

Yeshua in the Crossfire of a Jewish Religious Dispute

Israel Ablaze - Part 2

To best understand the Bible, and especially the New Testament, you need to realize the historical and cultural context in which it was written. For those who attempt to read and understand the New Testament without its historical and cultural context, it is like watching a scheduled two-hour movie when you decide to start watching it after the first hour has passed. When you watch only the last half, you may think that you understand what it was all about, but you don't have the first part of the movie to put everything that you saw in the last half in its proper perspective. Then, after the movie is over, when you explain and tell your friends what you saw and your thoughts about it, what you say to them may be partially true, but your overall perspective remains distorted because you failed to watch the first part of the movie. This is what it is like for a person who starts reading the New Testament, wherein their goal is to seek to understand the life and ministry of Yeshua. They may think that they fully understand it, but their deeper understanding of His teaching is distorted because they do not know the historical and cultural context in which it took place.

In historical context, Yeshua was born and lived at a time of a bitter religious Torah dispute among the Jewish people. He and His ministry took place right in the middle of this dispute. It had been going on since the 2nd century BC. Originally, it was a dispute over religious authority centered on the office of the high priesthood and the Temple in Jerusalem. It included a dispute over the proper interpretation of the Torah. Later, in the first century, it evolved into a dispute about whether or not Yeshua was the Messiah. In its historical and cultural context, when Yeshua took sides in this Jewish religious dispute (Matthew 21:32, 43, 45), it resulted in His death on the tree (Matthew 27:50,

John 11:47–48, 53). However, God the Father had a plan and a purpose for it. God the Father used the circumstances and politics regarding this Jewish religious Torah dispute to have His Will be done for Yeshua's life. The Will of God the Father was for Yeshua to come to this earth to die (Matthew 20:28, John 6:40) and to redeem mankind from their sins (John 3:16, Romans 5:8) because of the sin of Adam in the Garden of Eden (Romans 5:12).

On one side of this Jewish religious dispute was the Jewish group associated with Qumran. This group wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls, which were discovered in 1947. John the Baptist was associated with this group of Jews (see June 2025 Yavoh magazine). Their leadership consisted of the Zadok priests.^[1] These Zadok priests had been removed from their office of the high priesthood through the influence of the Greek Seleucids in the 2nd century BC. On the other side of this Jewish religious dispute were the corrupt temple system and the Pharisees.

The Aaronic Priesthood

The office of the Aaronic high priesthood came about from the sin of the golden calf (Exodus 32:1–6) after the children of Israel were given the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai (Exodus 20:1–17). The office of the high priesthood was to be exclusively from Aaron and his sons (Exodus 28:1). Aaron had four sons. Their names were Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar (Exodus 6:23). Of these four sons, Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, was promised an eternal priesthood (Numbers 25:10–13). The Zadok priests were descended from Phinehas, Eleazar, and Aaron (I Chronicles 6:3–8).

[1] Dead Sea Scrolls. 1QS 5:7-9

The Zadok Priests

Zadok was the priest in the days of King David and King Solomon (2 Samuel 8:15–17, 1 Chronicles 29:22). When David's fourth son, Adonijah (2 Samuel 3:2, 4), tried to declare himself as the next King of Israel (1 Kings 1:5) when King David was upon his deathbed (1 Kings 1:1, 2:1), Zadok the priest was faithful to King David (1 Kings 1:8). Because of this, the God of Israel declared and recognized that the Zadok priests will have the authority to determine when to keep the Feast Days in Israel and to teach Torah to the nation of Israel (Ezekiel 44:15, 23–24). This declaration by the God of Israel in Ezekiel 44:15, 23–24, was known and valid in the first century, given that Ezekiel was recognized as a prophet in Israel. Furthermore, the Zadok priests of the Qumran community believed that Ezekiel 44:15 pertained to them.^[2]

John the Baptist grew up in the wilderness of Judea (Luke 1:80). Yeshua supported the ministry of John the Baptist, referring to his ministry as an "Elijah ministry," being immersed of him in order to fulfill all righteousness (Matthew 3:13–15, 17:10–13). When John the Baptist lived with the Qumran community, he was required to follow the Torah under the authority of the Zadok priests.^[3] This included keeping the yearly festivals according to the priestly calendar. The Elijah ministry of John the Baptist was based upon Isaiah 40:3 (Luke 1:17, John 1:19, 23). The Qumran community was established based upon Isaiah 40:3.^[4] Therefore, when Yeshua supported the ministry of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:13–15, 17:10–13) and rebuked the chief priests of the Temple and the Pharisees who didn't support the ministry of John the Baptist (Matthew 21:23–25, 32, 43, 45), Yeshua was taking sides in this Jewish religious dispute. By supporting the ministry of John the Baptist, Yeshua was also supporting the

Qumran community where John lived and thus the Zadok priests who were leaders of the Qumran community.

