

Notes: December 1, 2012

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. Jeri - Drash
8. Praise and Worship Songs
9. Message
10. Aaronic Blessing
11. Kiddush
12. 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: Origin of the Synagogue

Two weeks ago, I talked about embracing Kingdom Authority. This Kingdom authority was ultimately transferred from the Patriarchs to Moshe, to Joshua, to the Judges...and so on, up to Yeshua, who transferred it to His talmadim.

Embracing Kingdom Authority as the authority of our lives requires commitment and trust in the congregation.

In weeks to come, we will continue identifying Kingdom Authority within the confines of the congregation.

- Justice and Mercy
- The process of congregational life
- How we will deal with matters as a congregation
- When covenant principles are violated – what happens
- Gifts of the Spirit as part of the congregation

In order to get to where we are headed, I believe it would be helpful to know and understand the origins of the synagogue,

- Its original intent
- Its purpose
- How it has evolved
- How it relates to the Messianic community

You will find that throughout the Tenach, there is no mention of the term synagogue, yet when you open up the Brith Hadoshah, you will see it referenced over 50 times.

This entity that is now so prevalent during the life of Messiah not to mention being an instrumental place where many discussions and teachings took place, it appears to exist in a similar manner as Malki-Tzedek – no origin, no beginning and no end. Yet this couldn't be any further from the truth.

So, how did the synagogue come to be?

Synagogue is not a Hebrew or Aramaic word but is Greek – synagogue meaning assembly

The term in Hebrew used to represent synagogue is Beit Ha Keneset – House of Assembly.

Consider the history of Israel at the time of the destruction of the 1st Temple, the Southern Kingdom being taken from their land into captivity in Babylon.

A country in crisis.

A homeless nation is now without its very structure, worship and prayer. The primary issue was that of survival.

When one country overthrows another, the identity of the overthrown country is usually lost. While its inhabitants are absorbed by the conquering country.

Yet, on many future occasions, the Jewish identity has continued to survive and be preserved

A people and culture has survived:

- Invasion
- Captivity
- Expulsion
- Threat of extermination
- Without a homeland

During this time of captivity in Babylon, we read in Ezekiel that the elders assembled.

Eze 8:1 On the fifth day of the sixth month of the sixth year, as I was sitting in my house, and the leaders of Y'hudah were sitting there with me, the hand of Adonai Elohim fell on me.

During that time, Adonai would speak prophecy regarding what was happening and what would happen to the people that have taken Israel captive

Also...14:1 and 20:1

We have seen in scripture aspects of preserving Jewish identity while in captivity:

- Daniel praying towards Jerusalem
- Shadrakh, Meishakh and `Aved-N'go refusing to bow to other gods

During the time in exile it is believed that the Jewish people had access to the Pentateuch – the Torah translated into Greek.

In addition to Torah, they had some of the prophetic writings and Psalms.

Being able to still have access to what was the foundation of their nation, was a reminder that even though they were in Babylon, captive, they were not of Babylon.

Many of the instructions found in Torah centered around the Temple, Priesthood and Sacrifice. Even though these mitzvot couldn't be done, there were still many instructions found in Torah that were doable.

The knowledge and identity still exist and were preserved. People were assembling and Adonai was speaking through His prophet.

During this time in captivity, Adonai's people were learning how to survive in a culture that was foreign to theirs. In many cases detestable and an abomination in relation to how they have been instructed to live. Many times, Torah would emphasize,

NOT TO BE LIKE THE OTHER NATIONS

House of Assembly...

What was its purpose?

We have already read about Ezekiel meeting with elders of Y'udah.

It is believed that not just elders met, but others in captivity came together as a place of support, a rallying center for a homeless nation where the scriptures they had access to were read.

The effect of these assemblies resulted in an awakening of interest in the study of the Hebrew scriptures, creating a Beit Midrash – House of Study

As time progressed, prayer was included, making the synagogue:

- a house of worship - Beit Hallel
- a house of prayer - Beit Tefilah
 - Standard prayers were created, such as the shemoneh Esreh, comprising 18 benedictions. Today, we know this as the Amidah, which means to stand. These prayers are recited while standing. You should be familiar with two of them -
 - Avot
 - Geebor

This was a public expression of prayer directed towards the community.

Even with the standardization of prayer, which included fixed times to pray, did not affect the private time for supplications that each person would direct towards Adonai, according to their own style and needs.

As a result of this increased interest, a demand for men who were to become equipped with this learning and would become qualified to teach. These men were known as scribes. Sopherim - they are not scribes in the sense of writers but instructors identified as “men of letters” we see them as “teachers” in Ezra...

Ezr 8:16 So I sent for Eli`ezer, Ari`el, Sh`ma`yah, Elnatan, Yariv, Elnatan, Natan, Z`kharyah and Meshulam, who were leaders, and also for Yoyariv and Elnatan, who were men of discernment.

