

Notes: June 29, 2019

Start: 10 AM

Order of service:

1. Meet and Greet
2. Introduction (if new people)
3. Ma Tovv
4. Open in Prayer for service
5. Liturgy – Sh'ma +
6. Announcements
7. Praise and Worship Songs
8. Message
9. Aaronic Blessing
10. Kiddush
11. Oneg

Children's Blessing:

Transliteration: *Ye'simcha Elohim ke-Ephraim ve hee-Menashe*

English: *May God make you like Ephraim and Menashe*

Transliteration: *Ye'simech Elohim ke-Sarah, Rivka, Rachel ve-Leah.*

English: *May God make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah.*

Introduction: Navigating the Maze of Judaism

Last week I shared with you my intent of holding a meeting in the fall, just prior to the High Holy Days where the focus would be on addressing the absence of the Yom Kippur sacrifice while over the last two weeks I have been sharing with you the perspective of Gentiles witnessing to Jewish people, considering Scripture provides many examples of anything but.

With that said, I am revisiting a sermon from June 2015 on Navigating the Maze of Judaism.

I called it a maze because even though Traditional Judaism is much smaller than the church, a much larger maze in that you must still navigate your way through many turns which I call nuances in order to reach your intended destination...

Joh 4:23 But the time is coming — indeed, it's here now — when the true worshippers will worship the Father spiritually and truly, for these are the kind of people the Father wants worshipping him.

Back in 2015 I had a meeting with the Executive Director and Program Director of the Jewish Community Alliance to discuss Kehilah Portland's place in the Jewish community.

I already know going in that it will be an enormous challenge in that their last email indicated:

“...based on a board decision from several years ago when Kehilah Portland first contacted our agency, the incoming

president feels that the JCA position regarding Kehilah Portland is absolutely clear and therefore he does not wish to participate in a meeting with you at this time. Ellie and I are certainly willing to meet with you at which point we can clarify our organizational position..."

To which my response was...

"Even though I am aware of the decision that was made several years ago pertaining to Kehilah Portland, I never received any details regarding the Alliance's decision. This would include no documents supporting the JCA's position and reasoning behind their decision."

Last week, I had asked you to be in prayer for this upcoming meeting in the fall, but I have really not told you how to pray.

In the past we have talked about passive prayer in relation to focused prayer.

A simple, and passive "if it be your will" lacks authority, passion and boldness that is instructed by Yeshua when we do pray...

Mat 6:6 But you, when you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. Your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Mat 6:7 "And when you pray, don't babble on and on like the pagans, who think God will hear them better if they talk a lot.

Mat 6:8 Don't be like them, because your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Mat 6:9 You, therefore, pray like this: 'Our Father in heaven! May your Name be kept holy.

Mat 6:10 May your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.

Mat 6:11 Give us the food we need today.

Mat 6:12 Forgive us what we have done wrong, as we too have forgiven those who have wronged us.

Mat 6:13 And do not lead us into hard testing, but keep us safe from the Evil One. *[The latter half of verse 13 is not found in the oldest manuscripts.]* For kingship, power and glory are yours forever. Amen.'

And the writer of Hebrews amplifies...

Heb 4:12 See, the Word of God is alive! It is at work and is sharper than any double-edged sword — it cuts right through to where soul meets spirit and joints meet marrow, and it is quick to judge the inner reflections and attitudes of the heart.

Heb 4:13 Before God, nothing created is hidden, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of him to whom we must render an account.

Heb 4:14 Therefore, since we have a great cohen gadol who has passed through to the highest heaven, Yeshua, the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we acknowledge as true.

Heb 4:15 For we do not have a cohen gadol unable to empathize with our weaknesses; since in every respect he was tempted just as we are, the only difference being that he did not sin.

Heb 4:16 Therefore, let us confidently approach the throne from which God gives grace, so that we may

receive mercy and find grace in our time of need.

As I have taught many times, if you know His Word, then you know His will.

Whether Yeshua:

Mat 10:5 These twelve Yeshua sent out with the following instructions: "Don't go into the territory of the Goyim, and don't enter any town in Shomron,

Mat 10:6 but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Isra'el.

