



**Christian Foundational Teachings  
No.1: Your Messiah  
(Introduction)**

**Is Your Messiah of Jewish Origin or  
from the Western Nations?**

**WE INFORM – YOU CHOOSE**

**PROFESSOR WA LIEBENBERG**

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By

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## Preface

YHWH "God" has called us to do two things. First, we are to never give up studying and seeking the correct interpretation of any given Bible passage. Second, such opportunities are golden moments for us to learn to show grace and love to others whose understanding of a given passage may differ from ours.

Throughout the HRTI's teachings, we use a slightly different vocabulary to that which some might be accustomed. We have chosen to use what many refer to as a Messianic vocabulary. The reasons being: firstly, using Hebraic-sounding words is another way to help you associate with the Hebraic Roots of your faith. Secondly, these words are not merely an outward show for us, they are truly an expression of who we are as Messianic Jews and Gentiles who have "taken hold" of our inheritance with Israel.

Instead of saying "Jesus", we call our Saviour "Y'shua" – the way His parents would have addressed Him in Hebrew. In addition, rather than referring to Y'shua as "Christ", we use the word "Messiah" – which is an Anglicized version of the Hebrew word, Moshiach.

"YaHoWaH" is the name of God in Hebrew, where it is written as four consonants (YHWH or YHVH, as the W and V is derived from the same Hebrew letter 'Vaw'). These four letters are called the Tetragrammaton (Greek for "[a word] having four letters"). Jews ceased to use the name in the Greco-Roman period, replacing it with the common noun Elohim ("God") to demonstrate the universal sovereignty of Israel's God over all others. At the same time, the divine name was increasingly regarded as too sacred to be uttered and was replaced in spoken ritual by the word Adonai ("My Lord"). From about the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> century the Masorettes (Jewish scholars who were the first to add vowels to the text of the Hebrew Bible) used the vowel signs of the Hebrew words Adonai or Elohim as the vowels for YHWH; and later on the artificial name *Jehovah* was produced. Christian scholars and translators after the Renaissance and Reformation periods replaced the sacred name YHWH with GOD and LORD (all in capital letters in the Bible); which was a strategic move of Satan for not using the Name. The Sacred Name occurs 6,828 times in the Hebrew text of the Bible, proving YHWH wants us to use it.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, biblical scholars again began to use the form Yahweh and it is now the conventional usage in biblical scholarship; but leading Hebrew Scholars suggest YHWH should be pronounced as Yah-oo-VaH (Y'shua is derived from YaH-shuvah which means YaH saves. Yah (יָהּ) is an abbreviation of God's name, YHWH, as seen in Psalm 68:4. The Name is also found in the word hallelu-YaH, which means "you praise the LORD").

# What is this story, that "Jesus" was a Jew!

## Introduction

As surprising as it may seem, many Christians are not aware that Y'shua is a Jew. As a matter of fact, when some hear it said that He is they get angry, and even mad. This has happened many times.

*"How can you say Y'shua was a Jew? Everybody knows he was conceived of the Holy Spirit and is therefore God and not a Jew. He just happened to live among the Jews".*

Many Christians bellow out:

*"What is all this stuff about Jesus being a Jew? He wasn't a Jew; he was the first Christian and the founder of the Christian Church".*

It is most unfortunate that this type of thinking is common in Christian circles today. Actually, it is an expression of a subtle, often subconscious, attitude on the part of many Christians that is quite serious and most dangerous. We might even go so far as to define it as "hellish". It is a hellish, ingrained anti-Semitism<sup>1</sup> that expresses itself in an unwillingness to accept Y'shua as a Jew.

The perverted logic is, *"How could anyone so dear and precious to me, someone I love so much and to whom I have surrendered my life, be a Jew?"*

It is believed that this kind of thinking expresses the conviction of many Christians today. It is usually buried deep within the subconscious mind (or repressed) and only manifests itself overtly when one's spiritual guard is down. It is the result of the spiritual ship of the Word of YHWH being torn loose from the jetty of the historical foundations of biblical faith that were secured firmly in the foundations of historic Judaism. As a result, the spiritual ship has for centuries, been awash in a sea of pagan theology that has led to the gentilisation; i.e., paganisation of the Church.

The Church has forgotten that they are the Wild Olive Branches that need to be grafted into the Natural Olive Tree. They have completely forgotten from whence it is that the branch receives the nourishing sap.

Journey with me as we study the Scriptures, which will thoroughly convince us that our Messiah Y'shua was indeed a Jew...

