

Introduction

Part 1

Knowing the God We Serve and
Who We Are in the Messiah

The purpose of the new Torah series *“Understanding the Covenant — Repentance Series”* is to gain a better understanding of the covenant that we have in Yeshua the Messiah, and how the covenant in Yeshua is related to living a repentant life that is directly connected to God’s Torah (תורה). In this context, I encourage people to know their Bible better, to ask questions regarding one’s faith, and to be able to identify the doctrine of men both in the pulpit and in the Scriptures as well. For example, *“are we living the way God wants us to live?”* *“How does this affect our relationship with Lord and with Yeshua the Messiah?”* *“Does our Father in Heaven and Yeshua the Messiah care about how we live?”* *“What did the apostles believe it means to walk in the footsteps of the Messiah and how is this connected to the Torah?”* (Romans 3:31) *“What does it mean to be under the Law?”* There are various covenants mentioned in the Bible, but the most well-known to the Christian world is the New Covenant. These two words, the *“New Covenant”* raises many questions for us, such as: *“In what way is this covenant new?”* *“Did this New Covenant replace a former one?”* And *“in the biblical context, does a new covenant supersede a previous one, and if so how?”* My hope is through this Torah series we will develop a framework for helping us to have a greater understanding of who we

are in the Messiah Yeshua.

In these studies, we will take a multidisciplinary approach by considering the history, the culture, the people, and the languages in order to help us understand the Scriptures and how to apply God's Word to our lives. In this Torah series we will examine the Hebrew Scriptures (Masoretic Text), the Aramaic (Targumim), and the Greek (Septuagint), coupled with studies in the rabbinic literature, the Talmud Bavli, Mishnah, and Midrashim, along with the classical commentators such as Rashi, Sforno, and Rambam, etc. It is necessary to see Yeshua as being firmly established within Judaism rather than as standing apart from it. It is also essential that the picture of Judaism not be distorted through the filter of centuries of Christian stereotypes and the developed theologies. The reason being, a distorted picture of first-century Judaism inevitably leads to a distorted picture of Yeshua the Messiah, who we are in the Messiah, and how we should be living our lives. Our goal is to immerse ourselves in the language, the history, the culture, and the people who lived in the time of Moshe, the Prophets, and the Messiah, in order to deepen our understanding of Scripture, increase our faith, and grow in our relationship with the Lord!

I want to begin the study by emphasizing the importance of "*Knowing the God we serve.*" There is a great deception that is going on today in various Christian theologies that are being brought together which create an artificial understanding (*a different understanding*) of both the Lord God of Israel our Father in heaven, His Messiah Yeshua, and the biblical descriptions of who we are as the Children of God. The most significant point I want to emphasize in this introduction is that theology permeates everything we believe. Our presuppositions, the theologies we have been taught from youth up inexplicably enter into our understanding of God's word and how the Word of God applies to our lives. For example, theology even enters into the translation of the Scriptures, and therefore we must not only know our bibles, but also to use multiple translations in order to recognize these things. I recommend going to the source texts, the Hebrew and Greek, while studying the bible. However it is also important to look at the various English translations of the Scriptures for the purpose of enhancing our understanding and to tease out the underlying theologies of the translators.

This may be demonstrated by the following example.

To emphasize the importance of “*Knowing the God we serve.*” The reason this is important is because of dispensationalism, we have been taught that the God of the OT was hard and cruel, and the God of the NT is different (*i.e. formerly we were under the Law and man had to earn his salvation, now we are in the dispensation of grace, etc*). Let’s look at *Jude 1:5* along side of seven English bible translations (NASB, NLT, ESV, BSB, BLB, NHEB, and DRB).

Jude 1:1-7

*1:1 Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ: 1:2 May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you. 1:3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. 1:4 For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. 1:5 Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the **Lord**, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe. 1:6 And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, 1:7 just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire. (NASB)*

New Living Translation

*1:5 So I want to remind you, though you already know these things, that **Jesus** first rescued the nation of Israel*

from Egypt, but later he destroyed those who did not remain faithful.