Mat 10:7 As you go, proclaim, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is near,'

Or Sha'ul:

Rom 9:1 I am speaking the truth — as one who belongs to the Messiah, I do not lie; and also bearing witness is my conscience, governed by the Ruach HaKodesh:

Rom 9:2 my grief is so great, the pain in my heart so constant,

Rom 9:3 that I could wish myself actually under God's curse and separated from the Messiah, if it would help my brothers, my own flesh and blood,

Rom 11:25 For, brothers, I want you to understand this truth which God formerly concealed but has now revealed, so that you won't imagine you know more than you actually do. It is that stoniness, to a degree, has come upon Isra'el, until the Gentile world enters in its fullness;

Rom 11:26 and that it is in this way that all Isra'el will be saved. As the Tanakh says, "Out of Tziyon will come the Redeemer; he will turn away ungodliness from Ya`akov

Rom 11:27 and this will be my covenant with them, . . . when I take away their sins."

So, in order to pray effectively for this matter you need to know more about what our purpose of this meeting is.

JCA Mission: Our mission is to build Jewish community locally, in Israel and throughout the world. The JCA develops, provides, and supports diverse programs, education and services. We work with other Jewish organizations and local congregations, and function as the hub of Jewish programming in Southern Maine.

By Definition of who we are as a congregation, we are part of the community, yet not recognised by the community.

Definition – Alliance: a union or association formed for mutual benefit, especially between countries or organizations; a relationship based on an affinity in interests, nature, or qualities.

Background – Jewish Sects / Denominations

Judaism includes a wide corpus of texts, practices, theological positions, and forms of organization.

Within Judaism there are a variety of movements, most of which emerged from Rabbinic Judaism. Keep in mind that the emergence of other positions coming out of an original position is usually a response to a differing view, in this case a theological disagreement.

Rabbinic Judaism holds that God revealed his laws and commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai in the form of both

the Written and Oral Torah.

Historically, this assertion was challenged by various groups such as the Sadducees and Hellenistic Judaism during the Second Temple period; the Karaites and Sabbateans during the early and later medieval period; and among segments of the modern non-Orthodox denominations.

Liberal movements in modern times such as Humanistic Judaism may be nontheistic. Today, the largest Jewish religious movements are Orthodox Judaism (Haredi Judaism and Modern Orthodox Judaism), Conservative Judaism and Reform Judaism.

There are major sources of difference between these groups and their approaches to Jewish law, the authority of the Rabbinic tradition, and the significance of the State of Israel.

Conservative and Reform Judaism are more liberal, with Conservative Judaism generally promoting a more "traditional" interpretation of Judaism's requirements than Reform Judaism.

Historically, special courts enforced Jewish law; today, these courts still exist but the practice of Judaism is mostly voluntary. Authority on theological and legal matters is not vested in any one person or organization, but in the sacred texts and rabbis and scholars who interpret them.

Each group offers a different understanding of what it means to be Jewish. There are common traits that bind them together in Judaism, yet there are differences.

This was just the introduction...are you confused yet?

To hopefully clarify further the positions of each sect, I have more details regarding each...

Orthodox: Orthodox Judaism holds that both Conservative and Reform Judaism have made major and unjustifiable breaks with historic Judaism, both by their skepticism of the verbal revelation of Written and Oral Torah, and by their rejection of halakhic (Jewish legal) precedent as binding.

Orthodoxy collectively considers itself the only true heir to the Jewish tradition. The Orthodox Jewish movements generally consider all non-Orthodox Jewish movements to be unacceptable deviations from authentic Judaism; both because of other denominations' doubt concerning the verbal revelation of Written and Oral Torah, and because of their rejection of Halakhic precedent as binding. As such, some Orthodox groups characterize non-Orthodox forms of Judaism as being heretical.

Then, within the Orthodox distinction there are specific groups

Hasidic: is a branch of Orthodox Judaism that promotes spirituality through the popularization and internalization of Jewish mysticism as the fundamental aspect of the faith. It was founded in 18th-century Eastern Europe by Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov as a reaction against overly legalistic Judaism.