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<sup>1</sup> Antisemitism (also spelled anti-semitism or anti-Semitism) is suspicion of, hatred toward, or discrimination against Jews for reasons connected to their Jewish heritage. Social scientists consider it a form of racism - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antisemitism>

## What the church has forgotten

The church has forgotten that they no longer have pagan ancestors – but that their ancestors are Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, and Rachel; and that they, too, passed through the Sea with Moshe<sup>2</sup>. They have lost their kinship to things Jewish; and if you will, to a Jewish Y’shua.

The church has failed to recognise for the last 2,000 years that the movement to which Y’shua gave birth was a Jewish one, totally within the historic Judaism of His day. In fact, He came to be the true Rabbi of Judaism and not to start a new religion called “Christianity” with all its pagan traditions and false theologies.

Let us analyse the logic of the argument that Y’shua was not a Jew. The fact that multitudes of Christians believe this is astonishing. Even the *skeptics* and the *agnostics* throughout the ages never advanced this argument...

## Y’shua’s Genealogy was Jewish

His lineage is traced back to David and the patriarchs in typical Jewish fashion in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. The angel Gabriel announced to Miriam<sup>3</sup> that the child, Y’shua, would be conceived by the Holy Spirit within her womb and would be given "the throne of His father David":

*He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the YHWH<sup>4</sup> God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.<sup>5</sup>*

David was a Jew from the Tribe of Judah; and if David is Y’shua’s father as the Scriptures say, then Y’shua was also from the Tribe of Judah.

*Behold, the days come, saith YHWH, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.<sup>6</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Hebrew for Moses, 1 Cor 10:1

<sup>3</sup> Hebrew for Mary

<sup>4</sup> The name of God used nearly 7,000 times in the Bible. The name is accepted by leading scholars to be pronounced as YaHuWaH.

<sup>5</sup> Luke 1:32

<sup>6</sup> Jer 23:5

*And there shall come forth a rod **out of the stem of Jesse** (David's father), and **a Branch shall grow out of his roots.***<sup>7</sup>

### **Y'shua's family was Jewish**

His earthly father's name (Joseph) was the second most common Jewish name of the period, exceeded only by the name Simeon.

His mother's name (Miriam) was the most common Jewish feminine name of the period.

Y'shua Himself had a common Jewish name. We learn from the inscriptions dating from the first century that the name Y'shua was the third most common man's name, tied with the names Judah and Zachariah. Four out of the twenty-eight Jewish High-Priests in Y'shua's time were called Yeshua as some write it.

Y'shua had Jewish relatives: Elisheva<sup>8</sup>, Zachariah the priest; and their son Yochanan<sup>9</sup> the Immerser – as well as His own brothers: Jakov<sup>10</sup>, Joseph, Simon, and Judah; and His sisters (who are unnamed)<sup>11</sup>.

### **Y'shua was circumcised according to the Torah**

Y'shua was circumcised on the eighth day, strictly according to Judaism's Torah:

*And when **eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child**, his name was called Y'shua, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.*<sup>12</sup>

### **Miriam's Torah offering at the Temple after Y'shua's Birth**

Miriam had waited for her purification period of forty days after the birth of Y'shua before she could go and offer a sin offering for her purification and to redeem Y'shua at the Temple strictly according to the Torah:

*2 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a woman have conceived seed, and born a man child: then **she shall be unclean***

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<sup>7</sup> Isaiah 11:1

<sup>8</sup> Hebrew for Elizabeth

<sup>9</sup> Hebrew for John

<sup>10</sup> Hebrew for James

<sup>11</sup> Matt 13:55-56; Mark 6:3

<sup>12</sup> Luke 2:21

**seven days**; according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean. 3 **And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.**4 **And she shall then continue in the blood of her purifying three and thirty days**; she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary (Temple), until the days of her purifying be fulfilled. 5 **But if she bears a maid child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her separation: and she shall continue in the blood of her purifying threescore and six days.** 6 **And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled, for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation** (Temple), unto the priest: 7 **Who shall offer it before YHWH, and make an atonement for her; and she shall be cleansed from the issue of her blood.** This is **the law for her that hath born a male** or a female. 8 **And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons**; the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean.<sup>13</sup>

22 **And when the days of her** (Miriam's) **purification according to the Torah of Moses were accomplished, they brought him** (Y'shua) **to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord;** 23 **(As it is written in the Torah of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)** 24 **And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the Torah of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.**<sup>14</sup>

Since Y'shua's parents were not from the Tribe of Levi<sup>15</sup>, Y'shua had to be brought to the Temple to be redeemed according to the Torah, as said. This ceremony is known as *pidyon ha-ben*, or *Redemption of the First Born*.