The Pharisees' View of Torah Authority

On the other side of this Jewish religious Torah dispute was a corrupt priesthood associated with the Temple system. Initially, the office of the high priesthood was corrupted by the Greek Seleucid influence from the 2nd century BC. However, it was further corrupted by the influence of the Romans, beginning with the reign of King Herod in 37 BC. This Jewish group consisted of the chief priests, scribes, elders, Pharisees, and Sadducees. They claimed their authority in association with the judicial court known as the Sanhedrin. The Sadducees were primarily in control of the Temple system. However, most of the Jews in the first century followed the teachings of the Pharisees.

The Pharisees claimed that their authority to make rulings regarding the interpretation of the Torah was given to the majority view of the rabbis in conjunction with the rulings made by their judicial court known as the Sanhedrin.^[5] They claimed this authority based upon Deuteronomy 17:8–11. They taught that they accurately interpreted the Torah that was given to Moses on Mount Sinai and that their rulings represented Torah law in Israel. When they made these rulings, they taught that their rulings were binding upon the Jewish people in the name of the God of Israel. This is known as the Doctrine of Oral Torah.

Once the Torah was given at Mount Sinai, the Pharisees taught that all Torah interpretation and rulings were to be done by humans and were not to be derived from heavenly sources. This doctrine is understood from the statement, "It (the Torah) is not in heaven." It is based upon twist-

[2] Dead Sea Scrolls. Damascus Document CD 3:19-4:4

[3] Dead Sea Scrolls. 1QS 5:7-9

[4] Dead Sea Scrolls. 1QS 8:12-14

[5] Babylonian Talmud. Babylonian Talmud, Baba Metzia 59b and Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 3:6, 5:5, 88a

ing the original meaning and context of Deuteronomy 30:12, which included the phrase, “It is not in heaven.” The doctrine “It (the Torah) is not in heaven” is known in Hebrew as: (לֹא הָיָה בַּשָּׁמַיִם לֵא) *lo ba-shamayim hi*). The Talmud explains, “[The Torah] is not in Heaven,” to mean that the meaning of the Torah itself is to be uncovered not by prophets or even God’s miracles or words (heavenly sources), but by human interpretation and decision-making, as explained in the story of the Oven of Akhnai.^[6] In support of their claim of Torah authority, the Pharisees taught the Jewish people to keep the Feast Days of Leviticus 23 based upon a Babylonian calendar.

The Pharisees Claim the Rabbis are Superior to the Prophets

The Pharisees wrote the Talmud. Today, the Pharisees of 2,000 years ago are called Orthodox Jews. Orthodox Judaism teaches that prophecy ended with the prophet Malachi. They teach:

“God communicated to people through prophecy for nearly the entire biblical period from Adam until Malachi. According to the prevalent Jewish tradition, prophecy ceased with Malachi not to be renewed until the messianic age.”^[7]

Furthermore, Orthodox Judaism teaches:

“When prophecy ceased, the era of Oral Torah commenced ...”

When the era of Oral Torah began, the rabbis viewed themselves as greater than the prophets. In the Babylonian Talmud, Baba Batra 12a, it says:

“Rabbi Avdimi from Haifa says: From the day that the Temple was destroyed prophecy was taken from the Prophets

and given to the Sages [Rabbis]... Ameimar said: And a Sage [Rabbi] is greater than a Prophet ...”^[8]

The Rambam (Moses Maimonides) in his introduction to the Mishna section 7 states the following:

“If there are 1000 prophets, all of them of the stature of Elijah and Elisha, giving a certain interpretation, and 1001 rabbis giving the opposite interpretation, you shall ‘incline after the majority’, and the law is according to the 1001 rabbis, not according to the 1000 venerable prophets.”^[9]

The Pharisees believed that, after Malachi, there was no more written inspiration of the Word of God that would be regarded as authoritative or canon. That is why there were no Second Temple era writings in the canon of the Hebrew Bible, which was made official by the Pharisees after the destruction of the Second Temple. For this reason, the Pharisees certainly didn’t believe in any written inspiration of Scripture, which came to be called the ‘New Testament.’ Given that the Pharisees believed that there was an “age of prophecy” that ended with Malachi, it can be compared to the Christian Baptist view that “the age of miracles” ended with the death of the original Apostles of Yeshua.