English Standard Version

*1:5 Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that **Jesus**, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.*

Berean Study Bible

*1:5 Although you are fully aware of this, I want to remind you that after **Jesus** had delivered His people out of the land of Egypt, He destroyed those who did not believe.*

Berean Literal Bible

1:5 Now I want to remind you, you having known all this, that Jesus, having saved at one time a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward He destroyed those not having believed.

New Heart English Bible

*1:5 Now I desire to remind you, though you already know this, that **Jesus**, having saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.*

Douay-Rheims Bible

*1:5 I will therefore admonish you, though ye once knew all things, that **Jesus**, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, did afterwards destroy them that believed not:*

Looking at *Jude 1:5*, note what we find in the Greek manuscript, Ὑπομνησαι δὲ ὑμᾶς βούλομαι, εἰδότας [ὑμᾶς] πάντα, ὅτι [ὁ] κύριος ἅπαξ λαὸν ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου σώσας τὸ δεύτερον τοὺς μὴ πιστεύσαντας ἀπώλεσεν. I examined the printed editions of the Greek text, Textus

Receptus, Stephanus 1550 edition, Byzantine Majority Text edition, the base texts of NA27 and UBS4 editions, and the Alexandrinus Codex, there are no textual variations on the word Kurios (κύριος) “*Lord*” that substitutes “*Yeshua*” or “*Jesus*” for κύριος as we find here in the English translations. The editors of these bible translations applied their theology and translated Kurios (κύριος) “*Lord*” to say, “*Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.*” The conclusion based upon their theology is that Yeshua was the one who led the people out of Egypt. This presents us with a number of questions and a great difficulty in the doctrine of dispensationalism. If we are to believe the interpretation of this translation by the editors, and if we believe the Word of God (Memora) went forth from our Father in heaven, and that Word was Yeshua (*John 1:1-14*), based upon the Apostolic writings and the Aramaic Targum, it is easy to see how this theology was developed.

Questions for Discussion

1. Do you believe Yeshua was the one who led Israel out of Egypt?
2. Do you believe he was the one who put to death all that generation who rejected the mitzvot of God?
3. Is this description of Yeshua consistent with who we know him to be according to modern theologies?
4. Do you believe the NT states this is the same Yeshua that will come at a future time to destroy those who reject God’s commands?
5. Do you believe Yeshua will come to destroy those who disobey the gospel of Yeshua? (2 Thessalonians 1)
6. If the gospel of Yeshua is related to obedience, what does it mean to obey the gospel of Yeshua? (2 Thessalonians 1)

וְקָרָאתִי עָלָיו לְכָל־הָרִי. *wall shall crumble to the ground.*
 וְהִנֵּה תָרַב נְאֻם אֲדַבְּרֵי יְהוָה תָרַב אִישׁ בְּאָחָיו תִּהְיֶה:
I will then summon the sword against him throughout My mountains—declares the Lord GOD—and every man's sword shall be turned against his brother.
 וְנִשְׁפָּטֵתִי אִתּוֹ בְּדָבָר. *and I will punish him with pestilence and with bloodshed; and I will pour torrential rain, hailstones, and sulfurous fire upon him and his hordes and the many peoples with him.*
 וְהִתְגַּדַּלְתִּי וְהִתְקַדַּשְׁתִּי וְנִודַעְתִּי לְעֵינֵי גוֹיִם רַבִּים וַיֵּדְעוּ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה:
(c) Thus will I manifest My greatness and My holiness, and make Myself known in the sight of many nations. And they shall know that I am the LORD.

Based upon these texts, should it be surprising that the Apostle Paul describes the Lord God of Israel and Yeshua His Messiah in a similar manner according to *2 Thessalonians chapter 1*.