And as men who caused the people to understand Torah...

Neh 8:7 The L`vi`im Yeshua, Bani, Sherevyah, Yamin, `Akuv, Shabtai, Hodayah, Ma`aseiyah, K`lita, `Azaryah, Yozavad, Hanan and P`layah explained the Torah to the people, while the people remained in their places.

Neh 8:8 They read clearly from the scroll, in the Torah of God, translated it, and enabled them to understand the sense of what was being read.

Greatest amongst these men was Ezra...

Ezr 7:6 this `Ezra went up from Bavel. He was a scribe, expert in the Torah of Moshe, which Adonai the God of Isra`el had given; and the king granted him everything he asked for, since the hand of Adonai his God was on him.

Many translations of bibles group together scribes and Pharisees.

Over time, the synagogue's purpose was three fold:

1. Be deliberate in judgment
 2. Raise up many disciples
 3. Make a fence around Torah
- Judgments were to be deliberated (to think about carefully, to discuss the pros and cons of a matter), in the sense that questions which had to be determined by the rule of Torah must be minutely studied and the closest investigation made as to the decision it suggested.

It was believed that a superficial reading could only result in a hasty judgment.

- Through the raising of many disciples was to further expand the base of teachers that would continue to teach Torah, passing down its knowledge the next generation.
- The fence was originally intended as a means of protection should anyone who kept too close to the letter of Torah, might inadvertently transgress it. The logic used was that of a cultivated field having hedges placed around it to prevent innocent trespassing, with the potential of damaging, or even destroying the field. Likewise the sacred domain of Torah must have precautionary measures.

Out of the synagogue system came what was known as the Keneset Hagedolah – The Great Assembly, a council of leaders brought together to decide matters of doctrine.

The Great Assembly ceased to exist around the middle of the third century BCE. Over time, it would be replaced by the Sanhedrin, comprised of priests and laymen and resided over by the High Priest.

The Sanhedrin comprised many sects within the Jewish community.

- Priests who favored Hellenistic thought – a policy of compromise at the expense of complete loyalty to Torah
- Laymen, who descended from Ezra and the sopherim, took a firm stand in demanding whole hearted adherence to what Torah said.

Over time, two sects would emerge:

- Sadducees
- Pharisees

According to Josephus:

- The Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers which are not written in Torah. For this reason, the Sadducees reject them.
- In response, the Sadducees state say we are to esteem those observances to be obligatory which are in written word, but are not to observe what are derived from tradition of our forefathers.

Within the confines of the fence (oral law) and synagogue matters we will find Halakhah and Haggadah to exist.

Halachah – means “walking”

- A way of life to follow in order to conform with the precepts found in Torah.

There are many references found in the Brith Hadoshah that involve Halakhah.

Haggadah - Narration

- Signifies the non-legal aspects of Torah, the Prophets and Writings

Both actually compliment each other.

Both would actually point out the way of a Godly life.

“Is it your desire to know Him, who spoke and the world came into being? - Learn the Haggadah; for from it, you will come to know the Holy One, blessed be He.”

The Rabbis strove to derive sanction for a legal decision from the text of Torah while endeavoring to corroborate the ethical or moral lesson by a quotation from that source, often represented by...

- As it is said
- As it is written

Sound familiar?

These two aspects are found in the developing authority of the oral law for which when compiled in the 2nd and 5th centuries of the common era became known as the Talmud.

We use these writings not for what their intent was, establishing the fence around Torah, but as insight from the Rabbis who have come before us.

We as believers in Messiah have our own authoritative and narrative writings, known as the Brith Hadashah.

Like the Talmud, these writings reference to Torah the aspects of legal, ethical and moral attributes pertaining to life and how it should be lived.

His insight into Torah is straight from the author Himself, so I would say that He knows what He is talking about.

Throughout the Brith Hadosah, we see many examples of Halakah and Haggadah.

- Halakah – Acts 15 – gentiles and circumcision
 - Yeshua says the following:

Mat 18:18 Yes! I tell you people that whatever you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven.

Mat 18:19 To repeat, I tell you that if two of you here on earth agree about anything people ask, it will be for them from my Father in heaven.

Mat 18:20 For wherever two or three are assembled in my name, I am there with them."

What would require a minyan of 10 in the synagogue to do something, requires only two or three like minded believers to rule on a matter. Call it a min-minyan.

- Haggadah – Yeshua's parables

Psa 78:1 [*A maskil of Asaf:*] Listen, my people, to my teaching; turn your ears to the words from my mouth.

Psa 78:2 I will speak to you in parables and explain mysteries from days of old.

Psa 78:3 The things which we have heard and known, and which our fathers told us

Psa 78:4 we will not hide from their descendants; we will tell the generation to come the praises of Adonai and his strength, the wonders that he has performed.

Compiled in the Brith Hadosah are 35 of Yeshua's parables.