15 **Every thing that openeth the matrix in all flesh, which they bring unto YHWH, whether it be of men or beasts, shall be thine: nevertheless the firstborn of man shalt thou surely redeem, and the firstling of unclean beasts shalt thou redeem.** 16 **And those that are to be redeemed from a month old shalt thou redeem, according**

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<sup>13</sup> Lev 12:2-8

<sup>14</sup> Luke 2:22

<sup>15</sup> Num 3:14, 16, 18

*to thine estimation, for the money of five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs<sup>16</sup>.*

From these passages, we can clearly see that Y'shua's parents strictly followed what the Christians call "Jewish things"; but what is in actual fact YHWH's Torah Instructions.

### **Y'shua attended the Yearly Festivals since childhood, according to Torah**

Y'shua's parents went to Jerusalem every year to observe the Feast of Passover:

*Now his parents went to Jerusalem **every year** at the feast of the passover<sup>17</sup>.*

### **Y'shua was a Rabbi**

Y'shua Himself was a Jew, a Rabbi, and earned this title:

*Then Y'shua turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?<sup>18</sup>*

*Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.<sup>19</sup>*

*The same came to Y'shua by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.<sup>20</sup>*

*And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither?<sup>21</sup>*

A Rabbi is a teacher of Torah<sup>22</sup>. This title derives from the Hebrew word רַבִּי Rabbi, meaning "My Master"; which is the way a student would address a master of Torah. The word "master" (רב rav) literally means "great one".

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<sup>16</sup> Num 18:15-16

<sup>17</sup> Luke 2:41

<sup>18</sup> Joh\_1:38

<sup>19</sup> Joh\_1:49

<sup>20</sup> Joh\_3:2

<sup>21</sup> Joh\_6:25



How did a person become a Rabbi in biblical times?

Boys studied the Torah and memorized it until they were twelve. At age twelve, they would either go on to study the rest of the TaNaCh<sup>23</sup> or they would learn a trade. Those who continued their studies in Torah did so with the intent of becoming a Rabbi.

We are shown a brief scene in the New Covenant, where Y'shua at age twelve comes before the teachers of the Torah at the Temple and astounds them with His knowledge. What we aren't told is that those teachers would have immediately encouraged Joseph to continue Y'shua's studies. Rabbis chose disciples based on their abilities in the Scriptures: the more adept the student was, the more likely he would be chosen by a Rabbi.

At age sixteen, those who had memorized the rest of the Old Covenant would then approach a Rabbi they wished to become a disciple of and ask if he would consider them. Rabbis only considered the **best of the best** since their disciples were a reflection of themselves. To be called by a Rabbi was, of course, a major honour for a disciple. No wonder the fishermen jumped up when Y'shua said, "*Follow me*"<sup>24</sup>!

Once accepted by the Rabbi, the young disciple would then take the **Rabbi's yoke** upon himself. A Rabbi's yoke was actually his teachings. When we think of a yoke, we think of the cumbersome piece of wood that lies over the necks of a team of oxen. While the term may have found its origins there, in religious terms it was the **Rabbi's interpretation of Scripture**; and their disciples would take that interpretation upon themselves. That's what it means when the Bible says "*we're not to be unequally yoked*". We can reason by application that we're not to marry someone who has a different interpretation of faith.

For the next ten or so years (26-30), the disciple would follow the Rabbi and learn everything possible. He would then move on to become a Rabbi himself at the approximate age of thirty. Scripture has it that you could only become a king at thirty (Saul and David<sup>25</sup>); and later on, Rabbis as well.

Y'shua began His ministry at age thirty. Instead of choosing the best of the best to be His disciples, he chose those that society despised: fishermen, a

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<sup>22</sup> Law, or rather YHWH's Instructions contained in the first five Books of the Bible

<sup>23</sup> Hebrew Bible known to Christians as the Old Covenant

<sup>24</sup> Matt 4:19

<sup>25</sup> 1 Sam 9:2 (Saul); 2 Sam 5:4 (David)

tax collector, a zealot; and called them to follow Him. In doing so, He showed those around Him that His interpretation of Scripture, the Torah and the rest of the Old Covenant, was one based on humility and that all men could study and understand it.

Y'shua wasn't a carpenter – merely the son of one. His Rabbi status is firmly established in John 8:3, when even the Pharisees refer to him as 'Teacher' – a name they would not have given Him unless He was one.

Y'shua used many terms associated with a Rabbi's position. He told His disciples to '*take my yoke upon you*', meaning "*follow My way of interpreting the Torah*".