2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

1:1 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: 1:2 Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 1:3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater; 1:4 therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. 1:5 This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. 1:6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 1:7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord

Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 1:8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 1:9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 1:10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed for our testimony to you was believed. 1:11 To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, 1:12 so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. (NASB)

Paul speaks of the perseverance and faith in the midst of persecutions and afflictions and parallels this to one being counted as worthy of the kingdom of God. Therefore, continuing in the faith and living for the Lord God in heaven in righteousness and truth no matter what happens to us is very important for entering into the kingdom of God. Yeshua is described as coming with his angels and with flaming fire dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord and Savior Yeshua. What is this gospel of Christ that is to be “*obeyed*” that Paul is speaking of? Note that those who receive this punishment will be paid with “*eternal destruction*” and cast away from the presence of God and from the glory of His power. What is the glory of God’s power? Is this not the power of God to overcome sin, and God’s ability to draw us to Himself and to His Son Yeshua? To bring peace and healing to our lives, and to enable us to live for Him? These things are coupled with the idea of being counted worthy of His Kingdom. This is related to our cooperative work, as Paul describes as “*fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power*” (2 Thessalonians 1:11) and the purpose of our good works, something of which is expected of God’s children, is *1:12 so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. (NASB)* The grace of God

is provided for us in our lives because we consistently fail in our walk before Him, but as His children, we pick ourselves up, repent, and start again. This is the description of the Lord God of Israel from the beginning, as the Torah provides this description at the mountain of Sinai. The glory of God, as it is described by Paul is not something to be concealed. This is the righteousness of God in our lives, who having made us righteous in His Son, we are now expected to live righteous and holy lives, which is the calling we are given as His children. This is the fruit that is the product of our faith. The question each of us needs to ask is *“If I am not seeking these things, if I have no fruit of this kind, has salvation really come to my life and do I really believe the Scriptures and the message of the Messiah Yeshua?”*

There is a great task at hand, getting Christians to understand that they cannot understand *“historical Christianity”* unless they view it as having emerged from Judaism. And so, consequently, to understand this man who came from Nazareth, it is necessary to understand Judaism. This is the point for incorporating studies in the rabbinic literature, the Talmud, the Mishnah, and the Midrashim, along with the classical commentators, Rashi, Sforno, Rambam, etc. In addition to these things, if we get Judaism wrong, we’ll end up perpetuating an anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic teaching. The objective here is to take an impartial approach to studying the Rabbinic literature and try to see how the rabbis teach a gospel of love rather than a gospel of hate.

Having a well developed understanding of the Scriptures, being well read in the Apostolic Writings, and understanding of the rabbinic literature, it is not surprising to see Yeshua as a Pharisee in Judaism where *Luke 5:30* states Yeshua and his disciples were of the same sect as the Pharisees. So people who make the claim that Yeshua was opposed to the Pharisees do not know their Bible. Yeshua had issues with the traditions of men that set aside the command of God, and the hypocrisy of not living what one says he or she believes in. Do not rely upon a historical polemic or a particular theology of the church which states that Yeshua was against the Pharisees or against the Jews. He was teaching Torah and its correct application, and that obeying God’s word should be done from the heart out of our love for the Lord God of Israel.

So how do these things apply to who we are in the Messiah? Study-

ing both the Apostolic Writings (Hebrew NT) and the Torah together, it is important to take note of the first distinctive Hebrew Word in the Torah portion titled ויקהל (Vayak'hel) and how it is used in both the Hebrew Torah and the NT texts.

ספר שמות פרק לה Shemot / Exodus 35:1-2

א ויקהל משה את כל עדת בני ישראל ויאמר אלהם אלה הדברים אשר צוה יהוה לעשות אתם: ב ששת ימים תעשה מלאכה וביום השביעי יהיה לכם קדש שבת שבתון ליהוה כל העשה בו מלאכה יומת:

35:1 Then Moses assembled all the congregation of the sons of Israel, and said to them, 'These are the things that the Lord has commanded you to do: 35:2 'For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a holy day, a sabbath of complete rest to the Lord; whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. (NASB)

Over the years, I have heard it taught that the “Church” is something new that was created after the death, burial, and resurrection of Yeshua the Messiah and specifically after Pentecost (Shavuot). However, if we carefully study the Scriptures, is this really true? Is the Church something New? Let’s examine this a little closer.

In order to study this topic, we need to examine the Hebrew, Greek, and English translations of both the NT and the Torah. “*The Englishman’s Hebrew Concordance of the Old Testament*” by George V. Wigram and “*A Concordance to the Septuagint: And the Other Greek Versions of the Old Testament (Including the Apocryphal Books) (Greek Edition)*,” by E. Hatch and H.A. Redpath were used to facilitate the comparison of the Hebrew and Greek texts for this study.