Haredi: is a stream of Orthodox Judaism characterized by rejection of modern secular culture. Its members are often referred to as **strictly Orthodox** or **ultra-Orthodox** in English. However the term "ultra-Orthodox" is considered a derogatory slur by some in the community. Haredim regard themselves as the most religiously authentic group of Jews, and although this claim is contested by other streams, it is a perception which is often held in the wider Jewish and non-Jewish society.

Modern Orthodox: The Modern Orthodox outlook is that differences have not been generated by heretical or

iniquitous intent, but by an attempt to reconcile Judaism with modernity. Thus, although Modern Orthodox Jews find all non-Orthodox forms of Judaism to be wrong, the non-Orthodox movements are not considered to be inherent antagonists; rather they are perceived to be competitors offering a faulty product.

Orthodox Judaism maintains that the Torah (Written and Oral) and Jewish law are divine in origin, eternal and unalterable, and that they should be strictly followed.

We see the origin of the Orthodox movement in Scripture, specifically through the Prushim. It would be out of this sect, led by Yochanan ben Zakahi at the council of Yavneh in 90 CE, 20 years after the destruction of the Temple, that the foundations of Rabbinic Judaism would be formed. This expression of Judaism was birthed as a response and need, not a desire. It was a response to the absence of the land and the Temple. And therefore a need to identify how the Jewish people would survive.

The question: How do we survive as a people without our land and Temple, for which over 25% of the 613 laws identified by Maimonides, dealt specifically with the Temple and life in eretz Israel?

Many of Yeshua's teachings addressed the manner by which Torah was interpreted and applied. Traditions that were imposed by and legislated by the Prushim. Yeshua alluded to the Prushim's practices as a "heavy yoke"

Mat 11:28 "Come to me, all of you who are struggling and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Mat 11:29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Mat 11:30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Judaism speaks of the "yoke of Heaven," the commitment any Jew must make to trust in God, and the "yoke of the *Torah*," the commitment an observant Jew makes to keep the generalities and details of *halakhah*.

Yeshua speaks of his own easy yoke and light burden. These two are sometimes contrasted in a way implying that in comparison with Judaism, Christianity offers "cheap grace." But this saying of Yeshua's must be put alongside remarks such as at 10:38. The easy yoke consists in a total commitment to godliness through the power of the Holy Spirit. It at once requires both no effort and maximal effort-no effort, in that the necessary moment-to-moment faith can not be worked up from within but is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8 - 9); and maximal effort, in that there is no predeterminable level of holiness and obedience sufficient to satisfy God and let us rest on our laurels.

Are you confused yet?

There are multiple views that fall under the banner of Orthodox Judaism who view their form of Judaism as the only valid and authentic form of Judaism. All other forms are not authentic.

Conservative: Conservative Judaism holds that Orthodox Judaism is a valid and legitimate form of normative rabbinic Judaism; it respects the validity of its rabbis. Conservative Judaism holds that both Reform and Reconstructionist Judaism have made major and unjustifiable breaks with historic Judaism, both by their rejection of Jewish law and tradition as normative, and by their unilateral acts in creating a separate definition of Jewishness (i.e. the latter movement's acceptance of patrilineal descent as an additional way of defining Jewishness.) Despite this disagreement, Conservative Judaism respects the right of Reform and Reconstructionist Jews to interpret Judaism in their own way. Thus the Conservative movement recognizes the right of Jews to form such denominations, and recognizes their clergy as rabbis, but does not generally accept their decisions as valid.

Conservative Judaism respects the rights of others but doesn't honor their decisions.

Reform: Reform Judaism espouses the notion of religious pluralism; it believes that most Jewish denominations (including Orthodox groups and the Conservative movement) are valid expressions of Judaism. Historically, however, the Reform view of Orthodox Judaism had been highly negative. Reform began as a rejection of Orthodox Judaism, and early battles between Reform and Orthodox groups in Germany for control of communal leadership were fierce. Reform viewed Orthodoxy as overly focused on tradition and literal interpretation of scripture that conflicted with modern science. Relations with the Conservative movement are much more cordial

A typical Reform position is that Jewish law should be viewed as a set of general guidelines rather than as a set of restrictions and obligations whose observance is required of all Jews.