He was asked to read the Scriptures in the synagogue – not something offered to anyone but a Rabbi<sup>26</sup>. He was in the perfect position as a Rabbi to refute the abuses that had been incorporated into the Jewish faith of that time. He could call the Pharisees a brood of vipers because He had the authority to do so as a spiritual leader.

### **Y'shua was a Jew and Spoke Hebrew**

The New Covenant is known today as a Greek Book, but much of it was originally written in Hebrew by the Jewish disciples of Y'shua. According to the Book of Acts, Y'shua Himself spoke Hebrew. In Acts 26, Sha'ul<sup>27</sup> describes a vision he had on the road to Damascus:

*I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and my companions. When we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me **in the Hebrew language**, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It hurts you to kick against the goads.'<sup>28</sup>*

The fact that the Book of Acts says that Y'shua spoke to Sha'ul in Hebrew testifies to the importance of Hebrew as the language of revelation for New Covenant Believers. Sha'ul himself preached to the Jews in Hebrew as reported in Acts 21:

*When he had given him permission, Sha'ul stood on the steps and motioned to the people for silence; and when there was a great hush, **he addressed them in the Hebrew language.**<sup>29</sup>*

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<sup>26</sup> Luke 4:16-17

<sup>27</sup> Paul

<sup>28</sup> Acts 26:12-14

<sup>29</sup> Acts 21:40

New Covenant scholars have long known that the Greek of the New Covenant has a strong Hebraic character to it. Most grammars of New Covenant Greek contain an entire category known as Hebraisms which are Hebraic thought patterns translated very literally into Greek. Five Books of the New Covenant, in particular, contain a large number of Hebraisms; leaving little doubt they were either written in Hebrew or translated from Hebrew sources. These five Books are: Matthew, Mark, Luke, Acts and Revelation. The Hebraisms in these Books prove that Y'shua and His original disciples preached in Hebrew; and even more importantly, that their words were recorded in Hebrew.

### **Y'shua used well-known rabbinical methods of teaching**

Y'shua's rabbinical methods of teaching (and perhaps most importantly) drew largely on the Scriptures and oral traditions of His day in His teachings. It is often overlooked that much of what Y'shua said was not new or original but was based on what the Rabbis had said and were saying. The basis for much of His teaching was taken from the TaNaCh (Old Covenant).

Y'shua was constantly referring back to the Torah and to the Jewish traditions of rabbis who had preceded Him or who were of His generation. Unless **this fact is clearly understood**, one will be greatly confused when an attempt is made to understand the magnificent sayings of our Messiah.

It is very difficult for us, almost 2,000 years removed from Y'shua's day, to project ourselves back across the centuries of time to a culture and language so totally foreign to the western mind of today. And yet, that is exactly what we must do before we can even begin to understand those magnificent and thrilling words of Y'shua!

And again, the first thing that one must realize is that Y'shua was a Jew. This fact should be obvious; however, it is surprising how many Christians are shocked to learn that Y'shua was a Jew, and not just any ordinary Jew. He was a Rabbi, a Teacher, one learned in the Scriptures and the religious literature of His day, which was considerable.

### **Y'shua attended Shabbat<sup>30</sup> Services in the synagogues of the Jews**

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<sup>30</sup> Hebrew for Sabbath

Y'shua, too, was an observant Jew who honoured the Torah. It was His custom, His habit, to attend the synagogue services on the Sabbath – Saturday morning:

*And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.*<sup>31</sup>

According to the Gospels, on at least one occasion, He was called upon to publicly read from the Scriptures in the synagogue; something a non-Jew would never have been asked to do:

*16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and **stood up for to read.** 17 And there **was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias.** And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, 18 *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,* 19 *To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.* 20 *And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. **And the eyes of all them (Jews) that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.***<sup>32</sup>*

### **Like All Observant Jews, Y'shua Wore Tzitziyot and Tefillin**

Like all observant Jews of the first century, Y'shua wore tzitziyot, ("tassels" or "fringes") on the four corners of His robe as commanded in Numbers 15:37-41 and Deut 22:12 to be reminded of the commandments, the Instructions of YHWH in the Torah:

*37 And YHWH spake unto Moses, saying, 38 **Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes (fringes) in the borders of their garments throughout their generations,** and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue: 39 **And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments (Instructions) of YHWH, and do them;** and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring: 40 **That ye may remember, and do all my commandments,***

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<sup>31</sup> Luke 4:16

<sup>32</sup> Luke 4:17-20

*and be holy unto your God. 41 I am YHWH your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am YHWH your God.*

**12 Thou shalt make thee fringes upon the four quarters of thy vesture, wherewith thou coverest thyself**

We see this dramatically illustrated in the story of the woman who, for twelve years, had suffered from a flow of blood. She was healed when she came up behind Y'shua and touched the "tassel on His cloak":