In the Scriptures, the word קהל Qahal (Strong’s H6951) is generally translated as “assembly” or “congregation” in the Torah, whereas in the Hebrew NT we find the word קהל and its translation as “Church.” In the Greek texts, the word ἐκκλησία Ekklesia (Strong’s G1577) is defined as “an assembly, congregation, or church.” Thayers Greek Lexicon states “the ἐκκλησία Ekklesia in the Septuagint is often equivalent to Qahal קהל, the assembly of the Israelites,” and provides references to *Judges 21:8* and *1 Chronicles 29:1*. The Greek Lexicon goes on to say that the word ἐκκλησία is used especially when gathered for sacred

purposes referring to *Deuteronomy 31:30 (Deuteronomy 32:1); Joshua 8:35 (Joshua 9:8), etc; and in the N. T. in Acts 7:38; Hebrews 2:12.* Let's examine the parallel texts (Hebrew, Greek, English) to study how how the words קהל Qahal and ἐκκλησία Ekklesia are equivalent according to these translations on *Devarim / Deuteronomy 23:1-4.*

Comparison of Devarim / Deuteronomy 23:1-4

<i>Hebrew</i>	<i>Septuagint (Greek)</i>	<i>English</i>
א לא יקה איש	23:1 οὐκ εισελεύσεται	23:1 'No one who is emas-
את אשת אביו	θλαδίας και	culated or has his male or-
ולא יגלה כנף	ἀποκεκομμένος εις	gan cut off shall enter the
אביו: ב לא	<u>ἐκκλησίαν</u> κυρίου 23:2	assembly (<u>CHURCH</u>) of
יבא פצוע דכה	οὐκ εισελεύσεται ἐκ	<u>the Lord.</u> 23:2 'No one of
וכרות שפכה	πόρνης εις <u>ἐκκλησίαν</u>	illegitimate birth shall enter
<u>בקהל</u> יהוה:	κυρίου 23:3 οὐκ	the assembly (<u>CHURCH</u>)
ג א יבא ממזר	εισελεύσεται Αμμανίτης	<u>of the Lord;</u> none of his de-
<u>בקהל</u> יהוה גם	και Μωαβίτης εις	scendants, even to the tenth
דור עשירי לא	<u>ἐκκλησίαν</u> κυρίου και	generation, shall enter the
יבא לו <u>בקהל</u>	ἕως δεκάτης γενεᾶς	assembly (<u>CHURCH</u>) of
יהוה: ד א יבא	οὐκ εισελεύσεται εις	<u>the Lord.</u> 23:3 'No Ammo-
עמוני ומואבי	<u>ἐκκλησίαν</u> κυρίου και	nite or Moabite shall enter
יהוה בקהל	ἕως εις τὸν αἰῶνα 23:4	the assembly (<u>CHURCH</u>) of
גם דור עשירי	παρὰ τὸ μὴ συναντῆσαι	<u>the Lord,</u> 23:4 because they
לא יבא להם	αὐτοὺς ὑμῖν μετὰ ἄρτων	did not meet you with food
<u>בקהל</u> יהוה עד	και ὕδατος ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ	and water on the way when
עולם:	ἐκπορευομένων ὑμῶν	you came out of Egypt, and
	ἐξ Αἰγύπτου και ὅτι	because they hired against
	ἐμισθώσαντο ἐπὶ σὲ	you Balaam the son of Beor
	τὸν Βαλααμ υἱὸν Βεωρ	from Pethor of Mesopota-
	ἐκ τῆς Μεσοποταμίας	mia, to curse you. (NASB)
	καταράσασθαί σε	

When comparing the Hebrew text to the Septuagint, we find the phrase “kahel YHVH,” is equivalent to “ekklesia Kurious” meaning the “assembly of the Lord (God).” Note the use of the circumlocution