These are the three primary positions within Judaism. Are you confused yet?

There are still more positions in Judaism. Here are a few...

Reconstructionist: is a modern American-based Jewish movement based on the ideas of Mordecai Kaplan (1881–1983). The movement views Judaism as a progressively evolving civilization. It originated as a branch of Conservative Judaism, before it splintered. The movement developed from the late 1920s to 1940s, and it established a rabbinical college in 1968.

Karaite: Karaite Judaism does not recognize the Oral Law as a divine authority, maintaining that the Written Torah, and the subsequent prophets which God sent to Israel, whose writings are recorded in the Tanakh, are the only suitable sources for deriving halakha, which Karaite Judaism maintains, must not deviate from the plain meaning of the Hebrew Bible.

Karaite Jews also maintain that Rabbinic Jews are not observing Jewish holy days on their correct date, because the dates are fixed according to the pre-calculated Hillel II calendar, instead of beginning each month with the sighting of the New Moon from the horizon of Israel, and starting the year during the month when the barley reaches the stage of Aviv in the land of Israel

Humanistic: is a Jewish movement that offers a nontheistic alternative in contemporary Jewish life. It defines Judaism as the cultural and historical experience of the Jewish people and encourages humanistic and secular Jews to celebrate their Jewish identity by participating in Jewish holidays and lifecycle events (such as weddings and bar and bat mitzvahs) with inspirational ceremonies that draw upon but go beyond traditional literature.

So this is just a sampling of some of the branches (denominations) of Judaism.

All offer different views on how to be Jewish and what being Jewish means, yet none of them are questioned about their Jewishness within the Jewish community.

In some cases, such as the Orthodox, they characterize non-Orthodox forms of Judaism as being heretical. Yet when looking at the JCA composition, they have listings for all the synagogues in the area, Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and even non-affiliated.

So, under the JCA umbrella, there is room for diversity, even if some of them don't agree with others pertaining to how they express themselves as Jews.

I am hoping this meeting in the fall will lead to many questions...

Remember the subject is Yom Kippur. A day that is regarded by all in Judaism as the Holiest. So much so, that you get people who don't attend Synagogue on a regular basis attending. To which could we deal with this congregation's

identity?

What makes a synagogue Jewish?

- Is it the people –

Is a synagogue Jewish because the people that attend it are all Jewish, or the majority are Jewish?

- Is it the practices

Is a synagogue Jewish because of what they do – Shabbat services, Moadim, teaching, etc...

We have already seen the diversity of expression and practice, yet all are recognized by the JCA as Jewish Synagogues.

We haven't even addressed the question that may or may not be asked: Who is Jewish?

This question alone is complicated in itself and offers many layers of complexity, depending on who you ask.

- Jewish by birth – if so, paternal or maternal
- Jewish by conversion – if so, by whom
- Are you still Jewish if you practice other religions

Each sect has their own definition and halachic laws pertaining to Jewish identity.

Are you confused yet?

Keep in mind, as complicated as this may seem to you, who are unfamiliar with the ongoings within the Jewish community, it is nowhere near 40,000 denominations comprising the church.

As mentioned in the JCA mission, it identifies Israel as being associated with the local community in Maine, yet as an outsider looking in, could you ever imagine eretz Israel not having the support of the entire Jewish community?

The issue of Zionism was once very divisive in the Jewish community. Non-Zionists believed that Jews should integrate into the countries in which they lived, rather than moving to the Land of Israel. The original founders of Reform Judaism in Germany rejected traditional prayers for the restoration of Jerusalem. Also, the view among Reform Jews that Judaism was strictly a religion and that Jews should be loyal citizens of their host nations led to a non-Zionist, and sometimes anti-Zionist, stance. Orthodox non-Zionists believed that the return to Israel could only happen with the coming of the Messiah, and that a political attempt to re-establish a Jewish state was contrary to God's plan.