*came up behind him and touched **the tzitzit on his robe**; instantly her hemorrhaging stopped.*<sup>33</sup>



References to the fringed garment which Y'shua wore can also be found in Matt 14:36:

*They begged him that the sick people might only touch **the tzitzit on his robe**, and all who touched it were completely healed.*

It is very likely that Y'shua also wore tefillin ("phylacteries") – the two leather boxes each containing four small parchments inscribed with a different passage of Scripture where it says that "God is one" (Exod 13:1-16; Deut 6:4-9, 11:13-21). This is what Y'shua also taught (John 10:10) which were bound by leather straps – one on the forehead and one usually on the left arm.

According to Jewish sources, it is not certain whether the tefillin were worn all day or just at times of prayer. It appears that more observant Jews in Y'shua's day wore them all day. Actual tefillin dating from the first century have been found in the Qumran caves along the shore of the Dead Sea. These ancient phylacteries are almost identical to those worn by Jews today.

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<sup>33</sup> Luke 8:44 (CJB – Complete Jewish Bible)

How can we be certain that Y'shua wore phylacteries? Especially since the wearing of phylacteries is not specifically commanded in the Scriptures, but represents a rabbinic interpretation of the mentioned Scriptures?

The answer is found in Matt 23:5: "...*They widen their phylacteries [tefillin] and lengthen their tassels [tzitziyot]...*" (NAB).

Y'shua is here criticising certain of the Pharisees for their religious hypocrisy, enlarging their tefillin and lengthening their tzitziyot to demonstrate how "spiritual" they were. He was not criticising the wearing of tefillin and tzitziyot !

Y'shua Himself wore tzitziyot as we have already shown!

Furthermore, notice that in the beginning of this passage in Matthew 23, Y'shua tells his followers: "*Therefore, do and observe all things whatsoever they (the Pharisees) tell you, but do not follow their example. For they preach but they do not practice*".<sup>34</sup>

Y'shua never condemns the custom of wearing phylacteries. Further, had not Y'shua worn phylacteries along with fringes, He would surely have been criticised for this by the Pharisees.

We can only conclude that in his manner of dress, Y'shua was just like the other observant Jews of His day.

### **Y'shua and the Samaritan Woman**

Those outside the mainstream of Judaism (as well as non-Jews) also testify to His Jewishness. For example, when Y'shua meets the Samaritan woman at the well and asks her for a drink of water, she questions, "*How is it that thou, **being a Jew**, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?*"<sup>35</sup>

### **Y'shua and Pontius Pilate**

During Y'shua's interrogation by Pilate – the Roman procurator of Judea (A.D. 26-36) – Pilate explodes in frustration, "*Am I a Jew?*" and then states, "*Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me*"<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> Matt 23:3 (NAB)

<sup>35</sup> John 4:9

<sup>36</sup> John 18:35

## The Jews were selected by YHWH

*"You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews".<sup>37</sup> Y'shua said this to this Samaritan woman at the well who claimed to be worshipping the same Elohim. You see, it's not what one's claim is. It's what the truth is that matters.*

For thousands of years, the Israelites were taught the Hebraic teachings and were supposed to be the forerunner and foundation of the coming "movement" of YHWH. Y'shua was the manifestation of this promised abundant life – the manifested and promised essence of Judaism.

He said clearly that salvation **belonged to the Jews**, who were supposed to recognise the Saviour and bring the Gospel to the world. *".and in you (Abraham and descendants), all the families of the earth shall be blessed"<sup>38</sup>.*

Why were they chosen? Because they were the children of Abraham and they have the "roots" for correct foundation and doctrines of the Gospel:

*"What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles (truths) of God"<sup>39</sup>.*

Alas, the Jews failed to receive Y'shua and the new move of YHWH that was about to conquer the world. Instead, the Gentiles gladly received Him and embraced Christianity. But they were pagans who **did not have the understanding of the oracles of YHWH**, the Hebraic foundation from Abraham's time to Y'shua; which took 2,000 years to establish. They began to spread a gospel that was according **to their own cultures and pagan** interpretations. It's another 2,000 years now, and **it's time for the testing** of the Gentile Christians to recognise and identify themselves with their forsaken Biblical Hebraic roots that Messiah Y'shua is founded on.

## Sha'ul the Jew was called by Y'shua to continue Y'shua's Jewishness

Paul often attended Jewish synagogue services where he worshipped with the Jewish people. Many synagogues even let him preach for a while because of his Jewishness.