Kuriou in the Septuagint to protect the name of God (YHVH) from common use. (i.e. the YHVH is never transliterated in Greek) In addition to this, the word “*ekklesia*” (Church) is found 73 times in the Septuagint, almost as many times as it is found in the Greek New Testament. What seems to be new is the translation of the word ἐκκλησία to mean “*Church.*” Do we find here another insertion of theology into the translation of the Greek text that is similar to *Jude 1:5*? The Greek NT shows Paul writing to the Corinthians saying “*ekklesia tou Theou*” translated to mean the “*Church (ASSEMBLY) of God.*” (*1 Corinthians 1:2*)

²τῆ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ τῆ οὔσῃ *1 Corinthians 1:2*
ἐν Κορίνθῳ, ἡγιασμένοις ἐν *To the church of God which is at*
Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, κλητοῖς ἁγίοις, *Corinth, to those who have been*
σὺν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐπικαλουμένοις *sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints*
τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ *by calling, with all who in every*
Χριστοῦ ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ, αὐτῶν *place call on the name of our Lord*
καὶ ἡμῶν: *Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours:*
(NASB)

In fact, the earliest use of the word קהל Qahal in the Bible may be found in *Bereshit / Genesis 28:3* which states *28:3 ‘May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company (CHURCH) of peoples. (NASB, וְאֵל שְׁדֵי יִבְרָךְ, ג :אֵתְךָ וְיִפְרֶךָ וְיַרְבֶּךָ וְהֵייתָ לְקָהָל עַמִּים:* The “*Church*” is known as the assembly of faithful people, those who believe in the God of Abraham. Would it be unreasonable to state that God was promising Jacob that He would make him to be a “*Church of peoples*” revealing prophetically the promise that the children of God are those who live by faith in the Messiah? Note the obvious transition of translation into English as we move from the Tanach to the Apostolic Writings, the Hebrew word used in the NASB for “*company*” is Qahal, which the Greek translation of the Tanach often renders as *ekklesia* which is then translated into English in the Tanach as assembly, and in the NT as church.

In addition, during the wilderness journey, the Lord God declared the Israelites to be His treasured possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (*Shemot / Exodus 19:5–6*) and we read the same thing in the

Apostolic Writings (i.e. *Revelation 1:6*). The most significant promise is recorded in *Jeremiah 31:31-33* that speaks of a spiritual transformation of God's people whose unresponsive hearts would be changed into new hearts under a new covenant by an outpouring of God's Spirit (*Ezekiel 36:22-28*). In the book of Acts, Stephen said to the Sanhedrin referring to Israel after the exodus as "*the Church (ekklesia) in the wilderness*" (*Acts 7:37*). The verses in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 9:10 and 18:16* become very profound when understanding the Scriptures from this perspective.

Devarim / Deuteronomy 9:10, 18:16

9:10 And the LORD delivered unto me two tables of stone written with the finger of God; and on them was written according to all the words, which the LORD spake with you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the Church. ... 18:16 According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the Church, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. (LXX)

The men of ancient times, before the coming of the Messiah Yeshua, were saved by faith looking forward to the Messiah of God and believed in the Lord God of Israel. The people of the First Century were saved looking to their present day events in Yeshua the Messiah. Today, we are saved looking back at the Messiah of God and believing by faith. The Lord has been working in and through His people from since the beginning of time. According to the Scriptures, there is no distinction that is made between Israel, the Children of God, and the ἐκκλησία Ekklesia the Church. The distinction that is made may only be found in the modern theologies which direct man to turn away from God's commands and teach a different Jesus than the one we know who is coming in the power and vengeance of God according to the Scriptures. (i.e. *the hyper-grace movement*) These things emphasize the importance of the non-Jew having been grafted into Israel as Paul wrote in *Romans 11:11-31*, to become a part of the family of God as the Children of God and to participate in the blessings of Abraham. So

what is new about the New Covenant? What is new and good news is that Salvation the Lord God of Israel provides in His Messiah, the one He sent to provide a present day reality of salvation and redemption, and a future expectation of the World to Come (Olam Haba). In addition, by faith we receive the Holy Spirit of God which changes us on the inside and empowers our lives to live for the Lord, to overcome sin, and to love one another. Praise the Lord!

The theological distinction that are made and taught between Israel and the Church will be discussed further next week.