The Qumran Community Believed in Present-Day Prophets

In contrast to the Pharisees, the Qumran community, through the leadership of the Zadok priests, believed in modern-day prophets being in their midst. Some believe that there was a School of

[8] www.jewishideas.org/article/end-prophec-malachis-position-spiritual-development-israel

[9] www.sefaria.org/Rambam_Introduction_to_the_Mishnah.7.47?lang=bi and judaism.stackexchange.com/questions/97422/does-a-prophet-win-halachic-debates-according-to-r-yosef-albo

[6] Babylonian Talmud, Baba Metzia 59b

[7] www.jewishideas.org/article/end-prophecy-malachis-position-spiritual-development-israel

the Prophets in Qumran and that John the Baptist was an eventual leader of it. The Qumran community believed in the works of the Holy Spirit, such as healing, deliverance, prophecy, dreams, and visions. This can be compared to the Christian Pentecostal view that healing, deliverance, prophecy, dreams, and visions are an active work of the God of Israel in the present day.

In Acts 13:1, it speaks of Manaen (Menachem in Hebrew), who was brought up with Herod the Tetrarch. Manaen laid hands on Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:2–3). The Jewish historian Josephus tells us that before Herod the Great became the king of Judea in 37 BC, Menachem prophesied to him that he would be king.^[10] At one time, Menachem was head of the Sanhedrin, along with Hillel. However, Menachem left the Sanhedrin and joined the Qumran community.^[11] When Herod the Great became king, he asked Menachem how long he would be king. Menachem didn't give Herod the Great a direct answer but indicated it would be over 30 years. As a result, Herod the Great was satisfied with the answer. Josephus finishes the story by saying that there were those among the Essenes (Qumran community) who were regarded as being "prophets." The New Testament refers to Manaen/Menachem as a prophet (Acts 13:1). This is who Josephus states was an Essene (a member of the Qumran community).

When Yeshua referred to John the Baptist as a "prophet" (Matthew 11:9), He was taking sides in this Jewish religious dispute. Yeshua was taking the side of the Qumran community over the view of the Pharisees. The "multitude" who regarded John the Baptist as a "prophet" (Matthew 14:5, 21:26) and Yeshua as a prophet (Matthew 21:11, Luke 7:16, 24:19) could not have been following the viewpoint of the Pharisees. Furthermore, the Pharisees rejected Yeshua as a prophet (Luke 7:39, John 7:47–48, 52). Yeshua also told the Phari-

sees that He would send them prophets but that the Pharisees would reject them (Luke 11:39, 49). Therefore, Yeshua believed in modern-day prophets just like the Qumran community, but the Pharisees did not. The New Testament testified of modern-day prophets (Acts 11:27, 13:1, 15:32). Paul testified that there are prophets in the body of Messiah (1 Corinthians 12:28, Ephesians 4:11).

While the Pharisees believed in the existence of angels (Acts 23:8), they did not look unto angels or a heavenly voice (Bat Kol) for Torah direction or understanding because of the doctrine "It (the Torah) is not in heaven." In the New Testament, an angel of the Lord told Joseph to marry Miriam (Matthew 1:20, 24), told Joseph to take Yeshua to Egypt (Matthew 2:13), told Zacharias that he would have a son named John (Luke 1:13), announced the birth of Yeshua (Luke 2:10–12), rolled away the stone from Yeshua's tomb (Matthew 28:2), announced the resurrection of Yeshua (Matthew 28:5), released Peter and John from prison (Acts 5:19–20), told Cornelius to visit Peter (Acts 10:1–6), and gave direction to Paul in his ministry (Acts 27:23–24). In these things, the New Testament is giving testimony regarding the work of angels in the present day. The corrupt Temple system was not willing to accept the testimony from the Angel Gabriel that John the Baptist was the Elijah figure (Luke 1:5–22, 57–66) who would testify of the Messiah. Furthermore, the leaders of the corrupt Temple system did not believe in the resurrection of Yeshua. They wanted people to believe that Yeshua's body was stolen from his tomb (Matthew 28:11–15). When the New Testament writers give testimony of the work of angels in the present day, they are taking sides in the Jewish religious dispute. Those connected with the Qumran community received the testimony of angels. In fact, the Qumran community invited and welcomed angels for their Sabbath services.^[12] The corrupt Temple system leaders and the Pharisees did not accept the angelic testimony

[10] Josephus, *Antiquities*, 15:373–379.

[11] Babylonian Talmud. Chagigah 16b

[12] Dead Sea Scrolls. 4Q400–407 and 11Q17.

regarding the ministries of John the Baptist and Yeshua.

The Sanhedrin supported turning Yeshua over to Pilate (Mark 15:1). They participated in giving false testimony to put Yeshua to death (Matthew 26:59). When Peter and John testified that Yeshua had risen from the dead, the leaders of the corrupt Temple system, along with the Sanhedrin, opposed them (Acts 4:1–15). They ordered Peter and John to no longer speak in the name of Yeshua (Acts 4:17–18). Peter and John refused to listen to them. In Acts 4:19–20, it is written:

“But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”

In Acts 5:17–18, the leaders of the corrupt Temple system put the Apostles in jail. At the Temple, the Apostles were preaching Yeshua. In Acts 5:27–28, it is written:

“The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. ‘We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,’ he said. ‘Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man’s blood.’”

In reply to their request, in Acts 5:29, it is written:

“Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.”

As we can see from this account, Peter and the Apostles didn’t recognize the authority of the Sanhedrin because the Apostles would rather obey God and angels more than men. In this Jewish religious dispute, Peter and the Apostles opposed the orders of the Sanhedrin. So, when the

Rabbis and the Sanhedrin tell us that we are to follow the annual Festivals according to a Babylonian calendar, are we required by Torah to listen to them if Peter and the Apostles didn’t listen to them?

Yeshua and the Teaching of the Pharisees

In teaching His disciples, Yeshua warned them against following the Pharisees and their Doctrine of Oral Torah. In Matthew 15:1–2 it is written:

“Then came to Yeshua scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, ‘Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.’”

The “tradition of the elders” is the Doctrine of Oral Torah. The Jewish historian Josephus also explains that the “tradition of the elders” refers to the Pharisaic Oral Torah. He says:

“... the Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers, which are not written in the laws of Moses; and for that reason it is that the Sadducees reject them, and say that we are to esteem those observances to be obligatory which are in the written word, but are not to observe what are derived from the tradition of our forefathers.”^[13]

Oral Torah teaches that you must wash your hands before you eat bread, even if your hands are clean.^[14] Yeshua didn’t follow the Doctrine of Pharisaic Oral Torah. In Luke 11:37–38, it is written:

“And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So He went in and sat down to eat. When the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner, (emphasis added).”

[13] Josephus, Antiquities, 13.10.6.

[14] Torah Anthology, Volume 17, Page 32

In Matthew 15:3, Yeshua replied:

“But he answered and said unto them, Why do you also transgress the commandment of God (written Torah) by your tradition (the Oral Torah interpretation)?”

Furthermore, in Matthew 15:9, Yeshua stated:

“But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines (you must wash your hands before you eat bread) the commandments of men (doctrine of Oral Torah or Rabbinic Authority to interpret the Torah).”

From Yeshua’s words to the Pharisees, they were offended. In Matthew 15:12, it is written:

“Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Do you not know that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?”

In response, Yeshua replied in Matthew 15:13–14, as it is written:

“But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father has not planted, (the Pharisaic Doctrine of Oral Torah) shall be rooted up (when Yeshua returns and sets up His Kingdom). Let them alone: they be blind leaders (teaching the Doctrine of Oral Torah) of the blind (those that follow the Doctrine of Oral Torah). And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch (have the wrong interpretation of following the written Torah)”

Regarding the teaching of Torah to the non-Jews, the Pharisees teach that non-Jews are only to follow what the Rabbis teach as the “seven laws of Noah.” In Matthew 14:13–21, Yeshua was feeding the “multitude.” The number was 5,000. He did it with five loaves and two fish. In Matthew 15:32–39, Yeshua fed 4,000 with seven loaves and a few fish. Yeshua taught the Torah in parables

(Matthew 13:34–38). So, while the miracle feeding of these “multitudes” was literal, it was a parable to the disciples of Yeshua. The object of the parable was the “multitudes.” The “multitudes” is a hint in the Torah to the blessing given to Ephraim and Manasseh by Jacob in Genesis 48. In this blessing, it is said about them, in verse 16, as it is written:

“The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.”

In the Hebrew, it does not say, “let them grow.” It says, “let them increase as fish” in the midst of the earth. It was not translated literally because fish don’t increase on land. They live in water. In the blessing to Ephraim, in Genesis 48:19, it is written:

“And his father... said... but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.”

When the ‘multitude’ were fed with ‘fish’, this is a ‘hint’ to Ephraim (the Northern Kingdom of Israel), who would be intermingled or mixed among the nations (Hosea 7:8) and thus become, in the course of time, those from the nations or Gentiles.

After being scattered in the nations, a remnant of the Northern Kingdom was prophesied to ‘return to the Torah’ (Zechariah 10:7–10) and be united with the Southern Kingdom of the house of Judah in the end of days (Hosea 1:10–11).

In Matthew 16:9–10, 12, Yeshua taught His disciples:

“Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the

*four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?
... Then understood they how that he bade them not
beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of
the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.”*

From these miracle feedings, Yeshua was teaching his disciples about the “multitude” by means of a “parable.” Yeshua was teaching them to “beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.” Yes but ‘the leaven’ about what? The subject of the teaching is about the “multitude.” Knowing that He was going to send His disciples into the nations after His resurrection (Matthew 28:18–20) and make them “His disciples,” Yeshua was teaching His disciples to NOT teach the non-Jewish world to follow the ‘seven laws of Noah’ or the doctrine of the Pharisees regarding the non-Jews. In order to be a disciple of Yeshua, you are to follow His Torah by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13, Romans 7:12, 22, 8:14).

In John 5, Yeshua healed a crippled person on the Sabbath. In John 5:8–10, it is written:

“Yeshua said unto him, Rise, take up your bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath. The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for you to carry your bed.”

In John 9:1–7, 14, Yeshua healed a blind man on the Sabbath. In doing so, in John 9:6 it is written:

“When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay ...”

In response, the Pharisees said that Yeshua broke the Sabbath. In John 9:16 it is written:

“Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he does not keep the sabbath day...”

In John 5 and in John 9, the Pharisees accuse Yeshua of breaking the Sabbath. If Yeshua actually did break the Sabbath, He was violating the Torah (Exodus 20:8). However, Yeshua didn’t violate the written Torah. He did violate the Pharisees’ Oral Torah teachings on breaking the Sabbath. According to the Pharisees, Yeshua was doing “work” on the Sabbath when he told the crippled man to “take up his bed” and the blind man when He “spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle.” In the Babylonian Talmud, it lists 39 categories of work on the Sabbath.^[15] What Yeshua did violated one of these 39 categories. So, in these instances, Yeshua didn’t follow Pharisaic Oral Torah.

While the blind man accepted Yeshua as Messiah (John 9:35–38), the Pharisees refused to believe that Yeshua is the Messiah because they regarded Him as a sinner because He broke Pharisaic Oral Torah (John 9:15–16, 24–29). As a result, the Pharisees asked Yeshua if they were blind. In John 9:40, it is written:

“And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also?”

In John 10, Yeshua answered their question. In John 10:1–2, 9, 11, Yeshua said to the Pharisees:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep ... I am the door ... I am the good shepherd ...”

Today, as was the case over 2,000 years ago, the Pharisaic sect/Orthodox Judaism tries to establish a relationship with God the Father by bypassing the belief that Yeshua is the Messiah and by expressing faith to God the Father through the

[15] Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 73a.

Doctrine of Oral Torah. So, Yeshua told the Pharisees in John 10:27, as it is written:

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”

As a result, Yeshua furthermore explained to the Pharisees in John 10:4–5 as it is written:

“...and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice (the good shepherd). And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.”

So, what is that voice of the Pharisees that Yeshua’s sheep will not follow? It is the doctrine of Oral Torah (Matthew 15:1–2, 16:12). How will Yeshua’s sheep follow Him? They will follow Yeshua’s Torah by His Holy Spirit (John 16:13, Ezekiel 36:26–27, Romans 7:22, 8:14).

