

BRIT CHADASHA INTRODUCTION

THE BESURAS HAGEULAH ACCORDING TO MATTITYAHU

Liberals try to destroy the historical validity of the Besuras

Hageulah by asserting these documents were written by the second

and third generations of followers of our Moshiach rather than

eye-witnesses and first generation authors, even Moshiach's

Shluchim. They assert that Mattityahu didn't write Matthew,

Yochanan didn't write Yochanan, and Markos and Lukas were second

or third generation or even anonymous authors. In other words, the

Besuras Hageulah is based on late and unauthorized hear-say tales, not eye-witnessed accounts, and, according to this view, written 60 years or more after Moshiach Yehoshua died. And this later Brit Chadasha kehillah, when it wrote the Brit Chadasha Scriptures, acted like a ventriloquist, throwing its voice into Moshiach Yehoshua, making him say all kinds of things he never really said. This is what these liberals believe. They throw out whatever they want, and try to find the true Moshiach Yehoshua of history, but when they find him he looks suspiciously like themselves, an ethical humanist, or a figure lower than themselves, i.e an erroneous dead prophet who thought that the world was coming to an end in his life-time, etc. These liberals

say that anyone with an open mind who follows their scholarly approach will reach the same conclusion. What they forget is that the mind is not open and the heart is desperately wicked, who can know it? And unless you receive the Ruach Hakodesh of G-d you cannot know either G-d or G-d's mind, nor can you understand words taught by the Ruach Hakodesh--that is, spiritual words explaining spiritual things (I Cor. 2:13f). A worldly person cannot understand or judge spiritual matters correctly.

Of course there are Brit Chadasha Scriptures scholars who refute liberalism and reconstruct the data differently. They show that Moshiach Yehoshua died in C.E. 30 but only 30 years later,

Shliach Kefa, Luke, Shliach Sha'ul, and Mark are shown to be in Rome (Col. 4:10, 14; I Pt. 5:13), and apparently they were all writing away, with eye-witnessed materials and records in their hands. Furthermore, as we shall see, when you're reading Mark, you're really reading Shliach Kefa, because Mark basically has arranged Shliach Kefa's sermons into an ordered form. That's why Mattityahu and Luke use Mark's writing. Mattityahu and Luke want to preach Shliach Kefa's Besuras Hageulah. Yochanan does not use Shliach Kefa's material because it's already been used three times. But Shliach Kefa was not the only one in the empty tomb. Yochanan was with him (read Yochanan 20:1-9). So in the four Besuras Hageulahs you have an exhaustive witness of both Yochanan

and Shliach Kefa, to say nothing of the Shliach Mattityahu and

all the eye-witnesses Luke was able to talk to when he was in

Judaea with Shliach Sha'ul in C.E. 57.

Liberals have their own religion, be it humanism, existentialism,

communism, etc, and they use Biblical G-d-talk to preach their

own message. Liberals preach another Moshiach Yehoshua, but we

preach the coming Son of Man, the Son of the living G-d, known

personally by Shliach Kefa and Yochanan and seen by them alive

from the dead and coming apocalyptically with his kingdom (Mat.

16:28-17:8).

We know when Moshiach Yehoshua lived, from about 6/5 B.C.E. to

30 C.E., preaching roughly 26 C.E. (tevilah) - 30 C.E.

(hanged on the Aitz). His historical existence is confirmed in

the writings of Pliny, Tacitus, Suetonius, Lucian, Josephus, and

other historians and written of antiquity. Those who say that

Moshiach Yehoshua is a mythical character who never existed are

ignoramuses on the order of someone saying that Julius Caesar or

Napoleon never existed.

We know the kind of world Moshiach Yehoshua lived in. Antiochus

Epiphanes, the Syrian-Greek, desecrated G-d's holy Beis Hamikdash

and the Maccabee brothers defeated him in 165 B.C.E., recapturing

the city of Jerusalem, and rededicating the Beis Hamikdash,

setting up an independent state until Pompey conquered Israel and

Roman rule began in 63 B.C.E. This was the beginning of the end

for Israel, because in 70 C.E. the Jerusalem Beis Hamikdash and

the Zealot insurrectionists holding it were destroyed, and in 135

C.E. another Jewish revolt against Rome ended with the final

razing of Jerusalem. Actually, the Jewish revolts are dated C.E.

66, 116, and 132-5.

