally experience the *aionios* life of the covenant. “While you have the Light, believe in the Light that you may become the children of Light.”⁴³⁹

John identified Jesus as the Light in seven passages.

Targum *Onkelos* begins by telling readers “*And the Memra of the LORD said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light by His Memra.*” Targum *Neofiti* in Exodus 12:42 reads: “And the Word [*Memra*] of the LORD was the light and it shone.” In Genesis 1, *Memra* created the light in *Neofiti*, separated light from the darkness and in verse 5 He called the “light” “Day.” In the Palestinian Targum tradition also known as the Jerusalem Targum, the surviving fragment of Genesis 1:3-4, reads: “And the Word of the LORD said: ‘Let there be light.’ And there was light in His Word. And the Word of the LORD saw the light, that it was good; and the Word of the LORD separated the light from the darkness.” It is important to realize from the fragment that *Memra* carried out the duty of seeing, judging, and separating.

Many scholars have accepted that John was very familiar with the Aramaic Targums and that this was foundational to His understanding of Jesus’ teachings. John Wesley Etheridge translated the Aramaic Pentateuch around the mid-1800s. His own opinion was explained at the start of his work:

Taking these passages into consideration, it seems difficult to arrive at any other conclusion than that the doctrine of the Targum on this subject is the same as that of St. John : “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was GOD.” *Onkelos* and Jonathan ben Uzziel are witnesses to such a faith existing in the pre-apostolic times; and Philo of Alexandria, when discoursing with such amplitude upon the *Logos*, writes not as a mere Platonic philosopher, but as a believer in the traditional

⁴³⁹ John 12:35-36 Paraphrase

theology of his forefathers. The germ of this article of their faith they found in their canonical Scriptures.⁴⁴⁰

Standing in agreement with these ones, my goal is to help students of the Scriptures make the connection between the understandings of ancient Israel prior to the rise of Second Temple Judaism. Largely because of dispensationalism, churchianity has passed down the false idea to posterity that the spirituality of Jesus was different than that of those like David—who celebrated Abrahamic faith. And of course, pure Darbyite dispensationalists don't even want anyone to think that anything Jesus taught or did is still relevant to Christians today, unless it happened after the resurrection. We have written at length in order to provide a corrective to Darby's virulent and well established ideas in Evangelicalism. Having done so, we want to move forward to make sense of John's recollection of Jesus' teachings in accordance with formative examples from the Targums. If we can do this, then we have unveiled concerns through which we may interpret John's Gospel.

In Targum *Onkelos*, Genesis 9:13-17, God stated He had set His Bow "in the cloud" as a token of the covenant between His *Memra* and the Earth. Herein we take note of divine agency structured between *Yehovah* and the Word of God which was also the case at creation. Targum *Neofiti* explains in Genesis 1:20 that the *Memra* commanded the birds to fly across the "air of the firmament of the heavens." In Targum *Onkelos* in Exodus 13:21, it was the "*Memra* of the Lord," Who led the Israelites by day in a pillar of cloud.

In Exodus 34:5, the various Targums explained *Yehovah* descending "in the cloud" to meet Moses as an appearance of the *Memra* or as the *Shekinah*. So then we understand that in antiquity, the Word of God was associated with the dwelling place of the

⁴⁴⁰ Etheridge, John Wesley., *The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan Ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch; with the Fragments of the Jerusalem Targum from the Chaldee.*, London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts and Green., 1865. p. 17.

Shekinah. Although we tend to associate the *Shekinah* with light, in both Hebrew and Aramaic "*Shekinah*" meant "dwelling."

Let's examine the variations of Exodus 34:5 in the extant Targums noting that in the context it was Moses who was dwelling in the cloud with *Yehovah*.

Targum *Onkelos* is the closest to the Hebrew text: "And the LORD was revealed in the cloud, and He stood with him there, and He proclaimed the Name of the LORD." Targum Pseudo-Jonathan reads: "And the LORD was revealed in the cloud of glory, and the LORD descended in His *Shekinah*, and He stood with him there, and He proclaimed the Name of the LORD." Targum *Neofiti* "And the LORD was revealed in the cloud, and the LORD descended in His *Memra*, and He stood with him there, and He proclaimed the Name of the LORD."

We take note of this interplay between God's presence, *Memra* and *Shekinah* in other instances in the Targums. Regarding *Yehovah's* divine presence going with Israel in Exodus 33:14-15, the Hebrew text says, "My presence will go with you." *Neofiti* says, "My *Memra* will go with you," and Pseudo-Jonathan says, "My *Shekinah* will go with you."

In Exodus 25:8 and also in 29:45-46 we find the identical dynamic: Hebrew says, "I will dwell among the Israelites." *Neofiti* says, "My *Memra* shall dwell among them." And Pseudo-Jonathan says, "My *Shekinah* will dwell among them." In Leviticus 26:11-12, the Hebrew reads: "I will set My dwelling among you...I will walk among you," whereas *Neofiti* tells us "'I will set My *Memra* among you...My *Memra* shall walk among you." And Jonathan reads: "I will set My *Shekinah* among you...My *Shekinah* shall walk among you." In Hebrew, Numbers 35:34 says, "for I dwell in the midst of the Israelites, whereas *Neofiti* reads: "for My *Memra* dwells in the midst of the Israelites." And Pseudo-Jonathan says, "for My *Shekinah* dwells in the midst of the Israelites." In Deuteronomy 23:14 we read: "For *Yehovah* your God walks in the midst of your camp," whereas *Neofiti* tells us, "For the *Memra* of the LORD walks in the midst of your camp." And Pseudo-Jonathan explained, "For the *Shekinah* of the LORD walks in the midst of your camp." In Hebrew, Zechariah 2:10-11, reads: "I am coming and I will dwell in

your midst,” whereas Jonathan said “I will reveal My *Shekinah* to dwell in your midst.” By comparison, the Palestinian Targum says “My *Memra* will dwell in your midst.” The Hebrew text of Psalm 74:2 reads: “Mount Zion where You have dwelt,” but Targum Psalms reads: “where Your *Shekinah* dwells.” By comparison, the Palestinian Targum tells us that Zion is “where Your *Memra* dwells.”

In the Targums, the terms *Memra*, *Shekinah*, Word, and Glory (which is *Yeqara*) were all used to reference *Yehovah*. *Yeqara* or glory also portrayed God’s radiance. We might associate this with the rainbow which was the sign in the cloud given to Noah. *Memra*, *Shekinah*, and *Yeqara* respectively represented God’s speaking and delivering presence, God’s abiding presence and God’s revealed or seen presence among the faithful. It is noteworthy to realize the interchangeability between *Shekinah* and *Yeqara*. In Exodus 40:34, the Hebrew text is translated, “the glory of *Yehovah* filled the Tabernacle,” whereas Targums read either that “the *Shekinah*,” perhaps stressing God’s closeness or “the *Yeqara*,” emphasizing God’s visible manifestation, “filled the temple.”

The holy of holies was where the priest met with the presence of God. In the Palestinian Targum in Exodus 25:22, God promised to meet with the High Priest by ordering His *Memra* to be there, specifically over the mercy seat where the cloud of glory appeared. *Onkelos* reads: “And I will meet with you there, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are upon the Ark of the Testimony.” Pseudo-Jonathan says: “And I will meet with you there, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat by My *Shekinah*, from between the two cherubim that are upon the Ark of the Testimony.”

John’s Gospel conveyed the concept of light, radiance, or illumination representing Jesus, which as we have seen can pertain to *Memra*, *Shekinah*, and *Yeqara*. In Targum Pseudo-Jonathan of Exodus 24:16 says, “The glory of the *Shekinah* of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai,” whereas the English translation of the Hebrew reads: “The glory of *Yehovah* rested on Sinai.” Targum Pseudo-Jonathan of Exodus 34:5 says, “The LORD descended in His *Shekinah* in the cloud of glory,” whereas the Hebrew text reads:

“The LORD descended in the cloud.” Exodus 40:34-35 say, “Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of *Yehovah* filled the Tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the Tent of Meeting, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of *Yehovah* filled the Tabernacle.” Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, by comparison reads: “And the cloud of glory covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the *Shekinah* of the LORD filled the Tabernacle.

And Moses was not able to enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud of glory rested upon it, and the glory of the *Shekinah* of the LORD filled the Tabernacle.” Targum Jonathan of Isaiah 60:1-2 says, “The glory of the *Shekinah* of the LORD shall shine upon you,” whereas the Hebrew version reads: “The glory of the LORD rises upon you.” Targum Psalm 63:3 says “The glory of Your *Shekinah* is better than life.”

Although Jesus had performed many miracles which they had seen, many did not believe or put their faith in Him. And some leaders did believe, however they hid this so that they would not be put out of the synagogue. They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. We see this in the church today as well. Speaking from my own experience, I admit that it is not always easy to be open and courageous.

Earlier we discussed the two powers in Philo’s writings.

In the one true God there are two chief powers, the Creative Power and the Royal Power. By His Creative Power, He made the universe, and by His Royal Power, He governs what He has made.⁴⁴¹

⁴⁴¹ Samu Yli-Karjanmaa and Runar M. Thorsteinsson, "Philo of Alexandria," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, Fall 2024 ed. (Stanford University), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/philo/>.

Philo, *De Aeternitate Mundi* [*On the Eternity of the World*], 24 in *The Works of Philo*, trans. C. D. Yonge <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/philo/works.xxv.xxiv.html>.

It is important to make the point that Philo's two powers concept presented here is different than the second power concept. Herein we take note of a parallel to *Memra* and the Glory of the *Shekinah*. In the print version, I used an upper-case "G" in spelling "Glory" because I wanted to emphasize divinity in this concept.

The reason discussion of Philo is important is that he lived during the lifetime of Jesus and died about 20 years after Jesus was crucified. We have no evidence that they met, however, as a Jewish thinker and prolific writer his writings show us extant Hebraic understandings early in the first century A.D. Through examination of a few of his texts, it is demonstrated that the arguments made in *The Lost and Forgotten Spirituality of Ancient Israel* are not contemporary fabrications. Instead, by an independent source outside of the biblical authors, the Hebraic spirituality discussed herein is substantiated.

In keeping with the diverse descriptions in the Targums, John emphasized Jesus' identity both as the Word of God and as the Light of the World Who came from *Yehovah*.

Because Philo was Greek and because he wrote about the "Word" using the term "*Logos*," early and continuing Orthodoxy maligned him as a Platonist. Because they did not and still do not understand that there was a Hebraic faith that preceded Judaism, nobody has ever connected Philo's writing interests with substantiating the Hebraic worldview. Instead, the world has categorized Philo with Hellenism—a syncretistic mixture of Judaism and Greek Philosophy. Although Philo did write in an era that was filled with both Jewish and Hellenistic discussion, he endeavored to provide an apologetic for Hebraic spirituality. Philo was not attempting to align Judaism with Greek philosophy, instead he was speaking in terms that the prevailing culture could understand. Just as Clement had stated that the Ancient Greeks being Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates, etc., developed their theory of the *Logos* based upon Moses' presentation of the *davar*, so then Philo was continuing to bring the Greek and the Jewish world back full circle into the Hebraic interests of Moses.

Alan F. Segal filtered what was known of about the two powers through rabbinical thought and interpreted Philo as a Hellenist. Although his work is unspeakably invaluable in identifying an ancient understanding regarding the second power of heaven, helping us to understand Hebraic faith, Segal did not show any awareness of the antecedent faith of the *Ish-rah-el-ites*. He ran into the issue describing Jacob as the man who saw God, but he did not appear to have apprehended this as a unique form of spirituality that predated the Second Temple's institutionalization of faith and spirituality. Segal did not seem to understand that Jacob's spirituality was taken away from the people in the eras of Hezekiah and Josiah. Nevertheless, these kinds of concerns were not in keeping with His agenda to demonstrate the extant understanding of the second power of heaven in ancient Israel that had predated Jesus' life by many centuries.

As Segal discussed Philo, he brought out several realizations of the first century writer that are in keeping with assertions made in this book and in *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*. Philo understood that the Bible presented the *Logos* as a dwelling place in the divine realm. Furthermore, in keeping with assertions contained herein, Philo understood that it was within some aspect of the soul of man that divinization or angelification took place in the Word of God so that faithful inhabitants of Earth could see the throne of God in the spiritual realm. The point I have made is that in the ancient celebration of the Sabbath, and maybe even today in some sectarian division of Judaism, individuals understood themselves as having received the *neshamah yeterah*—which I also link to each person's angel in heaven who beholds the presence of God in heaven. Furthermore, I might clarify that to keep the Sabbath holy, in some sense implied entry into heaven (note Segal's discussion from page 167 to about 171 in *Two Powers in Heaven*). Herein, the topics we are discussing have been affirmed as long existing facets of understanding dating back not only to the first century when Philo lived, but because Philo wrote about these concerns dating back to Abraham and Jacob, these date back to the far recesses of antiquity. So then there is an independent path back to these understandings beyond just my own perspective through

Segal, Philo, and Philo's understanding of the spirituality of ancient Israel in the time of Abraham through the prophets up into the first century A.D.

Quoting Segal's work, Philo wrote the following:

Behold...the eye of the soul, so translucent and pure, so keen of vision, the eye which alone is permitted to look upon God, the eye of Israel."⁴⁴² Continuing on the next page, "...but in their thoughts ascend to the heavenly height, setting before them Moses, the beloved of God, to lead the way. For *then they shall behold the place*, which, in fact, is the *logos, where God stands*, the never changing, never swerving and also what lies under His feet like "the work of a brick of sapphire, like the form of the firmament of heaven" (Exodus 24:10) even the world of our senses, which he indicates in the mystery."⁴⁴³

The soul Philo spoke of was understood to have the ability to mysteriously see the place of the Word of God in the realm of heaven.

Segal explained:

The story serves a further purpose in his argument: to demonstrate that Moses, the true servant of God, can have a mystical vision of God. Philo has used Moses' vision as a paradigm for the mystical vision available to the true believer...Therefore, the mystic, here Moses, does not see God himself, but the *logos*, "the place where God stands," who is manifested in the narration of Exodus 24:10 and following, as a human figure astride the world.

Segal also noted that in Exodus 33:21, God told Moses to stand in "a place" close to Him in order to see His Glory. In the case of John's Gospel, this is the Light of God's Glory, which Ezekiel had

⁴⁴² Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports About Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), 167.

⁴⁴³ Ibid. 168.

foretold would become manifest in the world at the time that God would provide His divine sacrifice (note Ezekiel 39).

It will sound anachronistic to make the following statement, however with that acknowledgment, Philo was speaking of Abraham as an *Ish-rah-el-ite*, in the sense that the Patriarch saw and walked with God. And on that note, critics may say that walking with angels is not the same as walking with God on the basis of hierarchical categorization which Orthodoxy superimposed on interpretation of the Bible. However, in the Hebraic Biblical understanding, the Word, Who was God, often came in the forms of dreams, visions, and by angelic visitations. This point was established at length in *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*.

Speaking of Abraham, Philo explained:

...he has the Divine Word as his leader, since there is an oracle which says, "Lo I sent my messenger before thy face to guard then in the way, that he may bring you into the land which I prepared for thee; give heed to him and hearken to him, disobey him not; for he will by no means withdraw from you. For My name is in Him."⁴⁴⁴

Whereas we read this passage from Exodus 23 today and commonly see the term "angel," the extant first century understanding, demonstrated by Philo, was that this was the "Divine Word." It could be easily concluded that Philo had extracted this understanding from *Memra* in the Targums, but rather instead, the point is reiterated that in Philo's lifetime, there was a broad comprehension that the Word of God came in the form of angels. Rationalism had not yet destroyed the eastern reasoning of the biblical authors.

Segal helped readers to understand that the concept of a heavenly journey was the major theme of Philo's writing—as was demonstrated in his work, "The Migration of Abraham." For our

⁴⁴⁴ Philo, *De Migratione Abrahami* [*On the Migration of Abraham*], 174, in *Philo*, trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, Loeb Classical Library 261, vol. 4 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932).

own interests, in *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*, I identified the Hebraic motif of the three-day journey which resulted in encounter with God. Segal pointed out that for Philo, the angel or the “Divine Word” abode in the life of the believer as a guide. Individuals of particular character could be guided into God’s presence by the Divine Word.

Although I pulled a couple quotes here from Segal’s work, we can get a better perspective of Philo’s thought processes by expanding the quoted material. The following excerpts have been extracted from *The Works of Philo Judaeus, the Contemporary of Josephus*, Translated from the Greek, by C. D. Yonge.⁴⁴⁵

Philo tells us:

For it is said, very correctly, that “the children of Israel groaned by reason of their tasks.” [Exodus ii. 23]. And what man in his senses is there who, if he saw the tasks of the generality of men, and the exceeding earnestness with which they labor at the pursuits to which they are accustomed to devote themselves, whether it be the acquisition of money, or glory, or the enjoyment of pleasure, would not be greatly concerned and cry out to God, the only Savior, that he would lighten their labors, and pay a ransom and price for the salvation of the soul, so as to emancipate and deliver it? What, then, is the surest freedom? The service of the only wise God, as the Scriptures testify, in which it is said, “Send forth the people, that they may serve me.” [Exodus 8:1]. But it is a peculiar property of those who serve the living God neither to regard the works of cup-bearers, or bakers, or cooks, or any other earthly employments, nor to trouble themselves about arranging or adorning their bodies like bricks, but to mount up with their reason to the height of heaven, having elected Moses, the type of the race which loves God, to be the guide of their path; for then “they will see the place which is visible,” on which the unchangeable and unalterable God stands; and

⁴⁴⁵ *The Works of Philo Judaeus, the Contemporary of Josephus*, Translated from the Greek, C. D. Yonge, 4 vols., London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854-55.

the footstool beneath his feet, which is, as it were, a work of sapphire stone, and, as it were, a resemblance to the firmament of heaven, namely, the world perceptible by the outward senses, which he describes allegorically by these figures.⁴⁴⁶

Philo then referenced Exodus 24:10, which in the ASV reads: “and they saw the God of Israel; and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and as it were the very heaven for clearness.” It is fascinating that Philo used the reference to Egyptian slavery, which he compared to menial jobs such as cup-bearers, or bakers, or cooks, or any other earthly employments by which men seek acquisition of money, or glory, or the enjoyment of pleasure to make the case that God can emancipate them to realize a higher calling. Those realizing their bondage could cry out to God, the only Savior, to pay a ransom and price for the salvation of the soul, in order that they would be able to see into the heavenly realm. He seems to have embraced facets of John’s Gospel, wherein Jesus called his audience to freedom—and moreover to Matthew’s Gospel wherein Jesus taught the disciples not to worry about the cares of tomorrow (note Matthew 6 and Luke 12). Moreover, the fact that he understood the context of a savior paying ransom to provide freedom from bondage to the path prescribed by the world is amazing.⁴⁴⁷

Philo continued:

For it is very suitable for those who have made an association for the purpose of learning to desire to see him [Who is God]; and, if they are unable to do that, at least to

⁴⁴⁶ Philo, *De Confusione Linguarum* [*On the Confusion of Tongues*], 93–95, in *The Works of Philo Judæus, the Contemporary of Josephus*, trans. C. D. Yonge, vol. 2 (London: H. G. Bohn, 1855).

⁴⁴⁷ Although early Orthodoxy maligned Philo as a Platonist, it is clear that he was not preaching Greek philosophy. And for that matter, I have heard more people than I care to count reference Philo in the same way today, who I am betting never have even read his works for themselves. Misinformation is perpetuated by the ignorant.

see his image, the most sacred word...For to philosophize is nothing else but to desire to see these things accurately.⁴⁴⁸

Herein, Philo was drawing his audience into the Hebraic faith and spirituality of the *Ish-raah-el-ites*. And furthermore, helping individuals to personally see God's Word was Philo's entire reason for engaging philosophers.