After events of the 20th century, most importantly the Holocaust and the establishment of the modern State of Israel, opposition to Zionism largely disappeared within Reform Judaism. Secular opposition to Zionism has continued among some Jewish political groups, and among some Jews active in leftist political movements. Among most religious non-Zionists, there is a de facto recognition of Israel, but as a secular state. The Edah Chareidis in Jerusalem does not recognize the legitimacy of the state, and one small group, Neturei Karta, actively opposes the existence of Israel.

This is only within the Jewish community. The views outside the Jewish community vary significantly.

We are a complex people with many views.

Ask three rabbis a question and you will likely get four different answers.

The matter in which we as a congregation seek to rectify is an enormous challenge in that as believers in

Yeshua who meet on Shabbat, celebrate the Moadim, study Torah with the intent of applying it to our lives because we follow Yeshua, in the eyes of the Jewish community, we are not a Jewish synagogue. There is fear that we are seeking to convert people to Christianity, when in reality, we do not convert anyone, yet provide a place for Jewish people who have come to the realization that Yeshua is Messiah can maintain their Jewish identity without having to compromise and assimilate into a church. Our role as a congregation is in line with what is conveyed in Isaiah 49:5 – 6

Isa 49:5 So now Adonai says — he formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Ya`akov back to him, to have Isra'el gathered to him, so that I will be honored in the sight of Adonai, my God having become my strength —

Isa 49:6 he has said, "It is not enough that you are merely my servant to raise up the tribes of Ya`akov and restore the offspring of Isra'el. I will also make you a light to the nations, so my salvation can spread to the ends of the earth."

Much of this mindset is what I call historical residue. Residue from the many persecutions endured by the Jewish people at the hands of those who identified themselves as Christian. Because Yeshua is Jesus, we are associated as being Christians, traitors of our people, having gone over to “the other side”.

This historical residue has tainted the identity of Yeshua to where He is not considered Messiah or King of Israel by the vast majority of the Jewish community.

How long can we be held captive to the past? Living in the past is in essence living in bondage to the things that have happened in the past.

Believe it or not, Israel's strongest supporter is not the United States, but many Christians who because of Scripture love Israel and the Jewish people. This includes many of you sitting here. The climate among Christians is improving, yet not fully reconciled.

We as a Messianic Jewish congregation are comprised of both Jew and Gentile, following the teachings of Yeshua that I have been sharing with you, including last week's Shabbat message that addressed Torah, believers and Yeshua's instruction regarding our pursuit of righteousness:

Mat 5:17 "Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete.

Mat 5:18 Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud (י) or a stroke will pass from the Torah — not until everything that must happen has happened.

Mat 5:19 So whoever disobeys the least of these mitzvot and teaches others to do so will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Mat 5:20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness is far greater than that of the Torah-teachers and P'rushim, you will certainly not enter the Kingdom of Heaven!

You now have a better understanding of the complexity that comprises the Jewish community and the challenges Kehilah Portland faces in pursuing inclusion into this community. Additionally, you have a better understanding of who you are being equipped to reach, with the Message of Messiah.

No one said this would be easy...

Mat 7:13 "Go in through the narrow gate; for the gate that leads to destruction is wide and the road broad, and many travel it;

Mat 7:14 **but it is a narrow gate and a hard road that leads to life, and only a few find it.**

A hard road, not an easy street.

There are many challenges you will encounter along this hard road that leads to life, but I assure you, it will all be worth it.

So continue to pray as I seek direction for this event...and continue to pray that Adonai equips you with the knowledge, wisdom and understanding so that you can effectively talk with anyone, the Jewish people especially about Yeshua. And that you are able to share the Gospel in truth, that is the reality of what is written, not any preconceived perception that is not supported by Scripture with anyone.

References:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Relationships_between_Jewish_religious_movements

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_religious_movements

https://en.wikipedia.org/?title=Orthodox_Judaism