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<sup>37</sup> John 4:22 (NKJ)

<sup>38</sup> Gen 12:3 (NKJ)

<sup>39</sup> Rom 3:1-2 (NKJ)

Contrary to common accusations against Sha'ul, he did not discredit Judaism, Jewish people, or Jewish worship. He revered the Jewish Torah (as can be seen in booklet No. 6 in this series) and remained a Jew. He regularly visited the synagogue on his travels. A few examples of this are: in Salamis, Acts 13: 5; in Antioch, Acts 13:14; in Iconium, Acts 14:1; in Thessalonica, Acts 17:1; in Berea, Acts 17:10; in Athens, Acts 17:17; in Corinth, Acts 18:4; and in Ephesus, Acts 18:19.

The synagogues were familiar and convenient to Sha'ul. It was not unusual for Sha'ul to use them as a base of operations upon entering a new mission area.

### **The Jewishness in the early church**

Contrary to what some believe, the first fifteen bishops of the original church at Jerusalem were Jewish. In his Ecclesiastical History, Eusebius tells us that:

*"the church at Jerusalem, at first formed of the circumcision, came later to be formed of Gentile Christians, and the whole church under them, consisted of faithful Hebrews who continued from the time of the apostles, until the siege of Jerusalem".<sup>40</sup>*

In his second-century historical work, Hegesippus describes the rivalry between a man named Thebouthis and others seeking the position of bishop after the death of Jakov (James, Y'shua's brother) – who was said to be the first pastor at Jerusalem<sup>41</sup>. According to Hegesippus, the Hebrew Believers finally chose Simeon (who was a cousin of Y'shua) to succeed Jakov.

Epiphanius lists the remaining thirteen Jewish pastors of the Jerusalem Church as Justus, Zacheus, Tobias, Benjamin, John, Mathias, Philip, Seneca, Justus, Levi, Ephrem, Joseph, and Jude – completing the historical record all the way up to the Bar Kochba Revolt in 132-135 CE, (A.D.)<sup>42</sup>. These Jewish relatives of Y'shua who led the early Church were called Desposynoi, meaning "heirs"; and were often persecuted because of their Davidic lineage and their relationship to the Messiah.

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<sup>40</sup> Isaac Boyle, trans, Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History, H.E. 5, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), pp. 4-6

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., H.E.3,32,6

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., H.E.IV.5



During the reign of Hadrian in 117-138 CE, (A.D.), the Jewish nation was crushed in what came to be called the Second Jewish War. Jerusalem was renamed Aelia Capitolina by the Romans, and Jews were forbidden to enter the city for one hundred years. As these dramatic events were unfolding, many of the Hebrew Believers (called the Netsarim) fled to the mountains of Pella (located in present-day Jordan) in obedience to Y'shua's instruction found in Matt 24:16 – "to flee to the mountains". This left only non-Jewish Believers in control of the Church for the first time, and they quickly appointed a man named Mark as Jerusalem's first non-Jewish pastor<sup>43</sup>.

According to Baring Gould's history, the community of Believers in exile that was led by Jacov and Simeon was **still clinging tightly to the old customs** while crouched at Pella<sup>44</sup>. The non-Jewish Believers in Jerusalem sadly moved away from the Jewish "ways" and slowly absorbed paganism into the Church.

### **The Synagogue and the Church**

Since the Hebrew Believers in Y'shua were not completely removed from Jerusalem until well into the second century, for its first one hundred years the Church remained very much a part of first-century Judaism, and its leaders stayed involved in many Jewish affairs.

There was no immediate split from the synagogue, **as evidenced by Y'shua's warning** that some synagogues would punish His followers for preaching a different brand of Judaism<sup>45</sup> (which is Messianic Judaism, a belief system that not only accepts Y'shua as the Messiah but also takes the New and Old Covenants literally).

We know that this scourging by synagogue leaders was not an unusual part of normative Judaism since it is mentioned a number of times in early rabbinical literature (Rabbi Isidore Epstein, ea., Soncino Talmud, Sanh. 9:6; Yev. 90 (London: Soncino Press, 1948)).

The structure of the local synagogues **was copied and carried directly over into the structure of the early Church and they looked identical.**

A president, deacons, a preceptor (song leader), and teachers can all be found in both the synagogue and the early Church. We know from early

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<sup>43</sup> Eus. H.E.III 5,3; Epiph. Paw. 29:7, 7; 30:2, 7, Ibid. H.E. 4, 6

<sup>44</sup> Baring Gould, "Schonfield's History", Lost and Hostile History, (London: Duckworth Publications, 1936), p. 35

<sup>45</sup> Matt 10:17

sources that there were between 394 and 480 synagogues in Jerusalem during the first century – one being located within the area of the Temple itself<sup>46</sup>.