Before we study the Besuras Hageulah, we need to look at a very

important quote written by a leader in the L-rd's work born

around 100 years after Moshiach Yehoshua rose from the dead:

Irenaeus, who flourished around C.E. 175-195. This man, who

preached the doctrine of the millennium, resided in what is today

France. As a youth, in Smyrna in Asia Minor (modern Turkey), his teacher had been Polycarp, who may have been the last survivor who had talked with the eyewitnesses of Moshiach Yehoshua and surely had a firsthand knowledge of the Besuras Hageulah and its inspired authors, being himself a disciple of the Shliach Yochanan.

Since Irenaeus had been Polycarp's student, a certain weight of credibility should be affixed to this quote, found in Irenaeus' work known popularly as Against Heresies, Book III, I.1. He wrote that Mattityahu also issued a written Besuras Hageulah among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Shliach Kefa and Shliach

Sha'ul were preaching at Rome, and laying the foundation of the
Brit Chadasha kehillah. After their departure, Markos, the
disciple and interpreter of Shliach Kefa, did also hand down to
us in writing what had been preached by Shliach Kefa. Lukas,
also, the co-worker companion of Shliach Sha'ul, recorded in a
book the Besuras Hageulah preached by him. Afterwards, Yochanan,
the disciple of the L-rd, who had leaned upon his breast, did
indeed publish a Besuras Hageulah during his residence at Ephesus
in Asia. This is the solemn testimony of Irenaeus.

Mark was written after that Antiochus Epiphanes redivivus figure,

Caligula, had almost put his image or statue up in the Beis

Hamikdash area in C.E. 40. That's why Mark writes, "But when ye

shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains" (Mark 13:14). If Matthew had written Matthew 22:7 (compare Luke 14:21,24) after 70 C.E., shouldn't we expect the same "(let the reader understand)"? Since Moshiach Yehoshua was a real navi and really predicted things that came true later, no "after-the-fact" spurious prophecies were needed (called prophecies ex eventu, a contradiction in terms). In his writing, Matthew does not exploit the destruction of Jerusalem; neither does Luke. Both Matthew and Luke seem almost unaware of it and

do not at all capitalize on the significance of this epochal event for their Gentile readers. The burden of proof is on those who assert that Moshiach Yehoshua could not have predicted Luke 21:20,24 or 19:43-44.

Because Ignatius of Antioch in his letter (written before 107) is the earliest witness to Mattityahu's Besuras Hageulah, many scholars believe Matthew wrote from Antioch or somewhere else in Syria like Damascus. Matthew is writing to convince the Greek-speaking Jewish people in the diaspora synagogues that Moshiach Yehoshua is the promised Jewish Moshiach. But Matthew is also speaking on behalf of the G-d-fearing Gentiles of the world and, for that reason, he uses the word ethnos (non-Jewish or

Gentile, that is, foreign or pagan tribe) more than any other

Besuras Hageulah writer. This also would speak well for a

possible Syrian origin of this Besuras Hageulah, since the Brit

Chadasha kehillah at Antioch had Greek-speaking Jews and a great

burden to go to the Gentiles throughout the world (see Acts

11:19-22; 13:1). However, Mattityahu's Besuras Hageulah could

have been written in Israel, as well. The author is familiar with

Jerusalem and writes from that vantage point (see Matt.27:8;

28:15).

Certainly Luke's Besuras Hageulah was written before the book of

Acts (see Acts 1:1). Among other reasons, since Acts has a

surprisingly absolute lack of notice or interest that Jerusalem

has been destroyed, Luke/Acts seems likely to have been written

before C.E. 70. If Rav Sha'ul's trial has not taken place yet at

the end of Acts, then Acts should be dated around C.E. 63, Luke's

Besuras Hageulah dated before that, and Mark's Besuras Hageulah

dated before Luke (since Luke uses Mark). These are all factors

that must be taken into consideration in deciding the date of

Matthew. However, there is, of course, another possibility: both

Luke and Matthew, as men who knew Mark personally, may have used

Mark's own unpublished material which only later, and with

additions, was published as the Besuras Hageulah of Mark during

the early 60's when Shliach Sha'ul, Mark, and Luke were all in

Rome together (see Col. 4:10; Philemon 24; I Shimon Kefa 5:13;

Col. 4:14; II Tim. 4:11).

It is also possible that Matthew wrote the so-called "Q material"

which Papias of Hierapolis in modern Turkey (quoted by Eusebius

the fourth century C.E. Brit Chadasha kehillah historian), may be

referring to when he says (probably around C.E. 110), "Matthew

compiled the logia (sayings) in the Hebrew (Aramaic?) dialect,

and each one translated/interpreted them as he was able." If

this is true, we see that Luke was dependent on both Matthew and

Mark for his Besuras Hageulah. If Matthew's Besuras Hageulah had

also been in Luke's hands, and if Luke/Acts had been written

before C.E. 63, then Matthew must have been written before C.E.