This by no means a new or unique way of teaching. To indicate how popular this Jewish method of teach is can be validated by the Talmud.

There are over 5000 parables found in the Talmud.

This is how the Rabbis taught and as such establishes Yeshua's position as a teacher – Rabbi.

Aspects of the Synagogue are found throughout the Brith Hadosah writings:

- Yeshua's times teaching in the synagogue

Luk 4:16 Now when he went to Natzeret, where he had been brought up, on Shabbat he went to the synagogue as usual. He stood up to read,

Luk 4:17 and he was given the scroll of the prophet Yesha`yahu. Unrolling the scroll, he found the place where it was written,

Luk 4:18 "The Spirit of Adonai is upon me; therefore he has anointed me to announce Good News to the poor; he has sent me to proclaim freedom for the imprisoned and renewed sight for the blind, to release those who have been crushed,

Luk 4:19 to proclaim a year of the favor of Adonai."

Luk 4:20 After closing the scroll and returning it to the shammash, he sat down; and the eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fixed on him.

- Sha'ul's many visits found in the book of Acts

Act 13:14 but the others went on from Perga to Pisidian Antioch, and on Shabbat they went into the synagogue and sat down.

Act 13:15 After the reading from the Torah and from the Prophets, the synagogue leaders sent them a message, "Brothers, if any of you has a word of exhortation for the people, speak!"

Act 13:16 So Sha'ul stood, motioned with his hand, and said: "Men of Isra'el and God-fearers, listen!"

Act 13:17 The God of this people Isra'el chose our fathers. He made the people great during the time when they were living as aliens in Egypt and with a stretched-out arm he led them out of that land.

While the Temple still existed, many synagogues existed, not with the intent to replace, but to expand its reach.

- Community prayer
- Study
- Assembly

The synagogue was known as the mikdash me'at – little temple

The synagogue became the center of the Jewish community and was a significant during the life of Yeshua.

Conclusion:

What about a Messianic synagogue?

- Does it exist?
- Is it relevant today?

This may not be apparent at first, depending upon the translation you are using.

When we look at Ya'akov (James) we even see a Messianic synagogue of its own. Writing to Jewish believers...

Jas 2:1 My brothers, practice the faith of our Lord Yeshua, the glorious Messiah, without showing favoritism.

Jas 2:2 Suppose a man comes into your synagogue wearing gold rings and fancy clothes, and also a poor man comes in dressed in rags.

I want to relate a few things that David Stern wrote about these verses.

Your synagogue. This is a Messianic synagogue, a congregation of believers in Yeshua, predominantly Jewish, expressing their New Covenant faith in a way retaining most or all of the prayers, customs and style of non-Messianic synagogues. The word in Greek is "*sunagôgeê*"; it appears 57 times? in the New Testament. Fifty-six times it refers to a Jewish place of congregational assembly and is translated "synagogue" in virtually all English versions. Yet in the present verse KJV and the Revised Standard Version render it "assembly," and other versions translate it by "church," "meeting," "place of worship" and other avoidances of the word "synagogue." This reflects the translators' unwillingness to acknowledge the Jewishness of New Covenant faith and the overall antisemitic bias that has infected Christianity over the centuries (see [Rom 10:4](#)). The New Jerusalem Bible prepared by Roman Catholics does use the word "synagogue," but adds in a note, "James is writing to Jewish Christians; it is possible that they may even have still been attending Jewish synagogues, or it may be his word for the Christian 'assembly' for liturgical services." "Even... still ... attending Jewish synagogues"-how backward of them! And how backward of Sha'ul, who made it his "usual practice" to do so ([Act 17:2](#))!

Ya'akov is talking neither about a Christian church service nor a gathering of Jewish nonbelievers but a Messianic synagogue. He would not refer to "**your synagogue**" and assume his readers were in charge of seating visitors if the synagogue was not controlled by the Messianic Jews. There is no reason why "synagogue," with its unmistakably Jewish connotation, should have been "his word for the Christian 'assembly' " in general, since the term the New Testament uses 112 times? for that is "*ekklêsia*" (usually rendered "church" in other versions; see [Mat 16:18](#)); Ya'akov himself employs it at 5:14. The idea that this synagogue was Messianic simply did not occur to the Jerusalem Bible note-writer. Rendering *sunagôgeê* "assembly" or "church" instead of "synagogue" robs Messianic Jews of their identity.

This verse establishes a solid New Testament basis for modern-day Messianic synagogues, provided they do not exclude Gentile believers. To do so would "raise the middle wall of partition" once again, in violation of [Eph 2:11-16](#). A Messianic synagogue, while committed to preserving and developing a Jewish rather than a Gentile mode of expressing New Covenant faith, must be open to participation by believing Jews and Gentiles alike.

So, now that this is all said and done, we can move on with the greater matters in talking about this congregation and how it will operate.