This is undoubtedly why the early pattern of the Church had its origins in the Jewish synagogue. Note the following similarities between the ancient synagogue and the early Church.

The principal leader of a synagogue was the nasi or president. In the Nazarene congregation, the leaders were still called president rather than "pastor" (as late as A.D. 150) by such non-Jewish writers as Justin Martyr<sup>47</sup>.

In the synagogue structure, three of these leaders would join together to form a tribunal for judging cases concerning money, theft, immorality, admission of proselytes, laying on of hands, and a host of other things mentioned in the Sanhedrin section of the Mishnah. These men were known as the "rulers of the synagogue" because they took on the chief care of things – a title mentioned several times in the teachings of Y'shua:

*And, behold, there cometh **one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet,***<sup>48</sup>

This practice was still in use among the congregations at Corinth under the apostleship of Sha'ul, where he spoke of the court within the congregation

*1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, **go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?** 2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, **are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?***<sup>49</sup>

The nasi was the administrator of the synagogue, and we know that Jacov, the half-brother of Y'shua, **was the nasi** of the early Church at Jerusalem.

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<sup>46</sup> Jerusalem Talmud, Meg. 3:1; Ket. 105a; Sot. 7:7,8; Yoma 7:1 (London: Soncino Press, 1948)

<sup>47</sup> Alexander Roberts, ea., *Anti-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. I (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company), p. 186

<sup>48</sup> Mark 5:22

<sup>49</sup> 1 Cor 6:1-2

Early documents such as the Didache also state that the churches in Asia Minor and Greece treated the Church at Jerusalem with much the same authority as the synagogues did the Sanhedrin<sup>50</sup>.

There also was a public minister of the synagogue called a chazen who prayed, preached behind a wooden pulpit, and took care of the general oversight of the reading of the Torah (yes, Law) and other congregational duties. He did not read the Torah, but stood by the one who did (to correct and oversee), **ensuring that it was done properly**.

He selected seven readers each week who were well-educated in the Hebrew Scriptures. The group consisted of one priest, one Levite, and five regular Israelites:

*And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.*<sup>51</sup>

The terms *overseer of the congregation*, *angel of the church*, and *minister of the synagogue* all referred to this position<sup>52</sup>.

There were also three men known as almoners or parnasin who cared for the poor and distributed alms, and were expected to be scholars of the Scriptures. Since they were also known as gabbay tzedikah, it may be from this function that we get the modern term "deacon". Some scholars hold that it was from these seven: the president, the ruler, the overseer, the chazen, and the three parnas; that the idea of selecting "*seven good men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom*" came about in Acts 6:3.

These men were appointed over the business affairs of the Church so the Apostles would not have to be distracted from their study of the Scriptures and prayer.

In Jewish literature, the question is asked, "*Who is a scholar worthy of being appointed Parnas?*" The answer is: "*He who is asked about a law*

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<sup>50</sup> Roswell Hitchcock, ea., *Didache* 8, (Willits, CA: Eastern Orthodox Publishers, 1989), chapters 11-15) (Isaac Boyle, trans., Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History 3.25.4 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974)

<sup>51</sup> Luke 4:16

<sup>52</sup> John Lightfoot, "Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica", *Hebraica*, Vol. 11., Rev. 3:1, 7, 14 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publications, 1979), pp.89-99

from any source, and is able to give an answer"<sup>53</sup>. In modern times, the Jews use this term to refer to a lay person, who is also called an elder.

Another function in the ancient synagogue was the shaliach, or announcer. From this position we get the term Apostle, meaning one who is sent forth to announce the Gospel – a role equivalent to that of our modern missionaries.

There was also the maggid, a migratory evangelist of the first century who spoke to various congregations; and the batlanim, a scholarly teacher who was either independently wealthy or on some kind of support so he would be available to provide the congregation with accurate academics and answers.

There had to be at least ten batlanim in every congregation of one hundred and twenty members. There was even a tradition that a synagogue service could not commence without **ten men present**<sup>54</sup>. Y'shua may have been referring to this tradition when He said, "*Where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I in the midst of them*"<sup>55</sup>.

Next, there was the zakin, a word meaning "old" – more in the sense of maturity than age. This person provided counsel to the people and was similar to a modern-day pastor or elder. In Judaism, those who had reached the age of forty were considered to have attained understanding, and those who were over fifty were considered worthy to counsel the younger people<sup>56</sup>.