63, and Mark still earlier. This is as close to the date of

Matthew as we can firmly conclude.

Mattityahu, like the three other inerrant versions of the Besuras

Hageulah, is not mere biography because its interest is

kerygmatic (kerygma is a Greek word meaning "proclamation" or

"preaching" as well as "what is preached"). Matthew is sermon

material stitched together to tell a story. Since Matthew and

Luke are apparently dependent on Mark's words, and since much of

Mark's words are Shliach Kefa's sermon material and Shliach

Kefa's anointed words (the "rock" of Matthew 16:15-18), it

becomes obvious that the Besuras Hageulah Gospels contain

preaching that is intended to be ingested by the reader and then not merely read but preached. Mat. 9:9 and 10:3 mention Matthew, as if to signal his humility in acknowledging his own part of the authorship (see also Matthew 13:52).

The Sermon on the Mount (chs. 5-7) gives us a taste of Moshiach's Torah or law/teaching (I Cor. 9:21), for Moshiah Yehoshua is presented apologetically to Jews as the New Moses (see Isaiah 49:9; Matthew 12:1-8; 9:16-17). The Moshiah's law is so stringent only the regenerate, repentant, law-abiding, true disciples can follow his Torah in this wicked and adulterous world. The lawless, false disciples cannot keep Moshiah's

Torah. These "scribes-and-pharisees kind of false talmidim and maggidim" filling up the Brit Chadasha kehillah will be separated at the final judgment (7:21-23; 13:36-43; 25:31-46). A rebuke to them is found in chs. 23-25; this is not a mere external polemic against outsiders in the synagogues and in the Jerusalem Beis Hamikdash; this is also focussing on those within the Brit Chadasha kehillot who love their reverential titles, offices, power and perogatives, and who, in time of distress are "in love with this present world," and desert the poor, persecuted, true brethren of the Israel of G-d (II Tim. 4:10). They are the lawless ones, the false disciples and false maggidim, without the oil of the Ruach Hakodesh issuing in the kind of obedience that

keeps their torches lit and their light of sanctification and

holiness shining (25:8; 5:14-16).

At the time Matthew is writing (see above), the early Messianic

community has been in existence long enough to have had its share

of those cunning, opportunistic "organization men" who lack the

courageous zeal in witnessing of the charter members and have

settled down to try to assert political control over what was

once a revival movement and to shun the poor, itinerant, homeless

emissaries of Moshiach's shlichut as unwanted rivals. Possibly

for this reason, there is a great emphasis in Matthew's Besuras

Hageulah on the need to be on one's guard against the swelling

pride of the religious leaders (16:6) and to keep close to the

dangerous Aitz of persecution and lowly, compassionate sacrifice

and bold, open, proclamation (10:27). Only so armed can believers

avoid the pitfall of a worldly, false profession (24:37-44).

In Matthew's Besuras Hageulah the above ideas are exemplified by

two gates, two ways, two types of trees, two kinds of foundation,

two breeds of followers, the moral and the immoral. Entrance

into the Kingdom is obtained in the end only by those who have

the kind of faith that issues in exacting, overflowing

righteousness (5:20). The "crowds" want no part of this way to

righteousness. Only a few obtain this road. The vast majority

want the easy life if they can somehow find it in a religion that pays lip-service to Moshiach Yehoshua (7:22) but avoids his hard, restricting commands that prohibit sinful pleasures and produce fearless preaching and persecution.

The pseudo-prophets want the limelight and the chief seats and the flashy attention of the external show of their charismatic activity (7:22), but they do not want to pay the private price of doing and being a life of exacting holiness and purity. The foundation of their ministries is wrong. They fail to base their whole existence on the rock of the Torah of the Moshiach, and on the true faith that obeys his sayings. Gehinnom awaits these foolish maggidim of Moshiach Yehoshua (7:23), which is really

another "Moshiach Yehoshua", for the true Moshiach Yehoshua disowns their Besuras Hageulah with its evil, antinomian ways and wicked fruit (7:20). If they do not repent, these are bound for Gehinnom, because they are guilty of faithlessly disobeying the Moshiach's Torah given in Matthew chapters 5-7. Study the word anomia (lawlessness), a key word regarding religious sin in Matthew 7:23; 13:41; 23:28; 24:12.