...but the man who follows God does of necessity have for his fellow travelers all those reasons which are the attendants of God, which we are accustomed to call angels. At all events, it is said that "Abraham went with them conducting them on their way." [Genesis 18:16.] Oh the admirable praise! according to which, he who was conducting others was himself conducted by them, only giving what he was receiving; not giving one thing instead of another, but only that one single thing, which was prepared as a retributory gift, for until a man is made perfect he uses divine reason as the guide of his path, for that is the sacred oracle of Scripture: "Behold, I send my angel before thy face that he may keep thee in the road, so as to lead thee into the land which I have prepared for thee. Attend thou to him, and listen to him; do not disobey him; for he will not pardon your transgressions, for my name is in him." [Exodus 23:20.] But when he has arrived at the height of perfect knowledge, then, running forward vigorously, he keeps up with the speed of him who was previously leading him in his way; for in this way they will both become attendants of God who is the guide of all things; no one of those who hold erroneous opinions accompanying them any longer...⁴⁴⁹

Just as I had earlier alluded to Canaan being metaphoric of *chennan* as a spiritual dwelling in God's presence, so also, Philo made a similar allusion. Although members of humankind were stuck in the rut of the world with its earthly desires, the souls of those who were truly made free would behold the realm of heaven.

⁴⁴⁸ Philo, *On the Confusion of Tongues*, 97.

⁴⁴⁹ Philo, *On the Migration of Abraham*, 16.84.

In Philo's two part treatise on dreams, he spoke of the sort of personal relationship that some Christians assert to experience day by day as having been identical to that experienced by individuals in the era of the Old Testament. In this example he spoke of Jacob being led by God.

...There is another dream also which belongs to the same class, that one I mean about the spotted flock, which the person who beheld it relates after he had awoke, saying, "The angel of God spake unto me in a dream, and said, Jacob; and I said, What is it? And he said unto me, Look up with thine eyes, and see the goats and the rams mounting on the flocks, and the she-goats, some white, and spotted, and ring-straked, and speckled: for I have beheld all that Laban does unto thee. I am that God who was seen by thee in the place of God, where thou anointedst the pillar, and vowedst a vow unto me. Now therefore, rise up and depart out of this land, and go into the land of thy birth, and I will be with thee." [Genesis 30:11.] You see here, that the divine word speaks of dreams as sent from God; including in this statement not those only which appear through the agency of the chief cause itself, but those also which are seen through the operation of his interpreters and attendant angels, who are thought by the father who created them to be worthy of a divine and blessed lot: consider, however, what comes afterwards. The sacred word enjoins some persons what they ought to do by positive command, like a king; to others it suggests what will be for their advantage, as a preceptor does to his pupils; to others again, it is like a counsellor suggesting the wisest plans; and in this way too, it is of great advantage to those who do not of themselves know what is expedient; to others it is like a friend, in a mild and persuasive manner, bringing forward many secret things which no uninitiated person may lawfully hear.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁵⁰ Philo, *On Dreams, That They are God-Sent*, 1.189.

By and large, what we find in the reading of Philo is an expansive commentary regarding Hebraic spirituality—the knowledge of which I have attempted to unveil in The Lost and Forgotten series. As Philo addressed interlocutors among the Jews and in the Hellenistic world, he continually pointed them to the living active Word of God. Although he sometimes chose to case his discussions in philosophical terms, it is not difficult to discover his goal in unveiling the faith of the *Ish-rah-el-ites*.

So then it is time to return to John's Gospel to complete our discussion there.

On the topic of the Targums' use of *Memra* and the Glory of the *Shekinah*, it appears that John had drawn the dichotomy between the Targums back together to explain Jesus' identity. He was both the Word and God's emanation of Light. Paul's encounter on the Road to Damascus elucidated the same concepts being brought together. And this radiance also provides a connection back to the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace which God established with Noah. This was more explicitly explained by John. As one Who was full of grace and truth, Jesus asserted that He was the Good Shepherd and that His sheep would know His voice. John expressed that from His fullness, they had received grace upon grace (note John 1:14-16).

Picking up where we left off, John 12.38, was a quotation of Isaiah 53:1.

Who has believed our message? and to whom has the arm of *Yehovah* been revealed? For he grew up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he has no form nor comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised; and we esteemed Him not.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁵¹ Isaiah 53:1–3

This passage and those ahead from Isaiah and Psalm 98 are all quoted from the ASV. Note that the name “Jehovah” has been changed to “*Yehovah*.”

Note that the arm of *Yehovah* can be understood as the second power of heaven. This “arm” is referenced thereafter in the verse with the pronouns “He” and “Him” being spoken of as a human being. In chapter 52, *Yehovah* spoke a prophetic Word over those who proved themselves to have been unfit to rule the nation.

They that rule over them do howl, saith *Yehovah*, and my name continually all the day is blasphemed. Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore *they shall know* in that day that I am he that doth speak; behold, it is I.⁴⁵²

Furthermore, *Yehovah* intended to bare His holy arm in the sight of all the nations and redeem Jerusalem—so that the ends of the Earth would have seen the *yeshuah* of God. It is easy to see how the Gospel writers understood Jesus as the fulfillment of this eschatological foretelling.

And this day would be understood as a day of forsaking wickedness—which was also realized through the work of John the Baptist as he called Israel to repentance, confession of sins, washing, and to be raised up to significance above the water. Isaiah spoke in continuity:

Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; cleanse yourselves, ye that bear the vessels of *Yehovah*. For ye shall not go out in haste, neither shall ye go by flight: for *Yehovah* will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your reward.⁴⁵³

And regarding this day Isaiah described,

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that brings good tidings, that offers peace, that brings good

⁴⁵² Isaiah 52:5b–6

⁴⁵³ Isaiah 52:11–12 modified KJV

tidings of good, that offers salvation, who says to Zion, Your God reigns! The voice of your watchmen! They lift up voices, together do they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when *Yehovah* returns to Zion. Break forth into joy, sing together, you waste places of Jerusalem; for *Yehovah* has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem. *Yehovah* has made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the Earth have seen the salvation of our God. Behold, My Servant shall deal wisely. He will be exalted and lifted up, and will be very high. Like as many were astonished at thee (His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men), so shall He sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths at Him. Behold, that which had not been told them will they see; and that which they had not heard shall they understand.⁴⁵⁴

And God's right arm was personified by Isaiah as a Servant— One Who would cleanse many nations and Who would give them eyes to see and ears to hear. Zion, a heavenly location that was figurative of Jerusalem, and a city which was figurative of a faithful people in Whom *Yehovah* dwelt, would again become inhabited by *Yehovah*. And somehow all of this would be done while His Servant would be marred beyond description so that He would be unrecognizable. Correspondingly, Jesus was beaten and whipped so bad that He could not even bear His own cross up to Golgotha. The price to redeem Israel came at a very dear cost to God Most High.

In Isaiah 59, the prophet reasoned as to why *Yehovah* had withdrawn His presence from the nation.

...our iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, so that He will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue mutters wickedness. None sues in righteousness, and none pleads in truth. They trust in vanity and speak lies. They conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. They hatch

⁴⁵⁴ Isaiah 52:7–10, 13–15 modified KJV

adders' eggs, and weave the spider's web: he that eats of their eggs dies; and that which is crushed breaks out into a viper. Their webs will not become garments, neither will they cover themselves with their works. Their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands. Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood. Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity. Desolation and destruction are in their paths. The way of peace they do not know; and there is no justice in their ways. They have made their paths crooked. Whosoever walks in their ways does not know peace. Therefore, justice is far from us, neither does righteousness overtake us. We look for light, but, behold, [we find] darkness instead of brightness, and we walk in obscurity. We grope for the wall like the blind; yes, we grope as those that have no eyes. We stumble at noonday as in the twilight; among them that are lusty we are as dead men. We roar all like bears, and moan sore like doves. We look for justice, but there is none; for *yeshuah* is far off from us. For our transgressions are multiplied before You, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us, and as for our iniquities, we know them: transgressing and denying *Yehovah*, and turning away from following our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering words of falsehood from the heart. And justice is turned away backward, and righteousness stands afar off. For truth is fallen in the street, and uprightness cannot enter. Yes, truth is lacking. And he that departs from evil makes himself a prey. And *Yehovah* saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no justice. And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor...⁴⁵⁵

In the legal economy of the spiritual world some debt had to be paid in order for *Yehovah* to rejoin Himself to Israel. However, *Yehovah* realized that there was no way that humankind was ever

⁴⁵⁵ Isaiah 59:2–16a

going to pay their own way out of the mess they had made of themselves and God's plan to restore them to the life of Eden.

...therefore, His own arm brought *yeshuah* to Him; and His righteousness, it upheld Him. And He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of *yeshuah* upon His head; and He put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a mantle.⁴⁵⁶

Isaiah's Servant was identified several times using the figure of God's arm and also described in many ways as having to do with "*yeshuah*"—which was also the name given to Mary's Son. He would be punished to pay the price to redeem Israel. God poured out the wrath deserved by Israel in order to buy them back.

According to their deeds, accordingly He will repay, wrath to his adversaries, recompense to His enemies; to the islands He will repay recompense. So shall they fear the name of *Yehovah* from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun; for He will come as a rushing stream, which the breath of *Yehovah* drives.⁴⁵⁷

Note again that the arm of the Lord was described with the pronouns "He" and "His." Recall as well that Jesus identified Himself as the Source of living water in John chapters 4 and 7. "And a Redeemer will come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith *Yehovah*." And again, repentance would result in the Redeemer inhabiting Zion and coming to those who returned to the Lord.

And as for Me, this is My covenant with them, says *Yehovah*: My Spirit that is upon you, and my words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, nor out of the mouth of your children, nor out of the mouth of your children's children, says *Yehovah*, from henceforth and forever.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁶ Isaiah 59:16–17

⁴⁵⁷ Isaiah 59:18–19

⁴⁵⁸ Isaiah 59:21

Moses and Jesus taught that humankind was not intended to have found life by earthly bread, but instead by the Word of God. And this Word of God, the *davar*, had first come to Noah to establish the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace.

In Luke 1, when Mary visited Elizabeth who was pregnant with John, Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. And afterward in verse 51, Mary declared regarding *Yehovah*, “He has shown strength with His arm.”

In Psalm 98, the arm of God was again referenced with the manifestation of *yeshuah*. And the manifestation of God’s *yeshuah* provided reason for abundant praise of *Yehovah*.

Oh sing to *Yehovah* a new song; For He has done marvelous things: His right hand, and His holy arm, has wrought *yeshuah* for Him. *Yehovah* has made known His *yeshuah*: His righteousness has He openly showed in the sight of the nations. He has remembered His lovingkindness and His faithfulness toward the house of Israel: All the ends of the Earth have seen the *yeshuah* of our God. Make a joyful noise to *Yehovah*, all the Earth. Break forth and sing for joy, yes, sing praises. Sing praises to *Yehovah* with the harp, with the harp and the voice of melody, and with the sound of trumpets and the cornet. Make a joyful noise before the King, *Yehovah*. Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. The world, and they that dwell therein; Let the floods clap their hands; Let the hills sing for joy together before *Yehovah*; for he comes to judge the Earth: He will judge the world with righteousness, And the peoples with equity.⁴⁵⁹

My Jewish friends may have read these quotes thinking, “Steven Service has been dishonest with us! He tricked us into reading all of these Isaiah passages so that we would become Christians.” Before addressing that potential accusation, we have to understand that we are recovering what for some is lost and forgotten background knowledge. When one individual in Scripture quoted another, we need to return to the original context in order

⁴⁵⁹ Psalm 98:1-9

to make sense of the present context. Nevertheless, in response to any accusation that I have a hidden agenda, as honestly as I understand my motivations, I do not wish for any Jew to become a Christian, neither do I wish for any Christian to become a Jew. Instead, just as Moses and Jesus each taught, my greatest desire is for both sides and for all nations to become *Ish-raah-el-ites*. When we personally meet the Holy One of *Ish-raah-el*, He Himself will further disclose His Identity according to our needs.

The goal of Scripture is that each of us tangibly embrace the Word of God. And despite what Jews and Christians may say about *Tanak* or the Bible, while we may consider that these revered writings have been inspired, these are not the Word of God Who was spoken of in the Scriptures. The Word of God was and remains as a living emanation of God's presence. If any of us has settled for the Bible instead of for the Word of God, we have missed the entire intention of the authors of Scripture and we have proven ourselves to have become anti-Moses and anti-Jesus. If our destination is not God's very tangible empowering presence before His throne, we have settled for counterfeit religion—which while asserting to be biblical, is anti-biblical.

The fact is that Jesus and all of his disciples were Jews. In the first half of the first century, perhaps 98 percent of those who had embraced Jesus' teachings and who sought eyes to see and ears to hear, hoping to embrace the *aionios* life, were also Jews. These ones were the intended inheritors of the holy dwelling place in the presence of the Holy One.

Although it seems that they had improperly embraced the Sabbath—celebrating it solely in human terms merely as a day of rest—within the practices of the Jews, the fourth commandment in its most ancient context had provided a pathway into the holy realm. Ignorant Christians dismissed the Sabbath because it was Jewish and furthermore because of a variety of dispensationalist excuses. By comparison, ignorant Jews embraced fundamentalist legalism and twisted the day of the Lord into practices not intended by Moses. The Jews forgot the significance of the *kiddush* while 99.99 percent of Christendom never even knew what this was. For centuries they have read the narrative they labeled as “the Lord's

Supper” and never understood its significance. Neither side realized they could re-enliven the sacrifice to invite the Holy One to join them as the gates of heaven were opened. In ignorance of Jesus’ instruction, in the practice of the Lord’s Supper, few if any have ever actually known that they were to wait upon the Lord for the coming of His tangible manifest presence—in order that together with Him they would drink the fruit of the vine with Him in the kingdom of heaven on the Sabbath. The Jews and the Christians alike demonized mystical encounter and distanced themselves from those who practiced such things—not realizing that by focusing on the bread of Earth, they were actually starving themselves. With this, the Jews ceased from embracing the *neshamah yeterah* and the *kiddush* became a reason for a social gathering, while similarly, Christians labeled Jesus’ statement that even the children’s angels in heaven beheld the presence of God in heaven as one of those difficult sayings that could no longer be understood.

Jesus washed the feet of the disciples, but even Peter really had no sense that Jesus was preparing them to partake in the holy realm, just as Moses had been told to remove his sandals because the *Ish-raah-el-ite* was going to walk on holy ground.

Now Moses was keeping the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the back of the wilderness, and came to the mountain of God, at Horeb. And the angel of *Yehovah* appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. And he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will turn aside now, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when *Yehovah* saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, I am here. And He said, Do not draw close. Take your shoes off of your feet. The place where you are standing is holy ground. Moreover, He said, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁶⁰ Exodus 3:1-6 modified ASV

When Joshua saw the second power of heaven, he too was asked to remove his sandals because he also stood on holy ground (note Joshua 5:15). Recall that in Joshua 1, he had embraced three-days of consecration. Also consider that when the Ninevites turned to the Lord, not only did the people fast and pray for three-days, food was also withheld from their livestock. While we should not apply legalistic rules regarding the proper way to find the presence of God, we understand that this is possible for those whose hearts are turned toward Him. The Sabbath, the *kiddush*, the Lord's Supper, removing one's footwear and washing one's feet, confession of sins, immersion in the *mikvah* pool, being raised above the water, as well as fasting and praying and putting on white clothing, and blessing the bread and the wine along with breaking the bread, and other practices when combined with waiting for the appearance of the Lord's presence played a role in the living spirituality of ancient Israel.

At the start of John 13, we read:

Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the end. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him. Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God, and was going to God; arose from supper, and laid aside His garments, took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe with the towel wherewith He was girded. Then He came to Simon Peter. But Peter objected, Lord, are You going to wash my feet? Jesus replied, "What I do, you do not understand now; but you will know hereafter." Peter reacted, "You will never wash my feet." But Jesus offered correction saying, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."⁴⁶¹

⁴⁶¹ John 13:1-8 Paraphrase

Having celebrated the *kiddush* with the start of the Sabbath, Peter and the disciples were standing at the doorway to the holy realm. And so just as the Levitical priests washed in the laver, so also it was necessary to wash their feet to prepare for entry. And we note that Jesus did not abstain from the fruit of the vine because, just as He had stated, He would not partake again until He stood there with them in the *qodesh* realm of God's kingdom.

Although I have been a part of fellowships wherein leaders washed the feet of the attendees, I have never seen this done following the breaking of the bread and eating in preparation for entry into the *qodesh* realm on the Sabbath. Perhaps this is because, generally speaking, Christendom has neglected to understand the significance of the seventh day. And so none of these details and their particular order has ever been the dominant focus of any Christian tradition (of which I am aware).

Recall that in John 3:5, being born of the water went along with being born of the spirit. This can be interpreted in the context of John's Gospel as being born into the realm of the spirit or the *aiona*. Just as Jesus lived in the earthly practice of entering into the presence of His Father, so also, He desired the same for the faithful.

Later ahead, in 15:3, Jesus told His disciples, "You are already clean because of the Word I have spoken to you." Similarly in Psalm 119:9, the Psalmist asked, "By what means shall a young man cleanse his way?" The answer provided was that it is by heeding *Yehovah's* Word—which was defined in the verse as the oracles which came from the mouth of *Yehovah*. However, these examples did not pertain directly to the time of the Sabbath as was the case with Jesus' insisting the necessity of washing their feet. One way that we can understand this is that those walking in obedience to God's Word and will were cleansed, however, this cleansing did not negate the essential component of foot washing as preparation for standing in God's holy presence.

We read in verses 9 through 16:

By what means will a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Your Word. With my whole heart have I sought You. Oh let me not wander from Your commandments. I have laid up Your Word in my heart so

that I might not sin against You. Blessed are You, O *Yehovah*: Teach me Your statutes. With my lips I have declared all the ordinances of Your mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches. I will meditate on Your precepts, And have respect for Your ways. I will delight myself in Your statutes: I will not forget Your Word.⁴⁶²

In Psalm 119, we have this person's perspective on the Word of God. For the sake of those who might become charismatic mystical religious fanatics and determine that they just need to run off into the wilderness to hear God's voice, although the Scriptures are writings that testify regarding the Word of God, these too can be a component of God's voice. And we might also interpret that the commandments and statutes of God were understood to be the stepping stones leading toward the living encounter with the Oracle of God. There can be no doubt that God loves to find us when our pursuit of Him is red-hot. The contention of this book is that God allowed for the establishment of the Hebraic tradition and has given us an over-arching perspective of the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace that is a multifaceted gem. We find peace with God through the means described by the Psalmist. First and foremost we seek to walk in righteousness, which God assuredly will see, and to enter a place under His rulership.

In John 17, Jesus prayed to the Father that He would sanctify them in His Truth—further exclaiming in prayer, “Your Word is Truth.”

“Sanctification” was the gathering of individuals into the holy realm. In Greek it is a verb form of the term *hagios* which is translated “holy.” Many interpreters explain that to be holy means to be “set apart.” Well then, there was a location into which individuals could become set apart; however, not all could enter as we see with Judas Iscariot. This deceiver, thief, and traitor allowed Satan to shape the path of His life, just like Pharaoh who hardened his own heart, then his heart hardened his heart, and then ultimately God hardened his heart.

⁴⁶² Psalm 119:9-16 modified ASV

What we see in the lesson of individuals such as Pharaoh and Judas is that earthly life is a progression of determining the identity of our father. Some are going to do anything and everything to embrace original innocence thereby proving that their Father is *Yehovah* and that they belong in His house.

Although we are cleansed by earthly water, ultimately what makes us pure is the Word of God, Whom we chase after with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Day in and day out as we love our neighbors—especially the difficult ones—in so doing we prove whether or not we actually love our Father in heaven.

Jesus told Peter while also addressing those gathered together with Him: “Whoever has already bathed only needs to wash his feet, and he will be clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you.” By this time, Jesus knew who would betray Him, and so He commented “not every one of you.”

So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments, and sat down again, He asked them “Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me, “Teacher,” and, “Lord.” And you do well in this recognition; for so I am. If then, I the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you an example, that you should repeat this with others. Very truly I tell you that just as a servant is not greater than his lord; neither is the One Who has been sent greater than He Who sent Him. If you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.⁴⁶³

In this instruction, we comprehend the calling to help others become *Ish-raah-el-ites*. If we truly recognize Who God is and the importance of washing our feet to prepare for entry into His presence, then why would we not do the same for others? From my own experience, awkwardness and fear will prevent us from working great works. However, if we truly understand that Jesus was the Teacher who Moses said would come, and if we accept that the Holy One is actually the Lord of our lives, then we will walk in obedience.

⁴⁶³ John 13:12–17

It was helpful and necessary for Jesus to warn the disciples in advance that one among them was going to raise his hand against Him so that eventually they would make sense of Isaiah's explanation of how the Arm of God would become treated.

Truly, truly, I tell you, whoever receives the One I send receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives the One Who sent Me.⁴⁶⁴

I am not speaking of all of you. I know whom I have chosen. Nevertheless, so that the Scripture may be fulfilled, "He that eats my bread lifted up his heel against me"—I have told you before it comes to pass, so that afterward you may believe that I am. Very truly, I tell you, those who receive the One I send also receive Me. And he who receives Me receives Him Who sent Me.⁴⁶⁵

From the context, we understand

After Jesus had spoken, He was troubled in the spirit, and testified, and said, Very truly, I tell you that one of you will betray Me. The disciples looked at one another questioningly about whom He was speaking. There was at the table reclining in Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. Therefore, Simon Peter beckoned him, and asked him, Tell who it is that He is speaking about. He leaning back, as he was, on Jesus' breast asked Him, Lord, who is it? Jesus therefore answered, It is the one for whom I shall dip the bread in the sop and give it to him. So when he had dipped the bread, He took and gave it to Judas, *the son* of Simon Iscariot. And after the sop, Satan entered into him. Jesus therefore said to him, What you do, do quickly. Now no man at the table knew for what reason He had spoken this to him. Some thought it was because Judas had the money bag, that Jesus had instructed him to buy things needed for the feast; or, that he should give something to

⁴⁶⁴ John 13:20

⁴⁶⁵ John 13:18; this includes the quote from Psalm 41:9.

the poor. He then having received the sop went out immediately; and it was night.⁴⁶⁶

Although there were many ways of helping the poor which would capture the attention of God, Judas helped himself to what belonged to the poor. Although the disciples performed many acts of faithfulness to Jesus, Judas called the arm of the Lord against himself by lining his pockets with stolen money.

And so, Judas had stained himself permanently. No amount of water or soap could have cleansed his feet enough so that he might have shared in the holy realm. In an ongoing progression, he had rejected the feast of the Word, settling instead for the adversarial meal of the world. He ate and drank judgment upon himself, whereas Jesus had intended for each one to imbibe blessing from God through the meal.

When he went out, Jesus said, Now the Son of man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him; and God will glorify Him in Himself, and straightway shall He glorify Him. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek Me: and as I said to the Jews, where I go, you cannot come; so now I tell you. A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this will all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another. Simon Peter replied, Lord, where are You going? Jesus answered, Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow afterwards. Peter responded, Lord, why can't I follow You right now? I will lay down my life for you. Jesus answered, Will you lay down your life for Me? Very truly, I tell you, the rooster shall not crow, until you have denied me three times.⁴⁶⁷

In the narrative yet again we see another prophetic Word, which later served to bring healing and restoration to Peter. Whereas no such redemption was possible for Judas because of

⁴⁶⁶ John 13:21–30

⁴⁶⁷ John 13:31–38

what he had allowed into his heart. He was so given over to the adversary that his choices, behavior, and character were no longer those of an individual able to embrace the *neshama yeterah*. He lacked eyes to see and ears to hear—not having proven himself worthy of becoming an *Ish-raah-el-ite*. Whereas Jesus had come to provide the exceeding life of Eden, Satan had taken captive Judas in order to steal, kill, and destroy (note Jesus' comment in John 10:10). Judas proved himself to have been the thief who tried to enter into the sheep pen by a different way than the Gate—Who Himself was the Holy One. There was only One Gate Keeper Who Himself admitted entry, and entry was accomplished only by sheep who were born of the Truth—by listening for and by obeying His voice. Such ones as these received the *aionios* life of the seventh day which preceded not only the first day of the week, but led each of them into Day-One of creation. The faithful who had both been cleansed by the Word, and whose feet were cleansed with water, found habitations in the Word in the presence of the Word. The Word of God Himself became their temple.

In response to Peter's question, "Where are you going?" Jesus explained:

Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will draw you to Myself; that where I am, you may also be. And where I am going, you know the way.

Jesus had just modeled for the disciples the way into the *qodesh* realm. Those who had sanctified or who had consecrated themselves forsaking wickedness, turning to the Lord, by confession of sins and by, baptismal washing were prepared for the *kiddush*. Recall that Clement implied that there was a process. And so, the bread and wine were blessed, re-enlivening the sacrifice, and the bread was broken opening the veil for entry into the *qodesh* realm of God's holy kingdom. Their feet were washed because they were entering into holy ground. Recall that Moses had been told to

remove his sandals. The Sabbath was being kept as a holy day as they entered into the holy realm.

John pulled together several concepts. To stand in the presence of the second power of heaven, in and of itself, was entry into God's holy temple. Jesus was about to provide each of them with the way to entry, apart from needing to offer sacrifices. He would also become their destination and holy dwelling place.

Thomas said to Him, Lord, we do not know where You are going. How do we know the way?

Thomas was stuck in his own confused earthly mindset assuming that Jesus was simply heading out to a different location in Israel.

Jesus said to him, I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life: no one comes to the Father, but by Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also. From now on, you know Him and have seen Him. Philip said to Him, Lord, show us the Father, and that will be sufficient for us. Jesus replied, Have I been with you such a long time and yet you still do not know Me, Philip? He that has seen Me has seen the Father. So then why do you say Show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The Words that I say to you I do not speak from Myself: but the Father abiding in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works' sake. Very truly, I tell you, He that believes on Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater than these will he do; because I go to the Father. And whatsoever you will ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you will ask anything in My name, that I will do. If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.⁴⁶⁸

In the vow and the blessing of the Nazirite, the name of *Yehovah* was placed upon the seeker's head. Although there were

⁴⁶⁸ John 14:1–15

other significances, this action was akin to bearing the image of God. At creation, humankind was created to bear the name or the image of God, and yet through their rebellion, they were robbed by the adversary. However, by walking in the ways of the Lord, as was the topic of in our earlier quote from Psalm 98, restoration to purity was possible.

Those who gathered together in the name of God were worshipers of *Yehovah*, not only in speech, but in their daily actions—loving and helping their neighbors in the world. God proved who they were by their choices, actions, and faithfulness. Such ones as these should have hoped to gain entry into the mansions of God’s holy realm. Individuals who sought after the original innocence of the Garden, becoming in character like innocent children, were destined to become inhabitants of the Word. And so, God’s Word would be placed in each of those having been born of the Truth.

And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may be with you in the *aion*: the Spirit born of the Truth Whom the world cannot receive. They cannot see or hear Him, neither do they even know He exists. However, you know Him; because He abides with you, and will be in you. I am not leaving you desolate. I will come to you in just a little while. The world will not see or hear Me anymore, but you will see and hear Me. Because I am alive, you shall be made alive also. In that day you will know for yourselves that I am in My Father, and that you are in Me, and I am in you. He who has and keeps My commandments, he is the one who actually loves Me. And moreover, he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father. And in My love, I will manifest myself to him.⁴⁶⁹

Proverbs 8:17, stated the generality, “I love those who love Me, and those who seek Me diligently find Me.” So then the concept presented by Jesus was identical to that of the ancient *Ish-*

⁴⁶⁹ John 14:16–26

raah-el-ites. Herein, Jesus' disclosure bore witness of common understandings of the wisdom literature of the second century B.C.

Wisdom, which in Greek is "*sophia*" is a feminine noun. So also is *ruach*, which is translated "spirit." Whereas English does not have gender related terms, many languages of the world still do. Early and continuing Orthodoxy taught Christendom to ignore gender when translating. However, centuries before their influence, feminine nouns were personified as female entities. Those pertaining to divine manifestations were thought of as female deities in the sense that they were sent to the faithful. While it is not our interest to support the existence of a particularly female deity that needs to be embraced, those of us whose minds were conditioned by Orthodoxy's dominant male considerations affecting interpretation need to become aware of this factor in order to make sense of the wisdom literature.

From the text of the Wisdom of Solomon, we read:

Wisdom is radiant and unfading, and she is easily discerned by those who love her, and is found by those who seek her... The beginning of wisdom is the most sincere desire for instruction, and concern for instruction is love of her, and love of her is the keeping of her laws, and giving heed to her laws is assurance of immortality.⁴⁷⁰

The *Koine* Greek term for immortality is "*aphtharsia*"—which actually was not used to speak of living forever—but instead referenced discovery of the presence of God.

With this understanding, in the Wisdom of Solomon 6:13-14, we continue reading the same passage "...and love of her [Wisdom] is the keeping of her laws, and giving heed to her laws is assurance of immortality [*aphtharsia*], and immortality [*aphtharsia*] brings one near to God."

So then, in context of the theological understandings of that era, and in the context of the passage itself, *aphtharsia* was not intended to have been understood as life without end, but instead as that which brought seekers near to God.

⁴⁷⁰ Wisdom of Solomon 6:12, 17-18

Philo wrote:

God is the only being who enjoys a true Sabbath; for He alone is free from all fatigue, and He alone is exempt from all passive suffering...His nature is pure activity, and His presence is characterized by incorruptibility [*aphtharsia*] and life."⁴⁷¹

Philo used *aphtharsia* to speak of the immediate domain of God's presence. Again the point is emphasized that translation is no easy task. And moreover, translators are influenced by their theological traditions. Therefore their renderings do not always convey the intentions of the original authors.

To cite one more example, that was written around 200 B.C., we have Sirach, also referenced as Ecclesiasticus 19:18-19:

To fear the Lord is the first step to being accepted by him, and wisdom obtains his love. The knowledge of the Lord's commandments is life-giving instruction; and they who do things that please him shall receive the fruit of the tree of immortality.⁴⁷²

The interesting component here was that a divine meal was associated with entry into the presence of God. And we have to keep in mind that these were well established writings in Jewish literature.

Sirach used the term "*athanasia*" which was translated as immortality. Literally, the term meant "without death." Of course, it is easily understood that the tree of immortality was the tree of life in Eden. And what is even more pertinent is that John spoke about this particular tree of life in Revelation—which we will examine momentarily.

The apostle Paul provides insight into the significance of these terms:

I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable

⁴⁷¹ Philo, *On the Cherubim*, 1.86.

⁴⁷² Ecclesiasticus 19:18-19

inherit the imperishable [*aphtharsia*]... For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable [*aphtharsia*], and the mortal with immortality [*athanasia*].⁴⁷³

Much has already been said regarding the *neshama yeterah* and personal angels who behold the presence of God for the faithful while they yet dwelt upon the Earth. For his own part, in 2 Corinthians 12:1-6, speaking in the third person because of how he viewed himself during the mysterious experience; Paul no longer knew whether he was in or outside of his own body when he entered the third heaven.

Christians who lack any familiarity with ancient historical literature become absolutely mortified today when the topic of deification or angelification is brought up. However, these are simply terms that were used throughout time to explain the exactness of what took place with Paul and others as they were subsumed into the kingdom, the *aiona*, the holy realm, the spirit, etc. —in their experiences of the throne room of God.

I have a dear friend who many years ago told me that he could not imagine how it was possible for him to enter into the presence of God while knowing the sins he had committed in his life. The fact of the matter appears to be that we are changed in an instant as we worship the Father. We may not see this transformation with our physical eyes, but God sees and draws those who are consecrated by washing and the blood of the sacrifice into His presence. And to be certain, there are times when those with eyes to see and ears to hear will behold the throne room of God and witness concerns that are too inexpressible to even discuss here on Earth. Those who say, “Well that is not for me,” might just be rejecting God’s inexpressible gift. Rest assured, nothing compares with being drawn into His presence; and I do not make this assertion because I have merely read the testimony of Paul. And moreover, this is not anything to brag about, but rather instead an experience that should humble us. I would not even mention such matters except for the benefit of readers to testify that I have witnessed an infinitely invaluable drop of God’s

⁴⁷³ 1 Corinthians 15:50-53

presence. And in the moment I blissfully thought He was taking me home. This is perhaps my most treasured experience in all of life on Earth. It does not make me more spiritual than anyone else or credential me as any kind of authority. I will leave all of that for Paul, although even he was reluctant to discuss the experience. Nevertheless, Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians explaining to them how it was that those walking in the renewed covenant should live according to the grace of the voice of God.

We understand that historically speaking in John 14, what Jesus was teaching was not something new. Rather instead, Jesus was restoring something that had been understood for many centuries by the ancient *Ish-rah-el-ites* and that was apprehended as the enduring legacy of those who had drawn near to *Yehovah*.

And he showed me a river of water of life [or a river of living water], bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, right there in the midst of the street. And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no curse any more: and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there. And His servants will serve Him; and they will see His face; and His name on their foreheads. And there will be no more night; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign in the *aiona* of the *aiona*.⁴⁷⁴

Christian Orthodoxy taught the church that they had to wait until they died to experience this. Evangelicalism taught the church that none of this would happen until after there was a great tribulation caused by an earthly antichrist. Nevertheless, there are those who understand that God did not reserve these concerns for life after death. However, the church has marginalized and demonized those who speak of what we label as “realized eschatology.” This is because, just like the religious leaders of Jesus’ day mentioned in John 5, they study the Scriptures mistakenly

⁴⁷⁴ Revelation 22:1–5

thinking that it is in these that they will find eternal life. They have fallen into early Orthodoxy's intellectual snare which equated the Scriptures with the Word of God. Based upon the acceptance that men wrote as they were moved to do so by the Holy Spirit, which is true and respectable, on the basis of Aristotle's rational deduction, Orthodoxy thereafter labeled the inspired Scriptures as the "word of God." and so as the Christian and even the Jewish traditions read the Bible, they assumed that the revered writings somehow embodied God. Jesus explained that this was a huge mistake. Even inspired literature is still literature. The Word of God is living and active and able to penetrate our lives. It is the grace of God's voice. The Word of God is the divine Being of God Who dwells and moves among His faithful children. And despite what we have been told by our well-intended but errant traditions, the Father loves to draw His children into His very real presence. To deny the Father of His desire is sin. Those who refuse to enter the Word of God miss His target for their lives to join Him in ruling over the nations. Nevertheless, many forsake the kingdom and settle for the intellectual acquisition of religious facts.

Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, Lord, what is going to happen that You are going to manifest Yourself to us but not to the world? Jesus answered him, "If a man loves Me, he will cherish My Word: and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make our dwelling with him. He who does not love Me proves this by not cherishing My Words; which are the Words that you hear that others cannot hear. These are the Father's Words Who sent Me."⁴⁷⁵

Essentially, Jesus was making a more practical explanation of the parable of the sheep in John 10. Philo used a similar metaphor explaining that a flock of sheep become unruly when they are not governed:

For God, like a shepherd and a king, governs according to right and law...having appointed his true Word [*Logos*] and

⁴⁷⁵ John 14:22–24

First-born Son to have the care of this sacred flock, as a viceroy of a great king.⁴⁷⁶

We may wonder where from Philo adopted his understanding of a first born son being the *Logos* who tended the great kings sheep as a royal ambassador. As a devout Jew, Philo simultaneously displayed several remarkable understandings.

Philo stated similarly,

But if there be any as yet unfit to be called a Son of God, let him press to take his place under God's firstborn, the Word, who holds the eldership among the angels, their ruler as it were.⁴⁷⁷

This passage from Philo almost has a hint of what Paul stated to the Corinthians.

I have been filled with a draft of inspired frenzy, so that I knew not the place where I was, nor those who were present...because I was under the influence of a divine possession, and was filled with a spirit of inspiration. For I obtained expression, a gift of vision, a most radiant light, a most distinct perception of the subjects treated, and a most manifest energy affecting every one of my faculties.⁴⁷⁸

Earlier in sections 62 and 63 of "On the Confusion of Tongues, Philo associated the time before the physical creation of the world conveying the idea that the *Logos* was the eldest offspring of the Creator. He attributed this to an understanding of a companion of Moses who appears to have been Zechariah.

I have also heard of one of the companions of Moses having uttered such a speech as this: Behold, a man whose name is the East! For the Father of the universe has caused him to spring up as the eldest son, whom, in another passage, he calls the firstborn; and he who is thus born, imitating the

⁴⁷⁶ Philo, *On Agriculture*, 51.

⁴⁷⁷ Philo, *On the Confusion of Tongues*, 146-147.

⁴⁷⁸ Philo, *On the Migration of Abraham*, 7.34-35.

ways of his father, has formed such and such species, looking to his archetypal patterns.

The One from the East mentioned by one of the companions of Moses was the Word of God, referenced in Zechariah 6:9, 12, 13, & 15. Whereas those with conflicted souls were disobeying God at Babel attempting to find their way into heaven, the Word of God was going to build and provide the faithful with a temple. We read:

And the Word of *Yehovah* came to me, saying,...”Thus speaks *Yehovah* of hosts, saying, Behold, the Man whose name is the Branch: and He shall grow up out of His place; and He shall build the temple of *Yehovah*; even He shall build the temple of *Yehovah*; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both....And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of *Yehovah*; and you shall know that *Yehovah* of hosts has sent Me to you. And this shall come to pass, if you will diligently obey the voice of *Yehovah* your God.”

The first thing that stands out in the passage is that the Word of God is a different entity than *Yehovah*. Philo was familiar with this passage and understood that the Word of God was the firstborn Son of God.

The Branch of David was understood to have been a messianic figure who would appear with the restoration of the Word. Note Amos chapter 8 and following where the Word was taken away in the famine of the *davar*, but the Branch would one day return.

Corresponding to Jesus’ assertion in John 3 that He would build a temple for the faithful in three-days, so also, according to Zechariah, not only would the Word or the Branch rebuild the temple for those who diligently obeyed the voice of *Yehovah*, their God, but so also would the faithful participate in its rebuilding. Furthermore, the Word of God would sit upon the throne as priest and this One would restore the Covenant of Peace between *Yehovah* and humankind.

Philo understood that encounter with the *Logos* or the Word of God was of the highest priority for humankind, whereby they would overcome the dual nature of the soul and the vices caused by the worse part of the soul—which had not been overcome by those who attempted to build the tower in Shinar. In section 61, Philo had explained that the conspirators attempting to build the Tower of Babel were led to commit injustice based upon their “twofold kind of dawning in the soul” which included part that was “of a better sort” and “the other of a worse.” The latter overshadowed the former and brought vice to its actions. Herein we also find a first century Jewish basis supporting the concept of the *neshama yeterah*.

The preceding passages from Philo demonstrate that the concept of the Word of God also having been identified as the firstborn Son of God did not come as a Christian invention. Rather instead, early in the first century A.D., this had already been established as a component of the Jewish knowledgebase. There can be no doubt, that late in the first century, it became one of the priorities of the Jewish Council of *Yavneh* to eradicate this understanding along with the concept of the *Two Powers in Heaven*.

Philo explained that Moses was the source of His mystical experiences.

I myself was initiated into the great mysteries by Moses, the friend of God; and yet when I saw Jeremiah the prophet, and learned that he was not only an initiate, but a competent hierophant, I did not hesitate to become his disciple. For he, being breathed into by a divine enthusiasm, uttered an oracle in the name of God, speaking thus to Virtue: “Didst thou not call me thy house, and thy father, and the husband of thy virginity?” [referencing Jeremiah 3:4] thereby showing clearly that God is both a house, the incorporeal region of incorporeal ideas, and the Father of all things, since He created them; and the Husband of Virtue,

sowing the seeds of happiness into her for the mortal race.⁴⁷⁹

Philo explained a similar concept we have discussed pertaining to Scriptures referencing Zion.