The rabbi was a prophet after the manner of the post-exilic prophets of Judaism. He carried the responsibility of reading and preaching the Word and exhorting and edifying the people:

*But he that **prophesieth** speaketh unto men to **edification**, and **exhortation**, and **comfort**.*<sup>57</sup>

There was also the interpreter, known as the meturganim. This was a person skilled in languages who stood by the one reading the Torah or teaching in a Bet Midrash (a house of study adjacent to the synagogue) to

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<sup>53</sup> Rabbi Isidore Epstein, ea., Soncino Talmud, Shab. 114a (London: Soncino Press, 1948)

<sup>54</sup> Lightfoot, op. cit., p.89

<sup>55</sup> Matt 18:20

<sup>56</sup> Philip Blackman, ea., Mishnah, I Pet. 5:5; I Tim. 5:1; Avot 5:21 (New York: Judaica Press, 1983)

<sup>57</sup> 1 Cor 14:3

interpret into the lingua franca of that day the Hebrew that was being spoken. The use of an interpreter goes back to the time of Ezra, when the interpreter was said to have added the meaning. The Talmud gives many details of the interpreter's duties in the synagogue<sup>58</sup>.

It is from this concept that we understand Y'shua's words, "*What ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops*" in Matt 10:27. This phrase was easily understood by those who were familiar with the system of study in the Bet Midrash where the teacher would literally speak the message in the interpreter's ear – who would then shout it out to others, both inside the classroom and out.

### **Summary of the Jewishness of Y'shua**

Y'shua grew up in a Jewish home. Both His stepfather, Yoseif and His mother Miriam were Jewish by birth. This is evident from the genealogical lists for Yoseif (found in Matt 1:1-17) and Miriam (found in Luke 3:23-38). In addition, the Scriptures speak plainly about which Tribe Y'shua was from:

*"For it is evident that our Lord **arose from Judah**, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood"*<sup>59</sup>.

His birthplace was prophesied to be in Bethlehem, which is in the territory that was assigned to Judah:

*"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth have been from of old, From everlasting"*<sup>60</sup>.

As the promised Messiah, Y'shua was a direct descendant of King David:

*"There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of YHWH shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of YHWH"*<sup>61</sup>.

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<sup>58</sup> Rabbi Isidore Epstein, ea., Soncino Talmud, Meg. 4; Maimon. Tephillah, 12; Massecheth Soph. 10 (London: Soncino Press, 1948)

<sup>59</sup> Heb 7:14 (NKJV)

<sup>60</sup> Mic 5:2 (NKJV)

<sup>61</sup> Isaiah 11:1-2 (NKJV)

A check of the genealogical lists in Matthew and Luke shows that both Yoseif and Miriam were descended from King David and his father Jesse. Also, the term "Branch" is recognised by Jewish and Christian scholars alike to be a reference to the Messiah.

It is this same Y'shua from Yehudah (Judah) who qualified to open the heavenly scroll and loose its seven seals:

*"But one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals'"<sup>62</sup>.*

Thus we see that both the Hebrew and the Greek Scriptures agree that the Messiah is a Jew from the Tribe of Judah.

## Conclusion

The skeptics who have tried to discredit Y'shua have frequently claimed that Y'shua did not believe He was the Messiah, nor claim to be the Messiah: but none have ever accused Y'shua of **not being a Jew**. And it is no wonder. In view of the evidence, if Y'shua was not a Jew – who is, or who was? What nationality was He?

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*Something mind-boggling is happening right now before our eyes! What can only be seen as a sovereign work of the Ruach HaKodesh is breaking forth as Christians around the world are working to **return** to their **historical Hebrew foundation**. After being **stained** for more than eighteen centuries by Judaeophobia, anti-Judaism, and anti-Semitism, many Christians are being impacted by an unprecedented revolution of restoration. Scholars, clergy, and laity from virtually every nationality, ethnicity, and denomination are reconnecting their faith in Messiah Y'shua with its historical Hebraic Roots in the **Torah**. **HalleluYAH***

## We inform – You choose<sup>63</sup>

Never be guilty of: **"By your traditions you make the Word of God of non effect"**<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Rev 5:5 (NKJV)

<sup>63</sup> The truth of the Torah makes you see the mistranslations in the New Covenant. It's amazing how you can look at the epistles of Rabbi Paul one way and it looks like he's leading the body

*As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country. Prov 25:25*  
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of Messiah away from Torah; when in reality, he's leading them **to** Torah. A paradox of vantage point. Let us remember, the intent of the law maker constitutes the law. We need to walk a mile or two in our Hebrew Messiah's shoes

<sup>64</sup> **Matt 15:3** *But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?* **Matt 15:6** *And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.*

**Mark 7:9** *And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition*