

Is the Church something New?

This weeks reading is from Parashat Vayak'hel (*Shemot / Exodus 35:1-38:20*), Moshe assembled the entire congregation of Israel and said *“These are the things that the Lord has commanded you to do.” (NASB)* They are to keep the seventh day as holy to the Lord, no work is to be done on the Shabbat. A Terumah (contribution) is to be made to the Lord like it was described in Parashat Terumah. Gold, silver, bronze, blue, purple, and scarlet material, goats hair, rams' skins, porpoise skins, acacia wood, olive oil, incense, and onyx stones for the setting of the ephod and breastplate (35:5-9). Moshe describes the construction of the Tabernacle (35:10-19). Moshe called Bazalel and Oholiab to begin the work of building the sanctuary (35:26-36:2). The scripture details the construction of the curtains (36:9-18), the walls of the Tabernacle (36:19-37), and the Ark of the Covenant (37:1-15). The utensils used for the daily sacrifice were constructed (37:16) and the menorah was constructed (37:17-22). The altar of incense was constructed from acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold (37:25-29). The altar for the burnt offering was constructed next (38:1-7) and it was overlaid with bronze and the laver was then constructed (38:8). The remainder of the Parashah details the construction of the court of the Tabernacle (38:38:9-20). Moshe gives an accounting of the materials used in the construction of the Tabernacle constructed by Betzalel and Oholiab. Following the construction of the Mishkhan, Moshe assembles everything, anoints them with oil, and commissions Aaron and his sons into the priestly service.

Studying both the Apostolic Writings (Hebrew NT) and the Torah together in Hebrew, it is interesting to take note of the first distinctive Hebrew Word in this week's portion 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 לעשת 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 the case? 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. (Alternatively you may use <http://www.blueletterbible.org>)

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 it is translated as “Church.” 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, *Judges 21:8; 1 Chronicles 29:1, etc, especially when gathered for sacred purposes, 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.*” One example where the words **קהל** Qahal and **ἐκκλησία** Ekklesia are equivalent is found in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 23:1-4.*

Devarim / Deuteronomy 23:1-4

Hebrew	Septuagint (Greek)	English
א לא יקה איש את אשת אביו ולא יגלה כנף אביו: ב לא יבא פצוע דכה וכי ג רות שפכה בקהל יהוה: א יבא ממזר בקהל יהוה גם דור עשירי לא יבא לו ד א יבא עמוני בקהל יהוה: ומואבי בקהל יהוה גם דור עשירי לא יבא להם בקהל יהוה עד עולם:	23:1 οὐκ εἰσελεύσεται θλαδίας καὶ ἀποκεκομμένος εἰς ἐκκλησίαν κυρίου 23:2 οὐκ εἰσελεύσεται ἐκ πόρνης εἰς ἐκκλησίαν κυρίου 23:3 οὐκ εἰσελεύσεται Ἀμμωνίτης καὶ Μωαβίτης εἰς ἐκκλησίαν κυρίου καὶ ἕως δεκάτης γενεᾶς οὐκ εἰσελεύσεται εἰς ἐκκλησίαν κυρίου καὶ ἕως εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα 23:4 παρὰ τὸ μὴ συναντῆσαι αὐτοὺς ὑμῖν μετὰ ἄρτων καὶ ὕδατος ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ ἐκπορευομένων ὑμῶν ἐξ Αἰγύπτου καὶ ὅτι ἐμισθώσαντο ἐπὶ σὲ τὸν Βαλααμ υἱὸν Βεωρ ἐκ τῆς Μεσοποταμίας καταράσασθαί σε	23:1 ‘No one who is emas- culated or has his male organ cut off shall enter the assem- bly (CHURCH) of the Lord. 23:2 ‘No one of illegitimate birth shall enter the assembly (CHURCH) of the Lord; none of his descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall enter the assembly (CHURCH) of the Lord. 23:3 ‘No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the as- sembly (CHURCH) of the Lord; none of their descen- dants, even to the tenth gen- eration, shall ever enter the assembly (CHURCH) of the Lord. 23:4 because they did not meet you with food and water on the way when you came out of Egypt, and be- cause they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you. (NASB)

When comparing the Hebrew text to the Septuagint, we find the phrase “*kahel YHVH,*” is equivalent to “*ekklesia Kuriou*” meaning the “assembly of God / Lord.” 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. The Greek NT shows Paul writing to the Corinthians says “*ekklesia tou Theou*” translated to mean “Church (ASSEMBLY) of God.”

²τῆ ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ τῆ οὔση ἐν Κορίνθῳ, ἡγιασμένοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, κλητοῖς ἁγίοις, σὺν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐπικαλουμένοις τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ, αὐτῶν καὶ ἡμῶν:

1 Corinthians 1:2

To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours: (NASB)

In addition to this, the earliest use of the word Kahel in the Bible is found in *Bereshit / Genesis 28:3* which says *28:3 'May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company (CHURCH) of peoples. (NASB)* The "Church" is known as the assembly of faithful people, those who believe in the God of Abraham. Would it be unreasonable to say 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? The Hebrew word used in the NASB for "company" is Qahal, which the Greek translation of the Old Testament often renders as ekklesia (*church*). 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 addition to this, 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 point of this week's Parashah is that the men of ancient times (*before Yeshua*) were saved looking forward to the coming of Messiah. Today, we are saved looking back at the Messiah. The Lord has been working in and through the Church / Assembly of believers from since the beginning of time. This emphasizes the importance of the non-Jew having been grafted into Israel (*Romans 11:11-31*) to become a part of the family of God as the children of God. So what is new? What is new and good news is that Salvation is offered to all men in Yeshua the Messiah, and those who believe are empowered by the very Spirit of God Himself, to overcome sin and to have love for one another. Halelluia!