

How God Prophetically Used the Talmud to Keep Judaism Alive

Recently, as a result of one of my previous articles, someone began corresponding with me by trashing the Talmud. I found this particularly interesting because it was clear from their posts that they had what you might call a less-than-superficial understanding of the Talmud.

For those reading this who may not even know what the Talmud is, let me briefly explain (please read to the end).

The Talmud is the codification of Jewish understandings. You will notice that I didn't say Jewish understanding singular. I purposely used the plural because the Talmud is not an encyclopedia of rules and regulations. It is a compilation of instructions, understandings and ideas. It is a series of opinions and guidances that have governed the Jewish people since the 4th century.

However, some of the oral instructions and teachings in the Talmud reach back as far as the book of Genesis. For instance, how did Noah know what animals were clean and unclean, and what were the mitzvot, decrees and instructions that Abraham listened to in Genesis 26:5? There are many, many more examples, but those should help you understand the concept.

Throughout the history of the Jewish people, as we read through the Bible, more and more oral instructions were put into place to assist the Jewish people to live their lives according to the Torah as their circumstances and situations changed. For instance, when Daniel was in Babylon and could not make the three daily sacrifices, he would face toward Jerusalem and pray at the times of the sacrifices (Dan. 6:11).

Also, by the time of Yeshua (Jesus), a length of travel called a Sabbath day's journey had been established (Acts 1:12). So, as you can see, oral instructions grew as Israel grew as a nation. New situations arose so new instructions arose with them.

However, after the destruction of the temple, Judaism needed a way to replace the centrality of the temple in Jewish life and understanding because ultimately, it was the temple that was the hub that held Judaism together.

Now there was no longer a temple and active sacrificial system Judaism turned to its sages and, for all intents and purposes, the Talmud was codified as a method of keeping Judaism as Judaism. The oral instructions were written down along with the understandings and opinions of the sages and this became the underpinning of Judaism without a temple.

It was the Talmud that held the Jewish people together and, because the Talmud exists, there are still Jewish people around the world today. It is because of this truth that I say if it were not for the Talmud, I would not be a Messianic Jew.

However (and this is a *huge* however), while I am thankful for the Talmud keeping Judaism alive, I also do not give the Talmud the same reverence that my non-Messianic Jewish brothers and even some of my Messianic Jewish brothers do.

While I absolutely believe that G-D has used the Talmud to keep Judaism alive for prophetic reasons (Rom. 11:13-24), I also believe that the codification of the Talmud was not merely the result of and response to the destruction of the temple. I believe it was also a response to the rejection of Yeshua as the Messiah.

You see, according to the book of Hebrews chapters 7 through 10, G-D already had a plan in place for when the temple was destroyed and sacrifices would cease. That plan was not a codified Talmud, but a High Priest after the order of

Melechizedek: a perfect High Priest who would, as we read in Hebrews 10:12 (TLV), offer a once and for all time sacrifice for sins.

“But on the other hand, when this One offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God ...”

So, I am thankful that the Talmud was in place and that my family was able to hold onto and continue to be a part of the Jewish people. As I said above, I am a Messianic Jew because the Talmud exists.

But I also believe that if more of the Jewish people had recognized Yeshua as the Messiah, the codification of the Talmud as a means to keep Judaism as Judaism would not have been necessary because Judaism would have been centered on our High Priest Yeshua, His sacrifice and His example of how to continue life as the Jewish people. {eoa}

Eric Tokajer *is author of* With Me in Paradise, Transient Singularity, OY! How Did I Get Here?: Thirty-One Things I Wish Someone Had Told Me Before Entering Ministry, #ManWisdom: With Eric Tokajer, Jesus Is to Christianity as Pasta Is to Italians *and* Galatians in Context.