

Lecture 15

Pharisees Scribes Sadducees and the Sanhedrin

5 In our journey of understanding the time of Yeshua and what was happening then, we will find ourselves taking some short trips down unexpected paths to see something wonderful or interesting things there are to see and learn about it. Today this path has us looking at the various groups talked about throughout the apostolic scriptures. Who were these groups and how should we understand
10 what they were and how they arose? This will probably takes us two to three weeks to fully study.

To begin, in looking at why we should be concerned with who these people are, it simply that if we are to understand the time of
15 Yeshua it means that we have understand who the players were and what their differences are. Being ignorant of this is like saying I understand Greek or Hebrew without ever taking the time to learn it. To understand the Gospels means we have to understand what was commonly understood at the time of the writing. Being
20 ignorant of this is like saying I do not care what the bible says. Let us go back to the first lecture and review this little bit of a story;

*So what does that mean for us today? I would like to use a silly song Yankee Doodle, you know the Song, Yankee
25 Doodle went to town riding on a pony and stuck a feather in his cap and called it macaroni. The song if taken as statement of faith; could have a number of interruptions. On the Fourth of July some Americans might say, the revolutionary soldiers were so hungry that they called their hats after their favorite food. The more fundamentalist
30 American Patriots on July 4th would eat their hats while calling them after their favorite food. While more Liberal American Patriots would eat all different types of pasta that might be called macaroni. The more conservative would only eat the elbow form of macaroni. The question then, what is correct understanding of it? We could see all sorts of divisions in understanding of the application of the song because it was taken out of context. So then what does it mean? If you look up in dictionary that covers older
35 meanings you find that macaroni refers to a person style of clothing in the 1700. That the American revolutionary soldiers look so bad compared to there British, the Americans were very plain. So while the American Soldiers
40*

45 *were on their way to battle the women would pluck feathers
to give soldiers to put in their hats to make them look
macaroni or simply put, to look better or fancier¹.*

50 *What does this story have to do with us today? It teaches us
that without the right context we can make text say what we
want it to. The human mind longs to explain things and
create meaning if does not have meaning that is clearly
seen by us today.*

55 So without understanding we will create a view of these peoples
that is incorrect. Being ignorant as Messianics is not acceptable
because we demand of ourselves a complete understanding of the
word of Hashem.

Excursus on Scribes

60 What is the history of this term and what was they did? The
history of the scribes is this;

*The scribes as a professional class of ‘doctors of
the law’ had their origins in the conditions of the Exile. It
was then that the law became the centre of Jewish life and
exiled Israelites occupied themselves in its study.*

65 *These early scribes cannot, however, have been
simply jurist in the narrowest sense (as they became in
later times). They were also wise men חכמים, the ‘men of
understanding,’ the ‘just men’ of Proverbs and
Ecclesiasticus².*

70 The best description of them is found in the book of
Ecclesiasticus starting in chapter 38 the writer makes the case that
these can be businessman in the normal sense;

75 *Sir 38:24-31 The wisdom of a learned man cometh by
opportunity of leisure: and he that hath little business shall
become wise. (25) How can he get wisdom that holdeth
the plough, and that glorieth in the goad, that driveth oxen,
and is occupied in their labours, and whose talk is of
80 bullocks? (26) He giveth his mind to make furrows; and is*

¹ This story I first heard from First Fruits of Zion’s [Introduction to Torah Club CD](#) which I recommend to all and found at the site ffoz.org

² [Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible Vol 4 pg 246](#)

diligent to give the kine fodder. (27) So every carpenter
and workmaster, that laboureth night and day: and they
that cut and grave seals, and are diligent to make great
variety, and give themselves to counterfeit imagery, and
85 watch to finish a work: (28) The smith also sitting by the
anvil, and considering the iron work, the vapour of the fire
wasteth his flesh, and he fighteth with the heat of the
furnace: the noise of the hammer and the anvil is ever in
his ears, and his eyes look still upon the pattern of the thing
90 that he maketh; he setteth his mind to finish his work, and
watcheth to polish it perfectly: (29) So doth the potter
sitting at his work, and turning the wheel about with his
feet, who is always carefully set at his work, and maketh all
his work by number; (30) He fashioneth the clay with his
95 arm, and boweth down his strength before his feet; he
applieth himself to lead it over; and he is diligent to make
clean the furnace: (31) All these trust to their hands: and
every one is wise in his work³.

100 Then in Chapter 39 we see the attributes of the scribe;

Sir 39:1-11 But he that giveth his mind to the law of the
most High, and is occupied in the meditation thereof, will
seek out the wisdom of all the ancient, and be occupied in
105 prophecies. (2) He will keep the sayings of the renowned
men: and where subtil parables are, he will be there also.
(3) He will seek out the secrets of grave sentences, and be
conversant in dark parables. (4) He shall serve among
great men, and appear before princes: he will travel
110 through strange countries; for he hath tried the good and
the evil among men. (5) He will give his heart to resort
early to the Lord that made him, and will pray before the
most High, and will open his mouth in prayer, and make
supplication for his sins. (6) When the great Lord will, he
115 shall be filled with the spirit of understanding: he shall
pour out wise sentences, and give thanks unto the Lord in
his prayer. (7) He shall direct his counsel and knowledge,
and in his secrets shall he meditate. (8) He shall shew
forth that which he hath learned, and shall glory in the law
120 of the covenant of the Lord. (9) Many shall commend his
understanding; and so long as the world endureth, it shall
not be blotted out; his memorial shall not depart away, and
his name shall live from generation to generation. (10)
Nations shall shew forth his wisdom, and the congregation
125 shall declare his praise. (11) If he die, he shall leave a

³ KJV original translation esword

greater name than a thousand: and if he live, he shall increase it⁴.

130 So here we see that it is someone who is devoted to the law that
is also someone more importantly devoted to the Hashem. The
scribe's job was to be a walking legal library: to know the history
of past decisions and then apply it for today. Today if you go to
most commonwealth countries or those that use an English
common law model you will see that past decisions influence
135 present decisions; these decision are found in a huge number of
books that are specific to the area of law that is in dispute. These
individuals would discuss how rulings were made and what there
affect should be on the decisions of today. This is what the oral law
is: this origin of the written oral law today. This is based upon the
140 text;

*Deu 17:8-11 "If any case arises requiring decision
between one kind of homicide and another, one kind of
legal right and another, or one kind of assault and another,
145 any case within your towns that is too difficult for you, then
you shall arise and go up to the place that the LORD your
God will choose. (9) And you shall come to the Levitical
priests and to the judge who is in office in those days, and
you shall consult them, and they shall declare to you the
150 decision. (10) Then you shall do according to what they
declare to you from that place that the LORD will choose.
And you shall be careful to do according to all that they
direct you. (11) According to the instructions that they
give you, and according to the decision which they
155 pronounce to you, you shall do. You shall not turn aside
from the verdict that they declare to you, either to the right
hand or to the left.*

160 It was role of the scribe to bring these past decisions to present
experience.

165 The scribes came to prominence at the time of Ezra and when
there were the Men of the Great Synagogue. At the time of the
Maccabean revolt, the Synagogue of the Scribes was very
important in supporting the revolt⁵. The scribes that are described
here are different than what you would have found as described as
a scribe anywhere else in the Roman Empire: those were simply
people that could read and write and were hired for that skill. Luke
call scribes more correctly calls them lawyers which would have

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid pg 247

170 made more sense to a Greek mind. This is as we would understand
them today. In fact today the Rabbi can render a legal judgment in
an orthodox community which is considered binding. The Beit Den
which Rabbis sit in, again renders legal decision on business,
marriage, divorce and other religious issues which are considered
175 binding.

We find the singular of the word "scribe" used 3 times the word
lawyer is used once in Luke 10:25; Matt 8:19; 13:52 and Mark
12:32. In *Mat 8:19-20* *And a scribe came up and said to him,*
"Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." (20) And Jesus said
180 *to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the*
Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." Here we see Matthew
scribe willing to follow Yeshua; we are not told whether or not he
did, just that he wanted to follow. The next one in *Mat 13:52* *And*
he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for
185 *the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out*
of his treasure what is new and what is old." Here Yeshua is telling
us that a Scribe who is trained for the kingdom is to chose what is
good from both the old and the new. This makes a lot of sense. The
Scribes who came into the kingdom were taking the treasure of the
190 old and apply in the new setting. Or use the treasure that was both
old and new. The next text is Mar 12:28-32

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing
with one another, and seeing that he answered them well,
195 *asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of*
all?" (29) Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear,
O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. (30) And you
shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with
all your soul and with all your mind and with all your
200 *strength.' (31) The second is this: 'You shall love your*
neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment
greater than these." (32) And the scribe said to him, "You
are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and
there is no other besides him."

205 In this conflict the scribe hears him in conflict with Herodians at
the request of the Pharisees, with the Sadducees and then scribes
enters the fray. It is interesting to note that he commends Yeshua
for his answer. Again we find Luk 10:25-37(this is also in Matthew
210 22:35) a lawyer in mentioned

And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test,
saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"
215 *(26) He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do*
you read it?" (27) And he answered, "You shall love the

220 *Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul
and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your
neighbor as yourself." (28) And he said to him, "You have
answered correctly; do this, and you will live." (29) But
he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my
neighbor?" (30) Jesus replied, "A man was going down
from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who
stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half
dead. (31) Now by chance a priest was going down that
road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side.
225 (32) So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and
saw him, passed by on the other side. (33) But a
Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and
when he saw him, he had compassion. (34) He went to
230 him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine.
Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an
inn and took care of him. (35) And the next day he took
out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying,
235 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will
repay you when I come back.' (36) Which of these three, do
you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell
among the robbers?" (37) He said, "The one who showed
him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do
likewise."*

240 Again Yeshua does not treat him as something repugnant but as an honest seeker of truth.

245 What is interesting in researching the word "scribes" we find 55 mentions of this word in Gospels and it is mention with either Pharisees, or the Sadducees or the chief priest and elders⁶. This lets us something that is interesting, that scribes were also divided along these lines and that also belonged to these parties. It should also be noted in most of these texts the scribes are shown in a bad light as hypocrites and evil. Yet one of the interesting texts is found in Mat 23:34 *Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town.* What is interesting is that scribes are included among those he has

⁶ (ESV) Mat. 2:4; 5:20; 7:29; 9:3; 12:38; 15:1; 16:21; 17:10; 20:18; 21:15; 23:2, 13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29, 34; 26:57; 27:41; Mark 1:22; 2:6, 16; 3:22; 7:1, 5; 8:31; 9:11, 14; 10:33; 11:18, 27; 12:28, 35, 38; 14:1, 43, 53; 15:1, 31; Luke 5:21, 30; 6:7; 9:22; 11:53; 15:2; 19:47; 20:1, 19, 39, 46; 22:2, 66; 23:10; John 8:3;

255 just condemned as having been sent by Him with a message of
repentance.

260 The message that comes through is that religious establishments
tend to be corrupting or corrupt. This is a fact that even the
believers in the end fell in to. It is message to leaders of any
organization that claim Yeshua as Lord to walk extremely
carefully. When then should we form an organization? To protect
the community there has to be accountability and responsibility. A
smaller community means less chance of this. A large community
265 of believers becomes corrupt when the majority of the leadership
becomes the same as main stream: it loses its crisp edge and it is
dulled by the majority of people that have no stake in the purity of
the movement. A small community of believers requires a
leadership that will be sharp and well informed because the
270 community of believers is sharp and well informed. There is great
burden on the leadership of CTOMC to be knowledgeable and
morally correct. This is because the community of believers is
committed to that same level of understanding and living and will
not tolerate inconsistency in leadership. So I know that all of you
275 refused the ignorance that was heaped upon you by the church,
being ignorant is not option for leadership or for members.

ⁱ This story I first heard from First Fruits of Zion's [Introduction to Torah Club CD](#) which I recommend to all and found at the site ffoz.org