So, in these examples, we can see how Yeshua took sides in this bitter Jewish religious dispute. He opposed the Pharisees’ teaching of the Doctrine of Oral Torah (rabbinic authority to make Torah rulings with the help of the Sanhedrin, which they say is binding upon the Jewish people). This is the Pharisees’ interpretation of the Torah. Meanwhile, the Qumran community followed the Torah under the direction of the Zadok priests (1QS 5:7–9, CD 6:18) with the help and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.^[16]

In conclusion, in order to realize that the ministries of John the Baptist and Yeshua were associated with a bitter Torah religious dispute among the Jewish people, you need to study and understand the history and the cultural context from which the New Testament was written. While the Qumran community is not mentioned in the New Testament explicitly by name (Greek context), their teachings and belief system are rep-

resented in the narrative of the New Testament through its historical and cultural context (Hebraic context).

To fully understand the New Testament, you MUST study the Dead Sea Scrolls. In addition, you MUST study the doctrinal Torah teachings of the Pharisees, who are today called Orthodox Jews. In doing so, you can easily determine the Jewish viewpoint from which the New Testament is written. It is written in support of the teachings and viewpoints of the Qumran community, as expressed through the teachings of the Zadok priests, and it opposes the corrupt Temple system and the Pharisees’ teachings of the Doctrine of Oral Torah, as well as the doctrine of “It (the Torah) is not in heaven.”

Yeshua boldly taught His teachings in the Temple and before the corrupt Temple leaders (John 18:19–20). Yeshua taught that His Torah teachings came from His heavenly Father (John 7:15–16, 12:49). While Yeshua did not belong to any sect of the Pharisees, nor was He a member of the Qumran community, Yeshua did take sides in this Torah religious dispute between them.

The Torah dispute was over several issues. First, it was over Torah authority. When Yeshua affirmed the ministry of John the Baptist, He was affirming the authority of the Zadok priesthood, under whose authority John the Baptist lived as a member of the Qumran community. Yeshua rejected the Torah authority of the corrupt leaders in the Temple and the doctrine of Oral Torah, as taught by the Pharisees.

Secondly, the Torah dispute was over the proper interpretation of the Torah. Yeshua taught to follow His Torah with the help of His Holy Spirit (John 16:13). The Qumran community taught their followers to follow the Torah with the help

[16] Dead Sea Scrolls. 1QS 5:7-9, CD 6:18; 1QS 3:6-8; 1Q28b 2:22-24; and Thanksgiving Hymn 32:14-15.

and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.^[17] The Pharisees taught the Jewish people to follow the Torah based upon the Doctrine of Oral Torah, and thus the Torah rulings of the rabbis and the Sanhedrin.

Thirdly, the dispute was over whether Yeshua was the Messiah. John the Baptist (John 1:29) and the Qumran community (Acts 2:41), along with the Zadok priests (Acts 6:7), accepted Yeshua as the Messiah. When they did, they were initially called the followers of “the Way” (Acts 9:2, 27, 22:4, 24:14, 22) and the sect of the “Nazarenes” (Acts 24:5). The corrupt Temple system leaders (Matthew 26:63–65) and the sect of the Pharisees rejected Yeshua as the Messiah (John 1:11, 9:28–29).

So, now with the understanding that the New Testament and the teachings of Yeshua within their historical and cultural contexts, what is the application for us today? It is the following:

- Believe that Yeshua is the Messiah (John 3:16)
- Follow Yeshua’s Torah through the help and inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14) to produce the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23)
- Embrace the ‘Arava’ (Isaiah 40:3, Isaiah 35:1–2), whose application is the Qumran community and its Elijah message of restoration (see June, 2025 Yavoh magazine)
- Restore the authority of the Zadok priesthood (Damascus Document CD 3:19–4:4, Ezekiel 44:15, 23–24) by following the annual Festivals according to the priestly calendar given in the Dead Sea Scrolls (4Q317–334), and stop following the Babylonian calendar, which came from the sect of the Pharisees after the Babylonian captivity

In doing so, we will be followers of Yeshua the Messiah in Spirit and in Truth (John 4:23–24). We will be restored to the Torah (Malachi 4:4) with the turning of the “hearts of the children to their fathers” (Malachi 4:6). This is the “preparing of the way” (Isaiah 40:3) (the coming of the Messiah) for Yeshua’s Bride (Isaiah 40:2, 61:1, 5), so she can be ready for her wedding day when He returns at His second coming. Then, we will see the fulfillment of the words from Jeremiah 31:12–13, as it is written:

“Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion ... Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow.”

May we return to the Torah of Yeshua with all our heart, and may Yeshua come speedily in our days! ■

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* Scripture references from the KJV

[17] Dead Sea Scrolls. 1QS 3:6-8, 1Q28b 2:22-24, Thanksgiving Hymn 32:14-15.