Therefore, the soul of the wise man is a palace of God, and the King of kings walks in it...Let us therefore look upon that house as a place which is to be beautifully adorned, and which is a fitting dwelling place for God; and let it be a house of joy, of gladness, and of thanksgiving...into which the *Logos* of God may enter and walk, as in a city.⁴⁸⁰

For God never comes into a house which is polluted...But if you are a lover of virtue, you will become a house of God...For the soul of the wise man is a house of God, and he who is the King of kings enters into it...and he who is the *Logos* of God dwells in it as in a city.⁴⁸¹

For when the soul is worthy to receive the divine presence, the *Logos* descends into it as a guest, to feast with it and to nourish it with the doctrines of wisdom.⁴⁸²

Note that in Philo's era, the term doctrine from the Greek "dogma" was not a formalized set of intellectual facts. God's divine presence did not join worthy individuals to convey gnostic ideas. The term "dogma" referenced widely accepted understandings. The term was used to convey generality. Philo used the term "dogma" to contrast the revelation of God with the temporal impertinent knowledge of the world.

For whenever the mind is eager to go forth, the *Logos* meets it, visiting the soul and granting it the power to see the

⁴⁷⁹ Philo, *On the Cherubim*, 14.48-49.

⁴⁸⁰ Philo, *On Dreams, That They are God-Sent*, 1.147-149.

⁴⁸¹ Philo, *On the Cherubim*, 98-100.

⁴⁸² Philo, *On the Posterity of Cain*, 122.

truths of reality...filling it with an immediate and divine light.⁴⁸³

In Revelation 21, John described the city of God as the New Jerusalem as coming down with heaven in order to provide a place of worship for God's people. Its gates were open to the faithful from among the nations whose names were written in the Lamb's book of life. In this realm there was no need of lights because the Lamb of God was the source of light. And continuing into chapter 22, this was the location of the living water in the river and the tree of life.

As we continue in John 14 and following, the text will be a paraphrased extraction from the ASV.

These things I have told you, while abiding with you. But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

What does it mean that the Comforter would come in Jesus' name? In God's provision of help to ancient Israel, the significance of Jesus name as *Yeshuah* was that this was the same term used to describe God's deliverance. Herein, John personified the name of *Yeshuah* as the divine Helper Who would be sent by the Father.

Using different terminology, Joseph similarly understood that God had been his Helper as was referenced in Genesis 49:24-25. Moses' son Eliezer was remembered as the namesake for God's help and *Yeshuah* in Exodus 18:4. NIV translates, "My father's God was my helper; he saved me from the sword of Pharaoh." The Hebrew term "*eli*" meant "my God" and "*ezer*" meant "strength" or "helper." Note here that the Hebrew term for "saved" was not "*yasha*" which is the verb form of the noun "*yeshuah*." Instead it was "*wayyatsileni*," which meant "to snatch away"—as one pulling another out of harm's way.

Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; which is different than anything the world can offer. Let not your

⁴⁸³ Philo, *The Migration of Abraham*, 127-128.

heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful. In hearing me tell you that I am going away, and I will come to you, if you loved Me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father. The Father is greater than Me. I have told you about this now before it comes to pass in order that when these things take place, you may believe.

Because Jesus knew that Judas had gone out to do Satan's bidding, and that His earthly end had been set in motion, Jesus explained,

I will speak little more with you, for the prince of the world is on his way and he has no part in Me. Nevertheless, so that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me His commandment, even so I obey. Get up, we need to go.

At the start of John 15, we come to Clement's reference to the vine and its Husbandman.

I am the True Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He cuts it off. But every branch that bears fruit, He cleans it so that it may bear even more fruit. Already you are clean because of the Word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine; so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the Vine, you are the branches: He who abides in Me, and I in Him, he bears much fruit. Apart from Me you can do nothing. If a man does not abide in Me, he is thrown away like a withered branch. Others gather these and throw them into the fire and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatsoever you will, and it will be done unto you. Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; and so will you also be My disciples. Even as the Father has loved Me, I also have loved you. Therefore, abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love in the same way as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. I have told you these

things so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. This is My commandment, that you love one another, even as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for His friends. You are My friends, if you do the things which I command you. No longer do I call you servants; for the servant does not know what his master is doing. Instead, I have called you friends. All that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and I appointed you so that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should endure. Therefore, whatsoever you will ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you. These things I command you, that you may love one another. If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. But instead, because you are not of the world, and because I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the Word that I told you, "A servant is not greater than his lord?" If they persecuted Me, they also will persecute you. But instead, if they treasured My Word, they will also treasure yours. But all these things will they do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him Who sent Me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have had sin.

The comment should be interjected here that according to the context of discussion regarding the Word of the Lord to abide in the Vine, sin here is a reference to missing the mark of abiding in the Vine and treasuring God's Word. We "miss the target" when we do all sorts of other counterfeit religious actions instead of pursuing entry into the kingdom.

With this we should keep in mind that entry into the kingdom is not merely by waiting for the mystical presence of God to fall upon us—notwithstanding the fact that those times of worship are incredibly important. But entry into the kingdom includes investing ourselves in the needs of Lazarus who is at our gate. And as the world becomes increasingly connected, the needs of those further away become nearer. We understand that "the

eyes of the Lord search back and forth throughout all of the Earth that He may strongly support those whose hearts are completely His.” In other terms, entry into the kingdom is facilitated by every thought, word, decision, action and deed in each of our lives. God is always watching to find those whom He will draw into His mystical presence.

Once we are informed regarding our purpose to seek entry into the kingdom or our abiding places in the Vine, just as Jesus continued teaching, we “have no excuse for missing the mark.” We already know that every thought, word, decision, action and deed in each of our lives matters to God.

Jesus continued:

He that hates Me hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other did, they would not have had sin.⁴⁸⁴

Those who witnessed Jesus signs and wonders should have known better. Although the Pharisees were the so-called “Bible-thumpers” of their era, in actuality they were quite unfamiliar with Moses’ teachings. To be straightforward, they had lost and forgotten everything that they should have known about becoming an *Ish-rah-el-ite* and how to become born into the spiritual realm.

Jesus continued, addressing the fact that they had both seen Him and His works.

And yet they have hated both Me and My Father. But this is coming to pass, that the prophetic Word may be fulfilled that is written in their law, “They hated Me without a cause.” But when the Comforter has come, Whom I will send to you from the Father, Who is the Spirit of Truth, Who proceeds forth from the Father, He will bear witness of Me. And because of this, you will also bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸⁴ John 15:23–24 modified ASV

⁴⁸⁵ John 15:24b–27

So then, just as the ancient *Ish-rah-el-ites* had not been left all on their own to fend for themselves, so also the same divine dynamic care would be provided once again with the renewal of the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace.

These things I have told you, so that you might not stumble. They will put you out of the synagogues. Yes, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think that he is offering service to God. And these things will they do, because they have not known the Father, nor Me. But these things I have told you, that when these things happen, you will remember what I told you. I did not explain these things from the start, but now it is time that I go to the One Who sent Me. And none of you asks Me, "Where are you going?" But because I have told you these things, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: It is better for you that I go away because if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you. And when He comes, He will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin; because they do not believe or uphold faith in Me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you behold Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world has been judged. I still have many things to tell you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of Truth, has come, He will guide you into all the Truth: for He will not speak from Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, He will speak. And He will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify Me: for He will take of Mine, and shall declare to you. All things whatsoever the Father has are Mine. Therefore said I, the [Comforter] will take what is mine, and will declare these concerns to you. For a little while, you will not see Me. But then after a little while, and you will see Me. *Some* of His disciples therefore said one to another, What is He telling us, "A little while, you will not see Me, and again a little while you will see Me." This is because I am going to the Father. They said therefore, "What is He saying about 'a little while?'" We do not know what He said. Jesus perceived

that they wanted to ask Him, and He asked them, “Are you murmuring about the fact that I said, “a little while, and you will not see Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me?” Very truly, I tell you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy.⁴⁸⁶

Jesus appeared to have been referencing Zechariah, 12:10:

And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.⁴⁸⁷

Jesus continued:

When a woman is in labor she is in sorrow, because Her hour has come. But when she has delivered her child, she forgets about her anguish, because of the joy that her child has been born. In like manner, you now have sorrow. But [be encouraged,] because I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice. Do not let anyone take your joy from you. And in that Day you will not ask Me any questions. Very truly, I tell you, if you will ask anything of the Father, He will give it you in My name. Until now, you asked for nothing in My name. But ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full.⁴⁸⁸

These things have I told you obscurely, but the hour is coming, when I will speak clearly and will tell you plainly of the Father. In that day, you will ask in My name: and am not telling you that I will have to ask the Father for you, but instead realize that the Father loves you Himself because you loved Me and have believed that I came [into the world] from the Father. I came out from the Father into the world,

⁴⁸⁶ John 16:1–20

⁴⁸⁷ Zechariah, 12:10 NIV

⁴⁸⁸ John 16:21–24

but now, again, I leave the world, and go back to the Father.⁴⁸⁹

His disciples exclaimed, “Finally, You are speaking plainly and not obscurely. Now we know that You know all things and do not need for any man to ask of You. In this acknowledgment, we believe that You came forth [into the world] from God. Jesus responded, “Do you now believe? Behold, the hour is coming and now here when all of you will be scattered; every man on his own. And you will leave Me alone. Nevertheless, I am not alone because the Father is with Me. These things I have told you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”⁴⁹⁰

Lifting His eyes up to heaven, Jesus said, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son so that the Son may also glorify You. Just as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You gave Him, He should give the *aionios* life. And this is life of the *aion*, that they should know You the only True God, and Him Whom You also sent, *Yeshuah* the Anointed One. I glorified you on the Earth, having accomplished the work which You gave Me to do. And now, Father, glorify Me with Your own self with the glory which I had with You before the start of the world. I manifested Your name to the Men whom You gave Me out of the world.”⁴⁹¹

By underscoring His preexistence in Day-One within the prayer, Jesus explicitly identified Himself as the second power. We understand that the Word of God participated in creation.

They belonged to You and You gave them to Me, and they have treasured Your Word. Now they know that all things that You gave Me are from You. For the Words which You

⁴⁸⁹ John 16:25–28

⁴⁹⁰ John 16:29–33

⁴⁹¹ John 17:1–6

gave Me, I have given to them; and they received knowing the Truth that I came forth from You. And they believed that You sent Me. I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for those whom You gave Me; for they are Yours. And all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine: and I am glorified in them. But I am no more [to be] in the world, however, these are to remain in the world, while I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name which You gave Me, that they may be one, even as we *are*. While I was with them, I kept them in your name which you gave Me. And I protected them. Not one of them perished, except for the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy made full in themselves. I gave them Your Word, and the world hated them because they are not of the world; even as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them from the world, but that You should keep them from the evil *one*. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the Truth. Your Word is Truth.⁴⁹²

Once again, the concept is underscored that entry into the holy realm, where by ones became spoken of as “holy” or “sanctified,” was synonymous with encounter with the *Logos* or the *davar*. Within the phrase “not of the world” there is an implied contrast. Such individuals treasured the Word of the Father, knowing that He had proceeded forth from the Father. Such individuals had proven their spiritual identities by birth into the *aiona*.

Jesus was leaving to embark on a three-day journey, wherein He Himself would be raised up as their temple.

Just as You sent Me into the world, even so send I them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself that they themselves also may be sanctified in Truth. Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on Me through

⁴⁹² John 17:6b–17

their Word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I gave to them; that they may be one, even as We *are* One; I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected into One; that the world may know that You sent Me, and love them, even as You love Me. Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me should also be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory, which You gave Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world did not know You, but I knew You; and these knew that you sent Me; and I made Your name known to them, and will make it known; that the love wherewith You loved Me may will abide in them, and I in them.⁴⁹³

Note the importance of the name of the Father and its impartation to the faithful disciples. Worship of the name of *Yehovah* had been the key of entry into the spiritual realm for King David.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call My servant *Eliakim* the son of *Hilkiah*: and I will clothe Him with Your robe, and strengthen Him with Your girdle, and I will commit Your government into his hand; and He shall be a Father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon His shoulder; and He will open, and none will shut; and He will shut, and none will open. And I will fasten Him as a nail in a sure place; and He shall be for a throne of glory to His Father's house. And they shall hang upon Him all the glory of His Father's house, the offspring and the issue, every small vessel, from the cups even to all the flagons. In that day, says *Yehovah* of hosts, shall the nail that was fastened in a sure place give way; and it shall be hewn down, and fall; and

⁴⁹³ John 17:18–26

the burden that was upon it shall be cut off; for *Yehovah* has spoken it.⁴⁹⁴

“Elyaqim” meant “God sets up” whereas *“Chilqiyyahu”* was translatable as “my portion is the LORD.” So then a Son would be raised up by a Father whose portion was the Lord, and He would be clothed with strength, having divine governance in His hand. As one abiding as the Father over the inhabitants of Jerusalem, He would also have the key of the house of David, giving Him unsurpassed power. Fellowship with this coming King would afford His subjects the spiritual authority of His reign.

And yet, as He established Himself as God’s throne—where God’s glory would be found, like a nail firmly driven into a board on which others would rest for security—He would also be torn down.

Many centuries later the reference was used again by John who had experienced this power firsthand:

To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write the following: “This is the solemn pronouncement of the Holy One, the True One, Who holds the key of David, Who opens doors no one can shut, and shuts doors no one can open...”⁴⁹⁵

When believers gathered together in His name, they were in God’s *Yeshuah* Who held all authority in heaven and in earth. In Matthew 16:19 and in Matthew 18:18, Jesus stated “whatsoever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatsoever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” Jesus continued in verses 19-20, teaching:

Moreover, I tell you that if two of you will agree on earth as touching anything that they will ask, it will be done for them of My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in their midst.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹⁴ Isaiah 22:20-25 Paraphrase

⁴⁹⁵ Revelation 3:7 NET

⁴⁹⁶ Matthew 18:19–20

To have been gathered together in the name of *Yeshuah*, which was the divine temple Jesus raised up for humankind, was accomplished by worship. The importance of dwelling together in unity was stressed in the Hebraic Tradition as this allowed for entry into the *aiona*.

In Psalm 133, David wrote:

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that came down upon the skirt of his garments; like the dew of Hermon, that comes down upon the mountains of Zion: For there, *Yehovah* commanded the blessing, which is life of the *aiona*.⁴⁹⁷

To have been anointed with oil was conveyed by the Greek term "*christos*." Although we recognize that this was a title given to Jesus, this anointing was discoverable by humble seekers of *Yehovah* who went out of their way to avoid conflict with others around them. The importance of such unity as this had bearing upon entry into the *aiona*, was underscored by Peter.

Husbands, in the same way, treat your wives with consideration as the weaker partners and show them honor as fellow heirs of the grace of life. In this way nothing will hinder your prayers.⁴⁹⁸

When Jesus had spoken these Words, He went forth with His disciples over the Kidron Brook, where was a garden, into which He entered, Himself and His disciples. Now Judas also, who betrayed Him, knew the place: for Jesus had often gone there with His disciples. Judas then, having received the band *of soldiers*, and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth, and said to them, Who do

⁴⁹⁷ Psalm 133

⁴⁹⁸ 1 Peter 37 NET

you seek? They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said, I am He. And Judas also, who betrayed Him, was standing with them. When therefore He said, I am He, they went backward, and fell to the ground. Again, therefore, He asked them, Whom do you seek? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I told you that I am He; if therefore you seek Me, let these go their way: so that the Word might be fulfilled which He spoke, "Of those whom You have given Me, I lost not one."⁴⁹⁹

Simon Peter therefore having a sword drew it, struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. Now the servant's name was Malchus. Jesus therefore told Peter, Put the sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given Me?⁵⁰⁰

So the band and the chief captain, and the officers of the Jews, seized Jesus and bound Him, and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. Now Caiaphas was the one who counseled the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.⁵⁰¹

And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and *so did* another disciple. Now that disciple was known by the high priest, and entered in with Jesus into the court of the high priest. But Peter was standing at the door outside. So the other disciple, who was known by the high priest, went out and spoke to the woman door keeper and brought in Peter. The maid therefore that kept the door asked Peter, Are you also *one* of this Man's disciples? He replied, I am not. Now the servants and the officers were standing *there*, having made a fire of coals; for it was cold; and they were warming themselves: and Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself.⁵⁰²

⁴⁹⁹ John 18:1–9

⁵⁰⁰ John 18:10–11

⁵⁰¹ John 18:12–14

⁵⁰² John 18:15–18

The high priest therefore asked Jesus about His disciples, and regarding His teaching. Jesus answered, I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues and in the temple; where all the Jews come together. I spoke nothing in secret. Why then do you question Me? Ask them. They have heard what I taught. They know the matters I discussed. When He had said this, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, asking, Is this the manner in which You should answer the high priest? Jesus replied, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why did you hit Me? Annas therefore sent Him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.⁵⁰³

I need to pause here to observe that Jesus restrained Himself from acting in the flesh. I have not found this to be so easy in my own life. Perhaps my own responses to others are a measure of how strongly or weakly I have embraced God's Word.

Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They asked him, Are you also *one* of his disciples? He denied, and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being a kinsman of the man whose ear Peter cut off, remarked, I thought I saw you with Him in the garden. Peter denied again, once more: and right then the rooster crowed.⁵⁰⁴

They led Jesus from Caiaphas into the Praetorium. It was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium, in order that they might not be defiled, but might eat the Passover. Pilate therefore went out to them, asking, What accusation do you bring against this Man? They answered, If this Man were not an evil-doer, we would not have delivered Him up to you. Pilate responded, Take Him yourselves, and judge Him according to your law. The Jews reasoned, It is not lawful for us to put any man to

⁵⁰³ John 18:19–24

⁵⁰⁴ John 18:25–27

death; so that the prophetic Word of Jesus might be fulfilled signifying by what manner of death he should die.⁵⁰⁵

Pilate therefore re-entered the Praetorium, and called Jesus, asking, Are You the King of the Jews? Jesus answered, Do you ask this of your own initiative, or did others say this to you concerning Me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to Me. What have you done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would fight, so that I would not be delivered to the Jews. But My kingdom is not from here. Pilate asked, Then, are you a king? Jesus answered, You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and came into the world; so that I should bear witness to the Truth. Everyone that is of the Truth hears My voice. Pilate asked Him, What is truth?⁵⁰⁶

An interesting point to bring up here, although it was addressed in *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom* regards the incongruity between the Eastern and Western perspectives which is demonstrated in John's Gospel as Pilate, a political leader who was ensconced in the Western-mindset, confronted Jesus.

Jesus contrasted what Pilate—trapped in the Western-mindset—thought was factually true about His kingship with His actual purpose in coming into the world: as a divine manifestation of Truth. Pilate's inquisition was brought to an abrupt end by Jesus because of the apparent incongruity between both men's conceptions of what constituted truth versus Truth. Aristotle characterized "factual information" as being "true" in contrast to the Eastern Hebraic paradigm which understood the "Being of God" Who comprised "Truth."

Even as John repeatedly contrasted being born of the flesh from being born of the Spirit, making this a contingency for walking in the kingdom or reign of God, he also repeatedly described the potential for divine-human relationship with the "Spirit of Truth."

⁵⁰⁵ John 18:28–32

⁵⁰⁶ John 18:33–38a

Such was availed to those ones who might enter into personal relationship with God by hearing His voice and responding with obedience. He reiterated the similar point in His epistle:

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loves is born of God, and knows God. He that does not love [others] does not know God; for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, because God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him...⁵⁰⁷

Over the first few centuries A.D., the divorce between Judaism and Christianity solidified. As the emerging intellectual religion advanced into the Greek thinking world, the Hebraic conception of “Truth” as the Spirit of God or the living manifestation of the Word passed from memorable usage and was forgotten. By the time that the Orthodox Christian movement defined its doctrines in the fourth century and beyond, they did so according to the Aristotelian Western perspective wherein its creedal statements became identified as intellectual factual “truth.” In the most austere extremes of religious correctness, emphasis was placed upon the notion that the cognitive acquisition of the so-called objective truths of scriptural knowledge held the potential to save humankind from damnation. Rather than experiencing the truth—being miraculously transformed by God in character and daily receiving help from heaven through a living, loving relationship marked by subjective divine intimacy—in many cases it was the voices of church leadership that usurped authority over the voice of God. The question under indictment—reeking of elitist gnostic heresy—is whether people are granted privileged status to be saved eternally merely because they had intellectual advantages and opportunities to acquire certain aspects of exclusive interpretive doctrinal knowledge.

Because the Eastern perspective embraced the understanding that the world was highly complex, there were always many diverse considerations and seeming incongruities that

⁵⁰⁷ 1 John 4:7–9

needed to be understood individually and accepted together. A variety of literary strategies were used to explain divine-human encounter in the narratives of Old Testament Scripture. Some of these seemed paradoxical to future generations. Although, the Hebrew and Aramaic Bibles were filled with many genres of literature that involved God, the Jews realized that He was not reducible into any number of valid doctrinal statements about Him. Because He transcended anything anyone could say about Him, ultimately, His presence had to be experienced.

Much of the Scriptures were comprised of narratives by or about those who encountered God. These were preserved by the ancients for posterity in order that future generations would learn how to seek and find God's presence and daily help.

The later Western notion that the entirety of the context of Scripture could be reduced to a handful of important doctrines was antithetical to the ancient Eastern mindset. Each verse of the Bible was written in the context of a letter or book with its own individual importance. The sacred Scriptures were written by a variety of people with differing perspectives, concerns, and life experiences. Each author demonstrated particular terminological and phraseological preferences, describing the same kinds of events dissimilarly. Together, these texts form a compelling witness to a tangible pathway in which members of a vibrant tradition walked—each one led into revelatory participation in God's kingdom reign. The text only had significance to the Hebraic thinking author so long as the likeminded reader understood that she or he should also imitate the patterns of relationship set forth repeatedly in the Scriptures. Readers were intended to acquire the understanding that they too could achieve the potential of a beneficent relationship with God if each would walk according to righteousness, seek Him daily, listen for His direction, and then obey when they realized His voice or activities on their behalf. The long line of historical examples and perspectives of God's relations with humankind also provided an eschatological record for the Hebraic Tradition so that when the Hebraic spirituality was dismantled and destroyed by the Deuteronomists, and further

eradicated by the purveyors of the Second Temple, its restoration would be expected in the future.

This was the message of the Latter Prophets, who foresaw the punishment and destruction of the counterfeit religious regime taking over in their own era—fostered by the worldly, lustful, greedy, selfish, abominable example set by the unrighteous kings. Those whose ancient ancestors of faith had been *Ish-rah-el-ites*, once again, became little more than complacent Israelites who could no longer see and hear God’s voice. The Word of God was taken from them, however it was prophesied by Moses and the Latter Prophets that one day the Word of God would return. Although Israel had violated the *Aionios* Covenant and were no longer at peace with *Yehovah*, He would provide His sacrifice so that, once again, those walking in righteousness before the eyes of the Lord could bless and break the bread in order to re-enliven the sacrifice.

By contrast, the Western practice of using the Scriptures as a divine knowledge base from which to strip individual verses out of historical and authorial context, from here and there or anywhere, then placing these next to one another in order to prove points of deductive logic that might have supposedly provided “true” doctrines, would have been absurd to the inspired biblical authors.

In order to make its enduring stand before the Western world, the Great Church was compelled to explain its identity in terms of non-contradictory logical doctrine. Setting themselves on stage as authorities in the Greco-Roman theater of “conclusions,” theological interpreters from the fourth century onward imposed a different kind of logic on Scripture than the logic used by those who composed the texts. Whereas the Eastern biblical authors employed reasonable inductive logic to create living narratives, the leaders of Orthodoxy were forced to impose foreign, rational, deductive, reductionistic logic on the sacred writings in order to determine meaning—so they could derive sterile “true” doctrines.

In the Hebraic Eastern mindset, were the question to have been asked bluntly, “Was Jesus God?” the response would have been a simple “Yes!” predicated on the accepted basis that He was a manifestation of the Word. If the alternate question were to have

been posed regarding His having been human, the equally valid reply would also have been “Yes!” There would have been little need to delve further into explanation, perhaps beyond merely considering some of the accounts recorded in Scripture that would substantiate each reasonable conclusion. Both responses were 100% acceptable depending upon the context of the passage being cited and the context of the historical present within which the question was being asked. Authority over any matter was confirmable by study of the Scriptures because God had spoken through them in many different contexts of time and amidst many diverse circumstances. The authors of Scripture were not confined by Aristotle’s narrow minded way of thinking. Instead, as was demonstrated by the case with Pilate and Jesus’ discussion of truth versus Truth, Eastern minded thinkers confounded those who were so pedantically limited by their adoption of the Greek mindset.

As Western-minded architects of Orthodoxy attempted to explain Jesus’ divinity in a way that was fitting with the law of noncontradiction, the matter became tediously complicated and was not settled without violence. Leaders were forced to resort to arguments about terminological meanings that did not even occur in the Greek New Testament. In the end, the apologetic for phraseology included in the Nicene Creed came down to the differentiation between two similar Greek terms *homoousios* meaning “of one substance with” versus *homoiousios* meaning “of like substance.” Christians were ridiculed for arguing over matters amounting to an “*iota*” of difference based on the latter term’s spelling that included the Greek letter *iota*. Herein, the interests of “Christianity” were being redefined according to the precepts of Platonic philosophy.

And throughout the history of the last 1,700 years, men like Calvin and Darby have added layer upon layer of human opinion to the lens of biblical interpretation until the point that the history of the Bible and the Hebraic perspective have been lost and forgotten.

And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and gave the judgment, I find no crime in Him. But you have a custom, that I should release to you a prisoner at the Passover. Will you choose that I release the King of the

Jews? They cried out, Not this Man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.⁵⁰⁸

Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged Him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on His head, and arrayed Him in a purple garment. They came and stood before Him saying Hail, King of the Jews! And they struck Him with their hands. And Pilate went out again, saying, Behold, I bring Him out to you, that you may know that I find no crime in Him. Jesus therefore came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment. And *Pilate* said, Behold, the Man! When therefore the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, Crucify Him, crucify Him! Pilate responded, Take Him yourselves, and crucify Him because I find no crime in Him. The Jews answered, We have a law, and by that law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God. When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, and he returned back into the Praetorium. He asked Jesus, Where are You from? But Jesus gave him no answer. Therefore, Pilate asked Him, Are You not speaking to me? Do you not know that I have the power either to release or to crucify You? Jesus answered him, You would not have any power against Me unless it had been given to you from above. Therefore those who delivered Me to you have sinned more greatly.⁵⁰⁹

Upon this Pilate sought to release Him. But the Jews cried out, saying, If you release this Man, you are not Caesar's friend: everyone who makes himself a king speaks against Caesar. Upon hearing this, Pilate brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment-seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, *Gabbatha*. Now it was the Preparation of the Passover—about the sixth hour. And Pilate said to the Jews, Behold, your King! They therefore cried out, Away with *Him*, away with *Him*, crucify Him! Pilate replied, Shall I crucify

⁵⁰⁸ John 18:38b–40

⁵⁰⁹ John 19:1–11

your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar. Then therefore Pilate delivered Jesus to them to be crucified.⁵¹⁰

They took Jesus and He went out carrying His cross to a location called The place of a skull, which in Hebrew is called *Golgotha*. There, they crucified Him, and with Him two others, on either side one, and Jesus in their midst. And Pilate also wrote a title and put it on the cross. And there was written, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. This title was read by many of the Jews because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city. It was written in Hebrew, *and* in Latin, *and* in Greek. The chief priests of the Jews asked Pilate not to write The King of the Jews; but instead, that He said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.⁵¹¹

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took His garments and divided them into four pieces, each soldier taking a part. Because His coat was seamless, woven from the top throughout, they agreed, Let us not tear it, but instead we should cast lots to see whose it will be. They did this so that the Scripture might be fulfilled, which says, They parted my garments among them and upon my vesture did they cast lots. This is what the soldiers did.⁵¹²

Jesus' mother was standing by His cross with His mother's sister, Mary the *wife* of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw His mother, and the disciple standing by whom He loved, He said to His mother, Woman, behold, your son! Then He said to the disciple, Behold, your mother! And from that hour the disciple took her into his own *home*.⁵¹³

⁵¹⁰ John 19:12–16

⁵¹¹ John 19:17–22

⁵¹² John 19:23–25a

⁵¹³ John 19:25b–27

After this Jesus, knowing that all things were now finished, that the scripture might be accomplished, said, I am thirsty. There was set there a vessel full of vinegar. So they put a sponge full of the vinegar upon hyssop and brought it to His mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up His spirit.⁵¹⁴

Because it was the Preparation of the Passover, so that the bodies should not remain on the cross upon the Sabbath (because the day of that Sabbath was a high *day*), the Jews asked Pilate that the legs of those being crucified might be broken, so *that* they might be taken away. Therefore, the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man, and of the other that was crucified with Him.⁵¹⁵

Now on the first *day* of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early while it was still dark. Seeing the stone taken away from the tomb, she ran to Simon Peter and the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him. Therefore Peter went out with the other disciple heading toward the tomb. And they both ran together, but the other disciple outran Peter, and arrived at the tomb first. Stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths lying there but he did not enter. Simon Peter arrived afterward following him, and entered into the tomb. He also saw the linen cloths lying, and the napkin, that was upon His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple also entered into the tomb. When he saw, he upheld faith. For as of that moment, neither of them knew the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. So the disciples went away again to their own home.⁵¹⁶

⁵¹⁴ John 19:28–30

⁵¹⁵ John 19:31–32

⁵¹⁶ John 20:1–10

But Mary was standing outside at the tomb weeping. As she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet of where the body of Jesus had lain. And they said to her, Woman, why are you crying? She replied, Because they have taken away My Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him. When she had said this, she turned back around, and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, Woman, why are you crying? Who are you seeking? She, mistook Him for the gardener, and said to Him, Sir, if you have carried Him somewhere, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away. Jesus said to her, Mary. She turned around, and said to Him in Hebrew, Rabboni? which is to say, Teacher. Jesus said to her, Do not touch Me; for I am not yet ascended to the Father. But go to My brethren, and tell them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God. Mary Magdalene went and told the disciples, I have seen the Lord; and reported what He said.⁵¹⁷

When it was evening, on that day, the first of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst, and told them, Peace *be* unto you. And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. The disciples therefore were glad, when they saw the Lord. Jesus therefore said to them again, Peace *be* unto you: as the Father has sent Me, so also, I send you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit: whosoever's sins you forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whosoever's *sins* you retain, they are retained.⁵¹⁸

Herein we take note of the firm restoration of the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace which began with Noah.

⁵¹⁷ John 20:11–18

⁵¹⁸ John 20:19–23

In continuity with Matthew's discussion of binding and loosing, we find a different way of describing the practice of divine manifestations of signs and wonders wrought by the faithful. Recall that the willful decision and choice to participate in sin gave license to entities in the spiritual world to bring sickness and demonic possession. Those who were delivered from the grip of the enemy by the strong arm of the Lord had the pronouncement of forgiveness stated over them. Forgiveness can be understood as a dominion. Participation in the pronouncement of forgiveness was possible by those having found their standing places in the *aiona*. As those who themselves had found peace with God, they could also exercise this dominion by forgiving others—a concept related to binding and loosing spiritual bonds of wickedness.

The combination of forgiveness with binding and loosing takes us back to the importance of the confession of sin or its exposure—such as was the case with the woman caught in adultery. James, the brother of Jesus, understood the necessity of confessing one's sins in order to facilitate miraculous healing (note James 5:16 and the surrounding context).

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, We have seen the Lord. But He said to them, Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.⁵¹⁹

And after eight days again His disciples were inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus visited. Although the doors had been shut, He stood in their midst, and said, Peace *be* unto you. Then said He to Thomas, Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach your hand, and put it into My side. Do not be faithless, but believing. Thomas answered and said to Him, my Lord and my God. Jesus said to him, Because

⁵¹⁹ John 20:24–25

you have seen Me, you have believed: blessed *are* they that have not seen, and yet have believed.⁵²⁰

In continuity with pronouncing forgiveness, so also the pronouncement of peace as a divine impartation was modeled for the disciples. Jesus instructed His disciples to first pronounce peace houses they entered in Luke 10:5.

And into whatever house you enter, first say, Peace to this house. And if a son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon him: but if not, it shall turn to you again. And in that same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the laborer is worthy of his hire. Do not go from house to house. And into whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you: and heal the sick that are there, and say to them, The kingdom of God has come to you.⁵²¹

The importance of exercising spiritual authority by verbalization is underscored. And the background of such verbalization conveyed by John was that individuals needed first to enter into the *qodesh* realm in order to see and hear what the Father was doing.

We take note of the lesson that with such revelation comes responsibility. Moses encountered the Word and was instructed to speak to the rock—from which water would flow to provide for the needs of Israel. However, Moses did not speak, but instead he hit the rock. God remained faithful to the nation and water gushed forth, however, the act of disobedience was not without cost for Moses.

The point is that no one can do any miraculous work apart from God's leading. In other words, it was not possible for Jesus to approach anyone anywhere at any time and heal them. There were dynamics of the spiritual world in play which resulted in even Jesus' inability to perform many signs and wonders (note Mark 6 and

⁵²⁰ John 20:26–29

⁵²¹ Luke 10:5–9

Matthew 13). Nevertheless, when the Word did provide leading, details were important.

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the anointed Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.⁵²²

Again we are continually brought back to the importance of the name of *Yeshuah* by John. On the one hand, impartation of the name of the Father was stressed by Jesus, but also the name of *Yeshuah* went hand in hand with the discussion of performing miraculous works.

As I ponder the scriptures, I continually think of Israel's ancient ancestors of faith who thanked *Yehovah* for His *Yeshuah* and wonder if there was more to that picture than has been passed down to posterity. My conclusion is that we continue to grapple with some missing background information.

Even so, we understand that David rejoiced in God's *yasha* in Psalm 9:14: "I will rejoice in Your *yasha*." And in Psalm 35:9 he cried, "My soul shall be joyful in the Lord; it shall rejoice in His salvation." Such worship, we note, was like a spring of living water erupting from within David—just as Jesus described. And in Psalm 27:1, the term *yasha* was changed and rendered as *yishi* due to Masoretic influences: "*Yehovah* is my light and my *yishi*—whom shall I fear?" Then, in Psalm 3:8, David again directly identified *Yehovah* with *yasha*: "*Yasha* belongs to *Yehovah*."

For David, we observe that *Yehovah* was inseparable from the manifestation of His *yasha* or *yishi*.

Psalm 18:2-3 reads similarly. David asserted that *Yehovah* was his Rock, Fortress, Deliverer, Shield and the horn of his salvation or *yishi*. Moses was instructed by God to fashion a silver horn, which, when blown, would summon *Memra*—God's Word—to help the people. And to obtain these aspects of life in *Yehovah*, David exclaimed: I will call upon *Yehovah*, Who is worthy to be

⁵²² John 20:30–31

praised: So shall I be saved from my enemies. Those who stood in the strong tower of *Yehovah's* *yishi* found security and rest.

Matthew repeatedly identified Jesus as the “son of David”—a point of concern that angered the Jewish religious leaders. John more candidly explained, “Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?” Later in his revelation on Patmos, John further identified Jesus with David. “I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.”⁵²³

Our concern is spiritual progeny: Jesus came to restore the spirituality of David, the *Ish-raah-el-ite*. David's understandings about worship of God's name with respect to *yasha* or *yishi* provide us with a link to the ancient knowledge base of worship.

Those of us with Western-minded instincts like to figure everything out. We want to better bridge the knowledge base of the Old Testament with Jesus' teaching. Just as Philo's writings are extremely valuable for bridging ancient Old Testament Jewish thought with first-century understandings—especially for comprehending the *Logos*, or *davar*—so David's Psalms offer similar insight into worshipping the name of *Yehovah* and His manifestation of *yasha*. In order to understand John's instructions regarding the relationship between the name of the Father and *Yeshuah*, we have to piece this back together ourselves. The deficit of the Aristotelian mindset, however, is that typically we try to convert Scripture into formulas. In the end, carrying out Jesus' instructions as they were conveyed by John comes down to establishing a firm, tangible divine-human relationship. Neither formulas nor doctrines are going to be of much use in that endeavor—if any at all.

After these things Jesus manifested Himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and He manifested Himself in this way. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of His disciples. Simon Peter told them, I am going fishing. They replied, We will also join you. They went forth, and entered into the boat; and that

⁵²³ Revelation 22:16

night they caught nothing. But when day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach: yet the disciples did not recognize that it was Jesus. Jesus therefore said to them, Children, have you caught anything to eat? They answered Him, No. And so He directed them, Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you shall find fish. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fish. That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved said to Peter, It is the Lord. So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, He wrapped his coat about himself (for he was naked), and cast himself into the sea. But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from the land, but about two hundred cubits off), dragging the net *full* of fishes. So when they got out upon the land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus said to them, Bring some of the fish which you caught. Simon Peter therefore went up, and drew the net to land, full of 153 large fish: and for all there were so many, and yet the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, Come, break your fast. And none of the disciples dared to inquire of Him, Who are You? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus had visited and had taken the bread, and gave this to them, and the fish likewise. This was now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after He was risen from the dead.⁵²⁴

So when they had broken their fast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me with brotherly love more than these? Peter answered, Yes, Lord; You know that I love You. Jesus responded, Feed My lambs. Then Jesus asked a second time, Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me with brotherly love? Once again, Peter replied, Yes, Lord; You know that I love You. And Jesus responded, Then you should take care of My sheep. And Jesus asked a third time, Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me with devotional reverence? Peter was grieved because He said to him the

⁵²⁴ John 21:1–14

third time, Do you love Me with devotional reverence? And Peter replied, Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You with devotional reverence. And Jesus replied to Peter, Feed My sheep. Very, truly, I tell you, When you were young, you girded yourself, and walked wherever you wanted to go. But when you are old, you will stretch forth your hands, and another will gird you, and carry you where you do not want to be. Now this Jesus spoke, signifying by what manner of death Peter would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, Follow Me. Peter, turning about, seeing the disciple whom Jesus loved following; who also leaned back on His breast at the supper, and said, Lord, who is he that is betraying You? Peter therefore seeing Him said this to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus said to Him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what does that matter to you? But you follow Me. This saying therefore went forth among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus did not say to him, that he should not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what does it matter to you?⁵²⁵

It is valuable to point out that the difficulty of attempting to sort out eschatological problems was an issue from the time of the disciples onward. My own perspective is that drawing these sorts of conclusions and such discussions are better off being avoided. Typically, this has led only to error and division. What matters is what we are doing with today—listening for and obeying the voice of the Lord.

This is the disciple who bears witness of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that His witness is true. And there are many other things that Jesus did; if they were all written down, I suppose the world itself could not contain the books that would need to be written.⁵²⁶

⁵²⁵ John 21:15–23

⁵²⁶ John 21:24–25

Epilogue

The unfolding narratives of the lives of those who proved themselves to have been the sons of perdition— like Cain, Pharaoh, and Judas—became such because of their choices, unchecked habitual behaviors, and resultant character. They loved darkness instead of the light and so their deeds were evil. They neither chose to come into the light nor did they subject themselves to the Lordship of the Word of God. Instead, they steadily became increasingly polluted and corrupt. These ones remained dead missing the target of entry into the kingdom—in contrast to those seeking to become *Ish-raah-el-ites*. Rather instead, those pursuing the treasure of Jacob willfully demonstrated their single-hearted love of God by meeting the needs of their neighbors and by their undaunted desire to please God.

Essentially, the Gospel of John was written to model the *aionios* life of the *Ish-raah-el-ites* and to call others to choose this path. This included celebration of the *kiddush* blessing and breaking of the bread, washing one's feet, and waiting for the coming of the Lord to drink of the vine with Him. Day-One should have been expected as a day of encounter with the light of the world, the

hidden manna of God, and the living water. Some would be called to walk out the three-day journey in order to be empowered to manifest the *aionios* life in the realm of Earth. They would be raised up on the last day of the three-day journey in order to see and hear God and to carry out His reign in the world.

As I am closing the book, it is pertinent to mention that many individuals may be inclined to reject the historical research of Margaret Barker regarding Josiah—on the basis that the Hebrew scriptures record that he was a good king. If any of us chooses ignore the historical records and interpretation of these which may tell a different story regarding Josiah, it remains to be undeniable that the Essene *Yahad* community had rejected the evil of Second Temple Judaism and had become separatists under the guidance of a *Zadokite* priest known as the Teacher of Righteousness. Therefore, disallowance of the historical literature Barker has uncovered and her interpretation does not affect the theses of this book. Nevertheless, because of her compelling insights and conclusions, and the impact of her work, it was vital to bring to light her research along with all of what has been lost and forgotten in the scriptures—identifying the *Aionios* Covenant, the *aionios* life, and the lost and forgotten spirituality of ancient Israel.

In that same vein of thought, Michael Heiser discussed very controversial topics and moved the discussion of the second power of heaven forward—and was rejected by many for his honest straightforward interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures. He was courageous to present what had been written by the ancient authors of the Bible, rather than cowering to tradition in order to maintain the acceptance of some of his peers. He did not need anyone's approval and was willing to faithfully examine and present the text of the Bible as it was written.

In this same regard, despite the curse which was placed upon Jews or others in posterity who might resurrect the two powers understanding—today, speaking in the authority of the second power, Who was personally known by Isaiah, we bind that curse and cast it away in the name of the *Meshiac Yeshuah*. This is broken so that the eyes of the world will once again see, hear, and understand. Herford and Segal were not unwilling to research and

provide insight, demonstrably proving that the second power of heaven had been acknowledged since the beginning of time. Today, we advance their agenda in rebuilding the ancient ruins spoken of by Isaiah and by doing what is possible to restore what was known regarding the ancient pathway into the divine temple.

All four of these individuals—in one way or another—chose to defy the monolithic institution of Orthodoxy in their pursuit of theological maturity. For my own part, I had never heard of any of them or their research when my eyes had become open in my studies during seminary—leading me to the comprehension that the *davar* was both the person of God and a dwelling place and that *charis* was the manifest presence of God. I was just too naïve to recognize that a few of my professors dismissed the significance of my findings—perhaps with attitudes more passionate than skepticism—and just kept moving forward in my work. Jon Ruthven gave me great encouragement along the way. Several years after publication of the first edition of *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the kingdom*, I felt vindicated when I ran across the simple fact that it is a common day understanding that the holy of holies, still today and all through time was recognized as the *davar*. And then later, after examining the work of Crispin-H-T-Fletcher-Louis and others, historical and religious records from *Qumran* explicitly explained that the *Yahad* entered into the *davar* as consecrated angelic priests. This was apparent in the worship guide left to posterity—now known as *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*. Finally, through the work of Barker, Heiser, Segal, and Herford—and with much encouragement of my friends and a significant number of professors, many of whom cannot be named—here we are. It has been quite a journey that began with the study of literature that has led to a pathway back to the ancient life of the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace.

When we examine the spirituality of the *Yahad*—in light of the theses of this book—the *Qumran* community practiced a seemingly identical spirituality that Jesus taught and that was expressed by John, His disciple.

John did not apprehend his identity as Elijah—who made way for the coming of the Messiah—Holy One of the *Ish-rah-el-ites*—although *Yeshuah* asserted this to have been the case.

Many years ago, a friend and independent scholar, Carol Wiseman, had commented that some believed that John the Baptist had been among the *Yahad*. It was one of those pieces of information that has rested on a shelf in my mind for decades. However, as I was pulling together the concepts in this book, a few realizations came together.

Recall from our discussion that the Hebrew term *midbar*—which in every instance I know of—is translated as “wilderness”—in the dissection of the Hebrew form—I have made the case that this could also in some contexts be understood literally as entry into the Word. Again we keep in mind the ancient and current association with the *davar* being comprehended as the holy of holies.

The *Yahad* lived in a realized eschatology. Scholars say that they lived lives having been convinced that—according to their namesakes dwelling together in unity—they were walking in the life of the *olam* that Greek scribes of the Bible translated with the phrase “in the *aion*.”

Although John the Baptist was not the renowned “Teacher of Righteousness (*tsedek*)” who founded the community, he was similarly understood to have been a teacher of righteousness. They believed they were walking in the Word (*davar*) while living in the wilderness (*midbar*). This is clearly reflected in their worship document, the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*. Through this text, we know they understood themselves to be transformed into angelic beings. On Pentecost—the 13th week of their fixed calendar year—they reverently entered into the *davar* through worship and a visionary reconstruction of the Temple. Just as they had departed into the Judean wilderness, so also they found their intended habitation in the Word of God. Amidst their praises, the temple of God was being raised up. And by dwelling in unity, they experienced the *aionios* life.

A central thesis of *The Lost and Forgotten Spirituality of Ancient Israel* is that Jesus never intended to start a new religion, but instead, the *Meshiac* Holy One of the *Ish-rah-el-ites* took on

human flesh in order to re-establish the ancient faith which Abraham had walked in and that was celebrated by David and many others in the Bible.

Just as traditional Jewish practice anticipates the return of Elijah—evidenced by setting an extra place at the table during modern Passover meals—it is plausible that God established the *Yahad* community to shape John the Baptist's upbringing. Within this communal environment, John would have been immersed in an emphasis on righteousness (*tsedek*) and a realized eschatology. This spirituality was lived out daily through communal washing, breaking bread, and gathering on the Sabbath in the name of *Yehovah*.

What we know from the scriptures is that John had had a life altering encounter with the Word wherein he understood that he needed to proceed out into the wilderness in order to begin calling Jews from the other religious sects back to righteousness. In essence—just as the *Yahad* understood themselves to have been the “Sons of Zadok (*tsedek*)—so also, John was calling first century Jews into the priesthood of the “*Zadokites*” as “ones who were intended to have become righteous priests.”

Therefore, pieces of the historical puzzle seemingly fall together with the considerable notion that John the Baptist had been raised in the spirituality that Jesus was restoring. Elijah had reappeared in order to set the stage for large-scale resurrection of the Abrahamic faith. He was the forerunner for *Yeshuah*—Who would re-consummate the divine-human marriage in the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace and Who would, once again, offer the *aionios* life to the faithful. Jesus called those with eyes to see and ears to hear to give themselves to lives of seeking, hearing, seeing, and obeying the Word—which meant walking in righteousness as *Zadokites*.

In the grand picture, we take note of the realized eschatological desire of *Yehovah* to raise up the entire nation as a holy priesthood who would enter and abide in His presence in the *davar*—just as had been His desire when he gathered the nation at the base of Mount Sinai in their three day journey.

While the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* provide posterity with a historical manual of what was taking place in their subjective

experiential worship, the *Hodayot* or “Thanksgiving Hymns” of the *Yahad* demonstrate how they worshiped like David, who had been supported by *Zadok* the Priest.

In the thanksgiving hymns of the Essenes—resurrection to life in the angelic realm of the *olam* or *aion* was re-enlivened. They understood—just as Paul had taught—it had always been by means of the sacrifice that ones in ancient times and in his own day were able to re-enliven the presence of God.

Although some may not see the forest through the trees and might dismiss the entirety of the concept of the *kiddush* for a variety of reasons, at many times meals were prepared and bread was broken amidst various forms of divine-human encounter and the working of miracles throughout the Scriptures—dating back to Abraham. Recall the context of his meeting with the three angelic beings. With the preparation of the meal and the breaking of the bread, the miraculous birth of Isaac was foretold. Recall that when it had not rained for three and a half years in Israel, Elijah commanded King Ahab to go prepare a meal and eat. He proceeded to obey—based upon the Word—and when the bread was broken, the power of *Yehovah* broke forth through the open veil into the world, and the rains were loosed. These and other examples set the basis for the Word of God being associated with bread or divine sustenance all throughout the Scriptures.

Those who walked in the ancient eternal (*Aionios*) Covenant of Peace stood in the light of Day One, counted among the heavenly host. To keep the veil open, they sought complete harmony with *Yehovah* and one another. They practiced sexual abstinence, consecrated themselves with the waters of the *Mikvah*, changed into pure garments before communal meals, and broke bread daily in worship. With their shame washed away, and by offering the sacrifice of their praise, they were entirely free to embrace the *aionios* fruit of consecration.

Reexamine a few verses from their hymnal that elucidate their ongoing celebration of a realized eschatology:

“But those who please Thee shall stand before Thee in the *olam*: those who walk in the way of Thy heart shall be established evermore.”⁵²⁷

Thou has revealed Thyself to me in Thy power as perfect Light, and Thou hast not covered my face with shame. All those who are gathered in Thy Covenant inquire of me, and they harken to me who walk in the way of Thy heart, who array themselves for Thee in the Council of the holy.⁵²⁸

For what is dust among al[l]... Ashes are in their hand: nothing at al[l] and thou hast shed [Thy Holy] Spirit over dust [to bring him into the company] of the ‘gods’ and unite them with the sons of heaven. And Thou has shed Thy [Ho]ly [Spirit] to atone for guilt for they are established in Thy truth [and Thou, my God], Thou hast acted wondrously for Thy glory.⁵²⁹

He “lifts up the poor from the dust to the eternal height, and to the clouds he magnifies him in stature, and he is with the heavenly beings in the assembly of the community.”⁵³⁰

I speak to you through the storm and the clouds. Be still. Know I am God.⁵³¹

And also of tremendous significance, more than a hundred years before Jesus’ birth, they upheld the understanding, “Thy

⁵²⁷ *Hodayot* 1QH Column IV, lines 21–22, Geza Vermes, trans., *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 7th ed. (London: Penguin Classics, 2012), 254.

⁵²⁸ *Hodayot* 1QH^a Column IV, lines 23–25, *Ibid.*

⁵²⁹ Quoted from *Hodayot* 4Q427.

⁵³⁰ *Hodayot* 4Q427 Fragment 7, Columns i–ii, Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 216.

⁵³¹ Quoted from 4QHodayot a.

name is my *Yeshuah* (יְשׁוּעָה), my rock, my fortress and [my] refuge [is my God].”⁵³²

From the *Yahad Hodayot* Thanksgiving Hymns, the practice of their continuing and enduring ascension into the spiritual realm was underscored as is demonstrated by these verses.

Some may ask, “If this community and spirituality already existed, then why did *Yeshuah* appear taking on human flesh to establish practices of sanctification that already existed?”

First we acknowledge that the Latter Prophets spoke of a small faithful remnant who would preserve the faith and spirituality of the ancient *Ish-rah-el-ites*. The *Yahad* community identified themselves as having obtained this prophetic identity.⁵³³

So then on one level, just as Daniel and the Latter Prophets had foretold, the fraudulent imposturous apparition of Second Temple Judaism was about to be destroyed. Although the religious order sought to have Jesus killed and made way for the crucifixion of the Holy One Who had dwelt in the clouds, their malevolent actions instead returned *Mashiach Yeshuah* back to His holy throne in the cloud. In three days, He rebuilt the holy temple in the *olam* or the *aion*—an authentic spiritual location for the gathering of the faithful—from whence the righteous or the *tsedek* could again find places of rulership over the earth in God’s Kingdom. While such ones still remained living on the earth, they tangibly walked in the *aionios* life—finding themselves having been transformed and dwelling amidst the angelic heavenly host.

With the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, *Yehovah’s* desired nation of priests at Mount Sainai began to be raised up. And moreover, the actions of the Second Temple priests, in murdering

⁵³² 1QH^a IX, 29, in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, ed. and trans. Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar (Leiden: Brill; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997–1998), 1:156–157. Note that in the translation by Martínez and Tigchelaar, “*Yeshuah*” is rendered theologically rather than spiritually using the term “salvation.”

⁵³³ Alex P. Jassen, “The Dead Sea Scrolls Community,” *Bible Odyssey*, June 20, 2017, <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/articles/the-dead-sea-scrolls-community/>.

the Holy Righteous King, brought about legal forfeiture of the nations. The Son of God from the heavens paid the redemptive price for the nations by freely offering His blood for theirs.

In this part of the spiritual equation, we take into account long-standing problems which had endured in the spiritual world with the rebellion of the heavenly host and all that had taken place at Shinar when God separated the nations by imposing different languages upon them—having also assigned geopolitical angelic beings to oversee each division. *Yehovah* had appointed Himself through the intermediary of the Holy One, His *Memra*, or the Word, to look after, protect, and to guide the Hebrews. He desired to lead them into *tsedek* or righteousness that they might eventually be prepared and consecrated as a nation of priests—empowered to assume authority over the fallen geopolitical ruling powers as they stood both in the *aion* and yet dwelt upon the earth. They would act in authority judging and binding disobedient angels in the realm of the spirit, while loosing the will of *Yehovah* upon the earth. In good-Wording or blessing the nations by spiritual means in the *aion* and by actively meeting the physical needs of the disenfranchised upon the earth, God's holy children would complete the calling given to Abraham.

However, the problem of the rebellious heavenly host, who taught evil to the nations—thereby leading them to whoredom and apostasy from their covenant marriage to *Yehovah*—had to be dealt with.

By choosing disobedience, and by committing themselves to walk in a covenant of darkness regarding their adulterous sins—keeping these secret—individuals had literally given themselves over as legal possessions to the angelic enemies of *Yehovah*. And as we take note in the eschatological pronouncements of the Latter Prophets, a redemptive price would have to be paid in order for the nation of Israel to once again be counted as the possession of *Yehovah*.

So then the re-purchase of humankind was accomplished by the offering of *Meshiac Yeshuah*—the Holy One known by Isaiah. The Father had to give up something worthy of the purchase price for nations of wayward people. Although we cannot clearly see the

economic relationship of bondage to adversarial angelic or spiritual beings, we do apprehend the dark fruit of the enemy of humankind in the lawless lives of those who miss the mark of entry into the Kingdom of God. The mis-deeds of humankind and each one's choice to either humbly confess their sins or their stubborn refusal demonstrates just exactly to Whom each of us belongs. God's children would ultimately prove their authenticity as His sons and daughters by their actions. Such ones would pass through the gateway *Yeshuah* prepared for each person to enter into the *aionios* life. In His sacrificial offering, *Meshiac Yeshuah's* flesh became the torn veil through which the faithful might enter into the *aiona*. Having been re-born of the Truth, they would walk in the means of empowerment that the Pharisee Nicodemus had sought Jesus to understand.

John's baptism functioned much like the temple priests' use of the *laver*, purifying the penitent by passage through water. In this ritual, the confessor's defiled identity was exposed and put to death through verbalizations of their wickedness and by symbolic drowning. Emerging from the water, the seeker of restoration as a child of *Yehovah* was raised to new life above the water. This resurrection allowed them to celebrate the *kiddush* on the Sabbath—as ones receiving ears to hear and eyes to see, or the *neshamah yeterah*—in order to experience the power of the heavenly realm, meeting the Holy One within the sacred cloud. Ultimately, this act gathered them into a grand assembly—joining what the author of Hebrews referenced as the “cloud of witnesses”—uniting the faithful with the multitude of loyal souls who had already departed the earth for the *aiona*.

This possession of the *Ish-raah-el-ites*—the treasure of Jacob—had been apprehended and celebrated between the time of Abraham and into the first century A.D. Nevertheless, in 90 A.D. Nevertheless, the remnant of religio-politically-minded Jewish survivors of the destruction of the Second Temple—ones who did not understand Isaiah's *Mashiac Yehsuhah*, and who sought to eliminate the connection between *Yeshuah* as the fleshly incarnation of the second power of heaven—took action at *Yavneh* in 90 A.D.—Who was understood to have taken on human flesh.

And in their vast ignorance due to the plethora of factors discussed herein, the very well-intended bishops of early Orthodoxy further set Christendom far off course from the understandings and intentions of Jesus. While we should be tremendously thankful for the Orthodox tradition that preserved the Bible—and valuable, albeit flawed religious understandings—what they have passed down to posterity is only a dim shadow of what has been lost and forgotten.

Selah

In a final word to my Jewish audience, the point is emphasized that whatever impression has been passed down to you about Jesus, He did not teach the dogmas and doctrines that were created during the historical development of Christendom. Neither did He replace Moses' teachings with a gnostic/intellectual dispensationalist religion. We take note from the writings of John that *Yeshuah* had sought to restore Hebraic faithfulness and spirituality that was at the heart of Moses' instruction, and that had continued among the *Yahad* remnant at *Qumran*. All of this was the treasured possession of your people long before the birth of Jesus. It should be yours once again. Rather than settling for ceremonial religion and a distant God, it is time to break off any shackles and to taste the heavenly gift of the *manna* of His Word—which was proclaimed by Isaiah. Day-One is available for those who are desperate to find all that our heavenly Father offers as our intended inheritance from the foundation of the world.

In all of this treatise—my hope for Christian and Jew alike—is that both contingencies will once again discover their intended identity and become united as *Ish-rah-el-ites*, dwelling together in unity so that the angelic anointing of Day-One will flow from *hemeron* and that all will experience the *olam* or the *aionios* life.

There is an old Christian folk song traced back to the African American spiritual tradition with the lyrics:

Let us break bread together on our knees; Let us break bread together on our knees; When I fall on my knees, with my face to the rising sun, Oh, Lord, have mercy on me.

The song continues with the second and third stanzas: *“Let us drink wine together on our knees,”* and *“Let us praise God together on our knees.”*

The Hebrew term *“barak”* means both to kneel and to bless. Perhaps this is our starting point and posture as we seek entry into the *aionios zoe*.

Index

The Lost and Forgotten Spirituality of Ancient Israel (Books One & Two)

Part I: Academic Subject & Author Index

A

- **Abomination of Desolation** [57–60, 436–438, 590, 670]
- **Abraham (Patriarch, c. 20th–18th century BCE)** [13, 22, 32, 46, 114, 124, 182, 336, 407, 464, 478, 507, 513–514, 554, 610–615]
 - Covenant with *Yehovah* [22, 32, 114, 182, 478, 513–514, 554, 610–615]
 - Offering of Isaac at Mount Moriah [336, 464, 507, 610–615]
 - Three-day journey of [13, 99, 336, 464, 610–615]
- **Ahaz (King of Judah, r. c. 732–716 BCE)** [557]
- **Aiona (αἰῶνα) / Olam (עוֹלָם)** [, 81, 68, 50, 46, 31, 26, 17, 11, 7, 4, 120, 134, 151, 203, 226, 253, 290–301, 318, 340, 396, 482, 555, 572, 604, 850–858, 908–913]
 - Defined as spatial spiritual location / heavenly throne room [31, 60, 138, 208, 244, 524–525, 555, 562–563, 642–644, 684–686, 701–703, 850–852]
 - Day-One of creation connection [138, 524–525, 562–563, 642–644, 701–703, 850–852]
 - Entry via consecration, worship, and breaking of bread [68, 81, 191, 227–229, 308, 508–509, 520–526, 541, 559, 613, 620, 655–657, 695–697, 700–702, 721]
- **Aionios Covenant of Peace** [4, 15, 21, 28, 31, 34, 52, 61, 84, 111–116, 124, 131, 181, 222, 239, 276, 313, 425, 501, 538, 540, 545, 603, 644]
 - Established with Noah [61, 80–84, 114–115, 186, 291, 541, 567]
 - Extension to Abraham and David [22, 32, 114, 185–186, 260, 501, 512, 554, 905]

- Re-establishment through Jesus [21, 111, 260, 336, 538, 541, 644, 730]
- **Aionios Zoe (ζωὴ αἰώνιος) / Ancient Life** [31, 60, 134, 208, 244, 288, 299, 356, 484, 562–563, 642–644, 684–686, 701–703]
- **Altars / High Places** [10, 46, 59, 91–95, 101, 114, 128, 134–136, 143, 146, 152, 179, 186, 365, 465, 558–559]
- **Amos (Prophet, 8th century BCE)** [15, 29, 31, 112–115, 159, 238, 359, 512, 538, 540, 663, 981]
 - Famine of the Word (Amos 8:11) [512, 663, 981]
 - Restoration of the fallen tent of David (Amos 9:11) [512, 513, 663]
- **Ananias (Disciple at Damascus)** [124, 609–626, 612]
- **Angel of the Lord / Angel of Yehovah** [35, 47–48, 75, 94, 105, 146, 170, 254, 558, 583, 612]
- **Angelification / Transformation into Spiritual Beings** [111, 145, 211, 224, 278, 447–448, 524, 582, 620, 636, 644–647, 724, 726]
- **Antiochus IV Epiphanes (c. 215–164 BCE)** [138, 339–340, 340, 342, 522–528, 624–627]
- **Arabia (Refuge of Zadokite/Melchizedek Priests)** [42, 62, 76, 109, 135, 214, 360, 381]
- **Aristotelian Logic / Greek Rationalism** [10, 108, 143–144, 152, 152–153, 165, 18, 33–34, 43, 152–153]
- **Assyria / Assyrian Captivity** [36, 64, 338, 347, 502]
- **Athanasius (Roman Orthodox Bishop, c. 296–373 CE)** [10, 108, 143–144, 152, 152–153, 165, 33–34, 43, 45]

B

- **Babel (Tower of)** [31, 116, 667]
- **Babylon / Babylonia (Captivity & Whore of)** [36, 60, 64, 74, 109, 173, 231, 338, 347, 380, 502]
- **Baptism / Cleansing Washings (Taher / Mikvah)** [219, 263, 280, 296, 337, 379, 402–404, 403, 414, 508, 803–806]
- **Barker, Margaret (Scholar, b. 1944)** [xi, 62, 95, 134, 185, 461, 506, 522, 542, 559, 618, 626–628, 721, 857–858, 1013, 1026–1028]

- **Bashan (Mountains of)** [230]
- **Belial** [145, 358–361]
- **Beth-el / Bethel (Sacred High Place)** [25, 46, 134, 351, 358, 362, 477]
- **Bethany** [607, 935]
- **Bethlehem / Ephrathah (House of Bread)** [36, 137, 187, 364, 557, 671, 672]
- **Birkat HaMinim (Curse on Heretics at Yavneh)** [37, 53]
- **Bread of Heaven / Lechem / Davar** [120, 181, 32, 511, 536, 541, 559, 589, 592, 607, 638–640]
- **Bridegroom / Divine Marriage Covenant** [15, 29, 31, 112–115, 159, 238, 359, 538, 540, 545, 658]

C

- **Calvin, John (1509–1564)** [302–306, 310, 714–716]
- **Cana of Galilee / Cana (Water into Wine Miracle)** [420, 563, 608, 860]
- **Canaan / Chennan (Land of Inheritance & Grace)** [42, 276, 481, 632, 651]
- **Chaldea / Ur of the Chaldeans** [403, 469, 557]
- **Charis (χάρις) / Chen (יְחֵן) / Grace** [28, 43–44, 48–49, 183–186, 579–581, 752–754, 770–771]
 - Defined as tangible manifest presence / miraculous power [28, 43, 183–186, 579–581]
 - Contrasted with passive “unmerited favor” or Greek redefinitions [28, 43, 183, 579]
- **Charismata (Spiritual Gifts)** [28–29, 54, 86, 176–177, 304, 352, 489, 579–581, 584–586, 752–754, 770–771]
- **Chiastic Structure (Literary Device & Insider Knowledge)** [478, 624, 650, 935]
- **Clement of Alexandria (c. 150 – c. 215 CE)** [728, 736, 863, 973, 1026]

- **Cloud (Divine Dwelling / *Shekinah*)** [4, 15, 34, 48, 52, 68, 88, 108, 111, 131–135, 187, 190, 209, 218–220, 232, 235–238, 279, 304, 313, 354, 400, 432, 537, 559, 606, 615–620]
 - Seat of the Second Power of Heaven [15, 48, 88, 131, 218, 537, 615]
 - Pillar of cloud and fire [187, 245, 251, 282]
 - Transfiguration [236, 447, 620]
- **Council of *Yavneh* (Jamnia, 90 A.D.)** [37, 53]

D

- **Damascus / Road to Damascus (Paul's Encounter)** [51, 76, 109, 124, 360, 419, 609–626, 612]
- **Darby, John Nelson (1800–1882) / Dispensationalism** [33, 119–121, 302–306, 310, 313–315, 321–324, 339, 356–358, 363–369, 376–383, 754–756, 767, 946]
- **David (King of Israel, r. c. 1010–970 BCE)** [15, 54, 61, 113, 120, 182, 194, 238, 276, 359, 507, 512, 521, 560, 615–617]
 - Priestly Order of *Melchizedek* celebration [61, 113, 182, 560]
 - Restoration of the Tabernacle/Tent of David [512, 513, 663]
- ***Davar* (דָּבָר) / *Memra* (מְאֵמְרָא) / Word of God** [25, 51, 68, 138, 146, 182, 227, 290, 353, 358, 361, 501, 562, 624–627, 642, 725, 855]
 - As the Holy of Holies / Spatial Sanctuary [51, 146, 227, 290, 358, 562, 642, 725]
 - Etymological link to *Midbar* (Wilderness) [624–627, 659]
- **Day-One (*Yom Echad* / *Yom Hamerison* / *Hemeron*)** [138, 318, 320, 524–525, 562–563, 642–644, 684–686, 701–703, 850–852]
 - Creation of light and heavenly angelic council [138, 320, 524, 642, 850]
- **Dead Sea Scrolls / Qumran Community** [5, 139, 145, 160, 186, 317, 357–361, 411, 523, 600, 648, 908–913]
- **Deuteronomists / Deuteronomistic History** [18, 68, 70, 73, 78, 86, 134, 556–559, 588–592, 684]

- **Dionysius / Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (c. late 5th–early 6th century CE)** [728, 863, 1028]

E

- **Eden / Edenic Life** [16, 24, 33, 161–162, 204, 231–233, 322, 324, 483, 634]
- **Egypt / Nile River** [119, 173, 186, 194, 283, 313, 351, 413, 601]
- **Eis Ton Aiona (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα)** [290–301, 462–486, 847–860]
 - Spatial rendering (“into the heavenly realm/*aiona*”) vs. chronological (“forever”) [290, 462, 847]
- **El Elyon (אֱלֹהִים עֶלְיוֹן) / God Most High / Ancient of Days** [47, 72, 87, 254, 556]
- **Elijah (Prophet, 9th century BCE)** [46, 236, 447, 536, 620]
- **Elohim (אֱלֹהִים)** [952, 762, 745]
 - As spatial residence designation for heavenly assembly [745, 952]
- **Emunah (אֱמוּנָה) / Pisteuo (πιστεύω)** [7–8, 33–36, 154–155, 161–162, 243–246, 577–579, 765, 773–775, 822–823]
 - Relational loyalty and orthopraxy vs. intellectual cognitive belief [7, 33, 154, 243, 577]
- **Enoch (Patriarch)** [145, 346, 555]
- **Epiphanius (Roman Orthodox Bishop, c. 310/320–403 CE)** [10, 18, 33–34, 43, 45, 108, 143–144, 152–153, 165, 192]
- **Essenes (Yahad / Sons of Zadok)** [6, 138, 145, 159, 160, 295, 317, 335, 358–361, 411, 522–528, 531, 560, 581, 600–603, 647, 650, 831, 908–913]
 - Sacred meals and *mikvah* washings [145, 317, 528, 584]
 - Expectation of *Melchizedek*’s return [138, 361, 560, 591]
- **Esther (Queen, 5th century BCE)** [25, 50, 124, 149–150, 310–311, 401, 407–420, 472, 479–481, 543–546, 820]
- **Eucharisteo (εὐχαριστέω) / Calling Forth Grace** [28, 43–44, 178, 180, 183–186, 189–190, 211–218, 390, 479, 584–586]
- **Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260 – c. 339 CE)** [722, 1028]
- **Ezekiel (Prophet, 6th century BCE)** [454, 500, 625, 662, 803]

- Chariot of the Cloud (*Merkavah*) [68, 184, 591]
- Prophecy of the Dry Bones (Chapter 37) [939–942]
- Divine sacrifice on the mountains of Israel (Chapter 39) [439–440, 662, 890]

F

- **First Temple Worship vs. Second Temple Regime** [10, 51, 72, 101, 114, 135, 179, 320, 347, 556–559]
- **Fletcher-Louis, Crispin H. T. (Scholar, b. 1965)** [1014, 1028]
- **Foot-Washing** [118–122, 142, 181, 182, 190, 193, 326, 345, 500, 508–509, 972]

G

- **Galilee / Sea of Galilee** [470, 563, 566, 886]
- **Gentiles / Nations** [13, 134, 15, 112–115, 159, 181, 238, 250, 283, 333, 513]
 - Calling of Abraham to bless the nations [13, 114, 181, 250, 513]
- **Gerizim (Mount)** [109, 560]
- **Gethsemane** [618, 835]
- **Gospel (Hebraic *Tov Davar* / *Evangelion*)** [545, 547]
 - Defined as the restoration of the Word/*Yeshuah* [545, 547]
- **Gospel of John** [499–500, 511, 541, 559, 721, 818–840, 907–938]
 - Practical manual for discipleship and entry into the *aion*a [499, 511, 541, 721]

H

- **Hagar (Patriarchal Figure)** [424]
- **Hannah (Prophetic Figure, 11th century BCE)** [67, 108, 170, 449, 452, 655–657, 695–697, 700–702]
- **Hasmonaeon / Hasmonean Dynasty (c. 140–37 BCE)** [138–139, 339–342, 522–528, 613, 619–620, 624–627]

- **Hebrews (Epistle to the)** [13, 32, 134, 155, 181, 189–190, 220–222, 250, 297, 325, 511]
 - Superiority of *Melchizedek* order over Levi/Aaron [13, 155, 220, 511]
- **Heiser, Michael S. (Scholar, 1968–2023)** [xi, 35, 47, 88, 91, 145, 524, 542, 554, 641, 742–745, 1018, 1029]
- **Herford, Robert Travers (Scholar, 1860–1950)** [xi, 64, 85, 542, 583, 1013, 1029]
- **Hermon / Mount Hermon / *Hemeron* (Wordplay & Metaphor)** [137, 138, 317, 320, 508, 524, 653]
- **Hezekiah (King of Judah, r. c. 715–686 BCE)** [18, 101, 114, 134, 135–136, 146, 179, 214, 215, 320]
- ***Hodayot* (Thanksgiving Hymns of Qumran / 1QH & 4QH)** [527–528, 1017–1020, 1035–1036]
- **Hosea (Prophet, 8th century BCE)** [108, 464, 525, 685, 841]

I

- **Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 130 – c. 202 CE)** [714, 725, 1028]
- **Isaac (Patriarch, c. 20th–18th century BCE)** [336, 405, 407, 464, 507, 610–615]
- **Isaiah (Prophet, 8th century BCE)** [10–11, 15, 16, 111, 112–115, 119, 142, 157, 159, 557, 565, 661]
- ***Ish-raah-el* (יִשְׂרָאֵל) / *Ish-raah-el-ite*** [11, 13, 15, 112–115, 120, 134, 142, 151, 159, 160]
 - Defined as “the man who sees/fights to see God” [11, 120, 134, 151]
 - Contrast with mere physical lineage or Rabbinic rule-keeping [11, 15, 160]

J

- **Jabbok River / Jabbok** [53, 62, 103, 232, 351, 424, 452, 513]
- **Jacob (Patriarch, c. 19th–17th century BCE)** [13, 24, 32, 53, 134, 161–162, 181, 231–233, 250, 297, 351, 358, 452]

- Wrestling with the Word/*Memra* at *Peniel* [53, 134, 232, 351, 452]
- Renaming to *Ish-rah-el* [53, 134, 351]
- Passage of the Jabbok River [53, 103, 232, 351, 513]
- **Jason (High Priest, fl. 175–172 BCE)** [523, 624]
- **Jeremiah (Prophet, 7th–6th century BCE)** [15, 29, 31, 112–115, 159, 238, 359, 538, 540, 547]
- **Jerome (Church Father, c. 347–420 CE)** [330, 726]
- **Jerusalem / *Yeru-shalem* (“City of Peace”)** [27, 39, 46, 54, 60, 110, 134, 138, 271, 288, 338, 347, 382, 438, 471, 506, 526, 558, 623]
- **Jesus (*Yeshuah* / Rabbi of Nazareth, c. 4 BCE – c. 30/33 CE)** [5, 6, 18, 20, 23, 25, 30, 32, 34, 62, 66, 68, 70, 74, 80, 85, 108, 112, 115, 116, 122, 124, 126, 139, 140, 183, 202, 208, 220, 225, 242, 256, 262, 265, 317, 324, 328, 349, 351–355, 382, 387, 412, 415, 420, 444, 476, 487, 501, 510, 514, 517, 523, 548, 552, 560, 563, 580, 592, 605, 637, 641, 651, 657]
 - As High Priest after the Order of *Melchizedek* [139, 351, 560, 592]
 - Operational method of miracles (John 5:19) [514, 580, 637, 732–746]
 - Tearing of the Temple veil [220, 292, 474, 668]
- **Jethro (Priest of Midian, 15th–13th century BCE)** [22–23, 42, 114, 172, 361, 556–559, 762–765, 765–767]
- **Job (Patriarch, Older than the hills BCE)** [25, 293, 299, 398, 453–457, 460, 597–599]
- **Joel (Prophet, 9th–8th century BCE)** [15, 29, 31, 112–115, 159, 238, 359, 500, 538, 540, 658]
- **John the Baptist (c. 1st century BCE – c. 28–32 CE)** [15, 29, 31, 112–115, 159, 238, 29, 359, 424–426, 534, 627, 803, 1018]
- **Jonah (Prophet, 8th century BCE)** [124, 149–150, 219, 263, 280, 296, 310–311, 337, 379, 401, 618, 623]
 - Three-day journey in the deep [124, 219, 310, 401, 618]
- **Jordan River / Jordan** [226, 338, 427, 466, 516, 803]
- **Josephus, Flavius (Historian, c. 37 – c. 100 CE)** [831, 833]

- **Josiah (King of Judah, r. c. 640–609 BCE)** [18, 101, 114, 134, 135–136, 146, 179, 214, 215, 320, 556–559]
 - Genocide of *Melchizedek* priests & destruction of high places [42, 101, 135, 179, 556, 559, 728]
- **Jubilees (Book of)** [525, 642, 855]
- **Judas Iscariot (d. c. 30–33 CE)** [972, 1012]
- **Judges (Period of Israelite)** [10, 22–23, 32, 42, 114, 128, 172, 186, 361, 556–558]
- **Justin Martyr (c. 100 – c. 165 CE)** [87, 1028]

K

- **Kebar River / River Chebar** [454, 625, 803]
- **Kiddush (קִדּוּשׁ) / Qodesh (קֹדֶשׁ)** [, 157, 142, 124, 119, 16, 11, 10, 180, 181, 237, 731, 889, 972]
 - Re-enlivening (*Zachar*) of the sacrifice [180, 237, 731]
 - Entry into the *Qodesh* holy realm on the Sabbath [189, 237, 731, 889]
- **Kingdom of God / Kingdom of Heaven** [10–11, 13, 16, 119, 120, 142, 157, 180, 182, 184, 545]
 - Present earthly reality vs. post-death destination [10, 120, 182, 545]

L

- **Latter Prophets** [15, 29, 31, 112–115, 159, 238, 359, 538, 540]
- **Levitical / Aaronic Priesthood** [101, 114, 129, 135–136, 143, 146, 151–152, 155, 172, 179, 347, 556]
 - Centralization of Temple sacrificial system [101, 135, 179, 347]
 - Subordinate status to *Melchizedek* order [114, 151, 179, 556]
- **Logos (λόγος)** [106, 248, 590, 623, 627, 638–641, 850, 856–857, 983]
- **Luther, Martin (1483–1546) / Protestant Reformers** [20, 251, 252, 291, 302, 310, 630, 714]

M

- **Maimonides, Moses (1138–1204 CE)** [726, 1029]
- **Manna (Bread of Heaven)** [422, 436–437, 534, 575, 624–627, 638–640, 806, 863]
- **Marcion of Sinope (c. 85 – c. 160 CE) / Marcionite Heresy** [31–32, 112, 180–181, 188, 292–293, 321]
- **Mary (Mother of Jesus, 1st century BCE – 1st century CE)** [108, 242, 280]
- **Melchizedek (מֶלְכִּי־צֶדֶק) / Order of Melchizedek** [45, 114, 135, 136–137, 179, 220, 345, 361, 511, 523, 556, 560, 591, 858]
 - Ancient, universal, decentralized prophetic order [45, 135, 179, 345, 556]
 - Pre-dating Levitical/Aaronic priesthood [45, 114, 179, 556]
 - Administered by the Second Power of Heaven [136, 179, 560]
- **Menelaus (High Priest, d. 162 BCE)** [523, 624]
- **Merkavah (מֶרְכָּבָה) / Chariot Tradition** [68, 184, 591, 910]
 - Ezekiel’s vision of the throne-chariot in the cloud [68, 184, 591]
- **Meshiac / Mashiach / Messiah / Mōšîaʿ (מָשִׁיחַ / מוֹשִׁיעַ)** [–136 137, 516–521, 523, 540, 549, 557–558, 565–567, 614, 621, 624–625, 1014]
- **Micah (Prophet, 8th century BCE)** [5, 130, 147–150, 247, 461, 503–505, 510, 514, 589, 594, 670–673]
 - Prophecy of ruler from Bethlehem Ephrathah (Micah 5:2) [137, 671, 899]
- **Midbar (מִדְבָּר) / Wilderness (“In the Word”)** [41, 282, 334, 524, 616, 624–627, 648, 659, 1017]
 - Shares root with *Davar* (“In the Word”) [624, 659]
 - Spiritual retreat and testing ground [624–627, 648]
- **Miracles of Jesus & Disciples** [514, 580, 637, 732–746, 818–840]
 - Operational method (seeing and doing what Father does) [514, 637, 732, 818]
- **Moriah / Mount Moriah (Place of Isaac’s Binding)** [336, 405, 407, 464, 507, 610–615]

- **Moses (Deliverer & Lawgiver, c. 14th–13th century BCE)** [5, 11, 25, 35, 38, 39, 49, 53, 68, 74, 104, 113, 187, 194, 196–198, 204, 216–219, 286, 304, 339, 403, 425, 441, 449, 472, 484, 491, 501, 510, 513, 535, 537, 546, 562, 576, 590, 618, 625, 650]
 - Meeting God face-to-face in the cloud on Sinai [49, 187, 216, 415, 536, 618]
 - Appointment of 70 elders [46, 196, 204]
 - Tabernacle / Tent of Meeting setup [46, 187, 216, 618]

N

- **Nathanael (Disciple)** [61, 420, 622, 839]
- **Nazareth** [351, 526]
- **Neshama Yeterah (נִשְׁמָה יְתֵרָה) / Additional Soul** [189–191, 203–204, 312–313, 447–448, 508–509, 524, 613, 620, 636, 731, 1016–1017]
- **Nicodemus (Pharisee, 1st century CE)** [333, 512, 802, 861, 1021]
- **Nineveh** [417, 619]
- **Noah (Patriarch)** [61, 80–84, 114–115, 186, 205, 291, 541, 567, 609, 615]
 - Passage through water into the cloud [61, 80–84, 205, 609]
 - Rainbow / Bow in the cloud covenant [61, 80, 114, 186, 254, 567, 615]

O

- **Onias III (High Priest, d. 171 BCE)** [523, 624]
- **Origen of Alexandria (c. 185 – c. 253 CE)** [31–32, 36–39, 112, 180–181, 188, 292–293, 435, 528, 767]
- **Orthodox Christianity (Early Roman)** [4, 7, 12, 17, 18, 31, 43, 49, 101, 113, 142, 156, 163–168, 191, 205, 243, 267, 291, 300, 328, 330, 346, 361, 379, 416, 427, 439, 445, 528, 541, 550, 564, 577, 601, 648, 659, 767]
 - Reinterpretation of *Charis*, *Pisteuo*, and *Soteria* [12, 31, 43, 101, 142, 243, 379, 577]

P

- **Paul (Apostle / Saul of Tarsus, c. 5 – c. 64/67 CE)** [11, 33, 34, 51, 79, 80, 81, 127, 231, 244, 249–253, 286, 330, 370, 410, 412, 498, 532, 563, 590, 630, 634]
 - Heavenly ascension experience (2 Corinthians 12) [291, 563, 630]
 - Distinction between *Nomos / Takkanot* and *Charis* [81, 249–253, 330, 441]
- **Peniel / Penuel (Face / Presence of God)** [25, 46, 53, 133, 134, 232, 294, 351, 358, 362, 365, 452, 558]
- **Pentecost (Shavuot)** [46, 221, 353, 500, 559, 666, 831, 854]
 - Outpouring of the Spirit as restoration of *Melchizedek* priesthood [46, 353, 500, 666]
- **Peter (Apostle, d. c. 64–68 CE)** [236, 330, 412, 447, 532, 606, 620, 638, 972]
- **Philo of Alexandria (Jewish Philosopher, c. 20 BCE – c. 50 CE)** [xiii, 3, 94, 468, 470, 526, 537, 543, 562, 575–580, 590, 614, 621–629, 638, 673, 739, 760, 806, 856–859, 952–954, 980–984, 1033–1035]
 - Writings on the *Logos*, Manna, and the Three-Day Journey [468, 470, 614, 638, 856–859, 952]
- **Plain of the Vision (Plain of Vision / Moreh)** [46, 351, 478, 558]
- **Plato / Platonic Philosophy (c. 428–348 BCE)** [227, 228, 847–850]
 - Philosophy of Forms vs. Hebraic spatial *aiona* [228, 847–850]
- **Prosser, Peter E. (Scholar, b. 1945)** [xi, 542, 714–718, 1035]
- **Protestant Reformers / Reformation** [302–306, 310, 313–315, 339, 356–358, 363–369, 376–383, 630, 714–716, 754–756]

R

- **Rapture (Theory of)** [119–121, 22, 302–306, 310, 313–315, 327, 33, 339, 356–358, 437]
 - **Redemption / Redeemer** [29, 31, 112–115, 159, 238, 359, 538, 540, 545, 668, 1020]
- 1035

- **Resurrection (Hebraic Concept)** [124, 127, 149–150, 219, 251, 252, 263, 291, 295, 310–311, 500, 685, 820]
 - Entry into the *aion* while physically alive vs. post-mortem event [124, 219, 291, 685, 820]
- **Rome / Roman Siege of Jerusalem** [438, 592, 829]
- **Ruthven, Jon (Scholar, 1937–2017)** [xi, 542, 1014, 1035]

S

- **Sabbath (*Shabbat*)** [10, 188–193, 197–204, 237, 349, 435–436, 485, 731, 889, 906, 972]
 - Intended as portal into the *Qodesh / Aion* realm [189, 237, 349, 485, 731, 889, 906]
 - Healing on the Sabbath (John 5) [349, 435, 731, 889]
- **Sacred Meals (*Kiddush* / Last Supper / Communion)** [112–115, 129–130, 137–139, 191, 238, 528, 584, 638, 731, 972]
- **Samaria / Sychar (Jacob's Well)** [109, 513, 560, 562, 875]
- **Samuel (Prophet, 11th century BCE)** [15, 61, 113–115, 159, 359, 508, 577–581, 605–606, 619, 745, 765, 773–775, 822–823]
- **Sanhedrin / Second Temple Hierarchy** [18, 53, 101, 114, 320, 523, 556, 592]
- **Second Power in Heaven (*Memra* / *Davar* / Second *Yehovah*)** [4, 15, 20, 41, 42, 43, 44, 47, 48, 51, 52, 55, 65, 68, 70, 88, 90–98, 106, 108, 116, 117, 121, 124, 133, 143, 153, 156, 162, 167, 173, 187, 190, 209, 225, 229, 236, 240, 242, 280, 296, 337, 351, 353, 354, 365, 395, 400, 402, 406, 418–423, 434, 435, 444, 448, 514, 515, 523, 542, 545, 548, 555, 607, 615, 620, 622, 631, 635, 648, 657, 662]
 - Executive divine Viceroy / Son of God Most High [47, 65, 108, 351, 555, 615, 662]
 - Manifestation in the cloud and fire [48, 88, 133, 236, 400, 555, 615]
 - Ban by Yavneh rabbis (2nd century A.D.) [51, 91, 528, 583, 1013]

- **Segal, Alan F. (Scholar, 1945–2011)** [xi, 8, 37, 44, 64, 85, 91, 93, 100, 296, 379, 423, 435, 542, 562, 570, 583, 622–627, 648, 674, 952–954, 1013, 1035]
- **Shame / Guilt / Uncleanliness** [80, 226, 298, 528, 658, 806]
- **Shechem** [477]
- **Shekinah (שְׁכִינָה) / Shekinta / Yeqara** [5, 50, 90, 187, 237, 466, 605, 607, 615–620, 630, 946–949]
- **Shur (Wilderness of)** [424]
- **Simeon (Prophet in Temple, 1st century BCE – 1st century CE)** [108, 242]
- **Significance Above the Water** [63, 119, 315, 596–605, 803]
 - Chaos/mortality below vs. spiritual rebirth above [63, 315, 596, 803]
- **Sodom and Gomorrah** [33, 55]
- **Solomon (King of Israel, r. c. 970–931 BCE)** [46, 252, 347]

T

- **Takkanot (תְּקֻנוֹת) / Traditions of the Elders** [18, 53–54, 57–59, 70, 73–74, 81, 249–253, 330, 441, 556–559, 588–592, 765–767]
 - Man-made 600+ Rabbinic regulations vs. God’s inspired Torah [18, 53, 556, 588]
 - Denounced by Jesus and Paul [18, 81, 556, 588]
- **Targums (Aramaic Paraphrases/Scriptures)** [2, 3, 40, 48, 51, 88, 89, 96, 101, 106, 111, 131, 168, 173, 186, 188, 236, 237, 273, 401, 416, 419, 422, 466, 506, 543, 548, 605, 607, 615–620, 630, 663, 946–949]
 - Personification of the Word as *Memra* [48, 88, 186, 548, 946]
- **Teacher of Righteousness (Qumran Leader)** [660, 1018]
- **Tent of Meeting / Tabernacle** [19, 25, 46, 68, 129, 133, 161, 187, 251, 292, 507, 601, 618]
- **Three-Day Journey (Literary & Experiential Motif)** [5, 13, 68, 69, 122, 123, 143, 209, 299, 328, 336, 443, 450, 462–474, 506, 517, 561, 569, 580, 609–615, 627, 835–846, 858–860]

- Pattern: 2 days of preparation/fasting, 3rd day divine encounter/resurrection [68, 123, 143, 209, 336, 443, 464, 561, 609–615, 835, 846]
- **Torah (Kind Instruction / Ten Commandments)** [45, 51, 58, 149–150, 182, 237, 282, 310, 543, 563, 589–590]
 - First Temple definition as Fatherly instruction (*Entole*) [45, 58, 543, 589]
 - Ten Commandments as portal to the *Aiona* [45, 182, 237, 589]
- **Transfiguration** [236, 447, 620, 722]

V

- **Vine (Parable of John 15)** [100, 618, 934, 989]
- **Virgin Birth / Prophecy of Immanuel** [364, 557–558]

W

- **Whore of Babylon** [36, 60, 64, 109, 238, 380, 502]

Y

- **Yehovah (יהוה) / Sacred Name** [8, 27, 53–54, 57–59, 70, 73–74, 81–82, 170, 182, 195–197, 227–229, 556–559, 588–592, 655–657, 695–697, 700–702, 730–731, 825–826]
 - Prohibition on pronunciation by Second Temple authorities [53, 57, 70, 556, 588]
 - Re-enlivening the Memorial Name in worship [81, 170, 195, 227, 655, 695]
- **Yeshuah (ישועה) / Soteria (σωτηρία) / Salvation** [4, 12, 28–32, 36, 42, 55, 58, 59, 70, 72, 82, 84, 85, 113, 128, 138, 169, 190, 202, 214, 225, 248, 259, 265, 351, 353, 381, 386, 393, 414, 420, 445, 488, 498, 517, 523, 542, 551, 563, 633, 655, 657]
 - Defined as real-time daily rescue, guidance, healing, and provision [28–32, 36, 42, 58, 84, 113, 248, 381, 393, 542]
 - Distinct from post-death escape to heaven [36, 42, 113, 381, 542]

– Name of Jesus / *Yeshuah* [80, 517, 523, 565, 1018]

Z

- **Zachar (זַכָּר) / Anamnesis (ἀνάμνησις)** [61–62, 67, 81–82, 153, 170, 182, 195–197, 227–229, 655–657, 695–697, 700–702, 730–731, 825–826]
 - Action verb meaning to “re-enliven” or call into active manifestation [61, 81, 153, 227, 655]
 - Distinct from passive cognitive memory [61, 81, 227]
- **Zadokites (Sons of Zadok / *Benei Zadok*)** [5, 42, 117, 307–309, 316–317, 359–361, 522–528, 661]
 - Legitimate high priests of First Temple line [316, 522, 661]
 - Separation to Qumran wilderness [317, 359, 523, 661]
- **Zechariah (Prophet, 6th century BCE)** [4, 645–646, 650, 942, 982]
- **Zion (Daughter of Zion / High Place)** [27, 55, 60, 100, 110, 137, 211, 288, 293, 311, 356, 368, 460, 506, 560, 614, 647, 653]

Part II: Index of Ancient & Biblical Passages (Index Locorum)

1. Hebrew Bible / Old Testament

- **Genesis 1:1–5 (Day-One Creation, Light & Angelic Council)** [138, 318, 524, 562, 642, 850]
- **Genesis 14:18–20 (*Melchizedek* Blesses Abram)** [45, 114, 135, 179, 345, 556]
- **Genesis 15:1–6 (Word of *Yehovah* Appears in Vision)** [46, 351, 478, 558]
- **Genesis 22:1–19 (Offering of Isaac & Three-Day Journey at Moriah)** [13, 99, 336, 407, 464, 507, 610–615]
- **Genesis 32:24–30 (Jacob Wrestles *Memra* at *Peniel*)** [25, 46, 53, 133, 134, 232, 294, 351, 452]
- **Exodus 3:1–15 (Burning Bush & Memorial Name *Yehovah*)** [8, 27, 53, 70, 195, 556, 655, 695]

- **Exodus 24:9–18 (Glory in the Cloud on Sinai)** [49, 187, 216, 415, 536, 618]
- **Deuteronomy 6:4–9 (The *Shema* & Single Marriage Covenant)** [15, 29, 31, 112, 538, 545]
- **Psalms 110:1–4 (Priest Forever After Order of *Melchizedek*)** [61, 113, 136, 182, 351, 511, 560, 592]
- **Isaiah 7:14 (Prophecy of Immanuel & Virgin Birth)** [364, 557–558]
- **Ezekiel 1:1–28 (Chariot Vision at Kebar River)** [68, 184, 454, 591, 625, 803]
- **Ezekiel 37:1–14 (Prophecy of Dry Bones & Re-enlivening)** [939–942]
- **Amos 8:11–12 (Famine of Hearing the Word)** [512, 663, 981]
- **Micah 5:2 (Ruler from Bethlehem Ephrathah)** [137, 671, 899]

2. New Testament

- **Matthew 3:13–17 (Immersion of Jesus in the Jordan)** [226, 338, 427, 466, 516, 803]
- **Luke 1:68–79 (*Benedictus* & Horn of *Yeshuah*)** [108, 242, 517, 565]
- **John 1:1–18 (The Word / *Memra* Made Flesh)** [106, 248, 499, 590, 623, 638, 850, 907]
- **John 2:1–11 (Miracle at Cana on the Third Day)** [420, 563, 608, 860]
- **John 3:1–15 (Ascension & Rebirth Above the Water)** [63, 315, 333, 512, 596, 802, 861]
- **John 5:1–19 (Healing on Sabbath & Seeing What Father Does)** [349, 435, 514, 580, 637, 731, 732–746, 889]
- **John 14–17 (Farewell Discourse, Abiding Vine & Sacred Meal)** [100, 618, 934, 972, 989]
- **2 Corinthians 12:1–4 (Ascension into the Third Heaven / Paradise)** [291, 563, 630]
- **Hebrews 5:1–10 & 7:1–28 (*Melchizedek* Priesthood Restored)** [13, 32, 134, 155, 181, 189, 220, 511]

3. Dead Sea Scrolls & Pseudepigrapha

- **11Q13 / 11QMelchizedek** (*Melchizedek as Heavenly Deliverer*) [136, 138, 361, 523, 560, 591]
- **1QHodayot** (Thanksgiving Scroll / 1QH & 4QH) [527–528, 1017–1020, 1035–1036]
- **4Q400–405** (Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice) [1017–1020]
- **1QS** (Community Rule / *Yahad Discipline*) [145, 317, 528, 584, 908]
- **Book of Jubilees** (Day-One Creation & Angelic Orders) [525, 642, 855]

4. Aramaic Targums

- **Targum Neofiti** (*Memra as Executive Divine Presence*) [2, 3, 40, 48, 88, 186, 548, 946]
- **Targum Pseudo-Jonathan** (Creation & Covenant via *Memra*) [48, 88, 186, 548, 946]
- **Targum Onkelos** (Word of *Yehovah* as Divine Shield) [48, 88, 186, 548, 946]

Part III: Lexical Index of Foreign Terms (Index Verborum)

1. Hebraic & Aramaic Vocabulary

- **Aiona** (אֵוֶנָה) / **Olam** (עוֹלָם) — Spatial heavenly throne realm [4, 7, 31, 60, 138, 208, 244, 524, 555, 562, 642, 701, 850]
- **Chen** (חֵן) — Tangible manifest grace and wonder-working power [28, 43, 183–186, 579–581, 752]
- **Davar** (דָּבָר) / **Memra** (מֵמְרָא) — The Word / Second Power of Heaven / Holy of Holies [25, 51, 68, 138, 146, 182, 227, 290, 353, 501, 562, 624, 725, 855]
- **Emunah** (אֱמוּנָה) — Relational covenant loyalty and orthopraxy [7–8, 33–36, 154–155, 161–162, 243, 577, 765, 822]
- **Ish-raah-el** (יִשְׂרָאֵל) — The man who sees / fights to see God [11, 13, 120, 134, 151, 160]

- **Midbar (מדבר) — Wilderness / In the Word** [41, 282, 334, 524, 616, 624–627, 648, 659, 1017]
- **Neshama Yeterah (נִשְׁמָה יְתֵרָה) — The additional Sabbath soul for heavenly entry** [189–191, 203, 312, 447, 508, 524, 613, 620, 636, 731, 1016]
- **Shekinah (שְׁכִינָה) / Shekinta / Yeqara — Manifest dwelling presence in cloud** [5, 50, 90, 187, 237, 466, 605, 615–620, 630, 946]
- **Takkanot (תְּקָנוֹת) — Man-made Rabbinic regulations / Traditions of Elders** [18, 53–54, 57–59, 70, 73, 81, 249, 330, 441, 556, 588, 765]
- **Yehovah (יְהוָה) — The memorial sacred covenant name** [8, 27, 53–54, 57–59, 70, 81, 170, 182, 195, 227, 556, 588, 655, 695, 730, 825]
- **Yeshuah (יְשׁוּעָה) / Mōšîa‘ (מוֹשִׁיעַ) — Real-time daily rescue, healing, and provision** [4, 12, 28–32, 36, 42, 55, 58, 82, 113, 128, 169, 190, 248, 381, 393, 517, 542, 565, 633, 655, 1018]
- **Zachar (זָכַר) — Re-enliven / call into active physical manifestation** [61–62, 67, 81–82, 153, 170, 182, 195, 227, 655, 695, 730, 825]

2. Koine Greek Vocabulary

- **Aiona (αἰῶνα) / Aionios — Spatial heavenly realm / Covenant of Peace** [4, 7, 31, 60, 138, 208, 244, 290–301, 462, 524, 555, 562, 642, 701, 847–860]
- **Aionios Zoe (ζωὴ αἰώνιος) — The Ancient Life / Edenic continuing divine encounter** [31, 60, 134, 208, 244, 288, 299, 356, 484, 562–563, 642, 684, 701]
- **Anamnesis (ἀνάμνησις) — Active re-enlivening during worship / sacred meal** [61, 81, 153, 170, 182, 195, 227, 655, 695, 730, 825]
- **Charis (χάρις) / Charismata — Tangible manifest grace / wonder-working gifts** [28, 43–44, 48, 86, 176, 183, 304, 352, 489, 579, 584, 752, 770]
- **Eucharisteo (εὐχαριστέω) — Actively calling forth grace over bread/sacrifices** [28, 43, 178, 180, 183, 189, 211, 390, 479, 584]

- **Logos (λόγος)** — The divine Word / Personified *Memra* [106, 248, 590, 623, 627, 638, 850, 856, 983]
- **Nomos (νόμος)** — Law / human regulatory legalism vs. Fatherly instruction [81, 249–253, 330, 441]
- **Pisteuo (πιστεύω)** — Covenant loyalty / matrimonial commitment [7–8, 33–36, 154, 161, 243, 577, 765, 822]
- **Soteria (σωτηρία)** — Present earthly deliverance, rescue, and healing [4, 12, 28–32, 36, 42, 55, 58, 82, 113, 128, 169, 190, 248, 381, 393, 517, 542, 565, 633, 655]

Part IV: Index of Experiential Motifs & Methodological Frameworks

- **The Three-Day Journey Pattern (Preparation → Fasting → 3rd-Day Encounter/Resurrection)** [5, 13, 68, 69, 122, 123, 143, 209, 299, 328, 336, 443, 450, 462–474, 506, 517, 561, 569, 580, 609–615, 627, 835–846, 858–860]
- **Significance Above the Water (Chaos/Mortality below vs. Rebirth/Ascension above into Cloud)** [63, 119, 315, 596–605, 803]
- **The Four-Step Operational Method of Miracles (Seeing Father → Calling Grace → Re-enlivening → Authority)** [514, 580, 637, 732–746, 818–840]
- **The Two-Priesthoods Conflict (Decentralized *Melchizedek* Order vs. Centralized Levitical/Rabbinic Legalism)** [45, 101, 114, 135, 151, 179, 345, 347, 522, 556, 560, 591, 661]
- **Ascension into the *Aiona* During Earthly Life (Realized Eschatology vs. Post-Mortem Heaven)** [31, 60, 124, 138, 208, 219, 244, 291, 524, 555, 562, 630, 642, 685, 701, 820, 850]

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Also see: *Two Thieves in Paradise* © 2001 by Steven R. Service – an entertaining historical fictional account of the lives of the thieves before they go to the cross alongside Jesus—action, adventure, romance, comedy, tragedy and great hope for tomorrow. Perhaps 5 years after writing this script, I re-read it and laughed so hard it that it really surprised me. Before I was finished, I cried my eyes out. The story does not end at the cross. Note that the cover has nothing to do with the content. For my wife's birthday, I uploaded our picture to make this a gift for her, but then, I have never yet gotten around to changing the cover.

The screen play format allows for the production to be theatrically re-enacted on stage.