Matthew tells believers how to recognize false prophets by their eschatology. If they have immoral behavior they are false prophets (7:13-23). If they preach anything other than an imminent parousia they are false prophets(24:23-25:13). The word

tameion in Matthew 24:26 means a room without windows in the

interior of the house; that is, a hidden or even secret storage

room or private, secret chamber (the word is used that way in I

Clement 50), where one could pray in secret or in hiding as in

Mat. 6:6 or Isaiah 26:20 in the Septuagint. See Luke 12:3 where

the word must mean private room. Anyone who says, in spite of

Mat. 24:26, that the Moshiach will come secretly needs to bring

his doctrine into line with the Greek Brit Chadasha Scriptures

(see also Rev. 1:7). The public and open, non-secret aspect of

the Second Coming is taught in Luke 17:23-24; 21:26-28, 35 and

the doctrine of a private or secret, non-public parousia is

condemned as well in II Thes. 2:1-8. From Zechariah 14:5 and

Luke 17:37 we may surmise that the "corpse" in Matthew 24:28 is Jerusalem (certainly Jerusalem was a corpse in 586 B.C.E. and even later, after Matthew wrote, in C.E. 70--see Luke 19:43-44; 21:32) and the "vultures" are the angels and raptured saints with the Son of Man at the Second Coming. The vultures signify divine judgment (see 16:27). Those who insist on separating the rapture of the saints and the Second Coming so that they become two different events with a considerable time interval between them have to grapple with the fact that the word *episunago* "to gather together" is used in Matt. 24:31; Mark 13:27; II Thes. 2:1 and appears to be a technical expression for the rapture as even

Dispensationalists admit (see Ryrie Study Bible note on II Thes.

2:1), just as parousia is a technical expression for the Second

Coming. But these two expected events, the "gathering together"

and the parousia, are seen as one and the same event in both II

Thes. 2:1 and Matt. 24:27-31. We must make our teaching line up

with the Greek Brit Chadasha Scriptures, not with some human

tradition of Dispensationalism taught as doctrine.

Mt. 16:16-19 views Shliach Kefa's anointed words as

representative of the Brit Chadasha kehillah's kerygma and

doctrine and shows, using rabbinic technical terms, by what

criteria conduct is permitted or prohibited (asur) by means of

shunning from fellowship or restoring to communion. If someone

in your congregation claims to be a believer in the Lord but is a

fornicator or sexually unclean or guilty of any unrepentant

wickedness condemned by Scripture, you also share his guilt if

you do not obey Mat. 18:15-20, which speaks the same message as

Mat. 16:16-19; I Cor. 5:4-5, 9-13; Gal. 5:19-21 and II Thes.

3:14. Mat. 7:1-5 has to do with interpersonal judgmental

attitudes, not Brit Chadasha kehillah discipline of idlers and

fornicating hypocrites.

The word pornea in Matthew 19:9 generally means sexual

immorality, but in certain instances it may refer specifically to

incest (Acts 15:20), as in the sins of Lev. 18. The rabbis

called this kind of incestuous Lev. 18 forbidden marriage zehnut

which means prostitution in the sense of an illicit union. In

Mat.19:9 we see the Pharisees trying to tempt Moshiach Yehoshua

by making him take sides in the debate among the rabbis of two

schools regarding the correct interpretation of two words in

Deuteronomy 24:1: ervat davar, "something indecent" or "a matter

of nakedness." Moses granted grounds for divorce for the man

(not the woman) if the husband found "something indecent" in his

wife. According to Moses, all the husband had to do was give her

a bill of divorcement and she could then remarry if she chose,

which she had little choice but to do, because a single woman

living independently was practically an impossibility in the

society and culture of the day. Of course, the teaching of

Moshiach Yehoshua is more exacting on this point, and women

without families were in some cases cared for by the congregation

in the early days of the Brit Chadasha kehillah.

In the days of Moshiach Yehoshua the marriage laws of Deuteronomy

22:13-30 were strictly interpreted and a husband had to divorce

an adulterous wife or a woman guilty of infidelity during the

engagement period (in which case immorality/deception in entering

the union would annul the marriage--Mat. 1:19; Deu 22:13-21).

The law provided no loop-hole for her to be forgiven as Hosea

graciously forgave his wife. However, Matthew 19:9 is translated,

"Any husband who sends his spouse away--the reason of fornication

being left out of account or excepted--and marries another woman

commits adultery (against the first woman)." This is the

exceptive clause: "except for porneia (sexual immorality,

unchastity, unlawful sexual intercourse)." The exception has a

purpose in a society governed by Torah. The man who follows the

Torah is being protected from going through life with a second

marriage but under the stigma of being called an adulterer

against his first wife, when in fact he was forced by the Torah

to put the first of two wives away. Yosef would have been

excepted by Mat. 19:9 from being an adulterer if he had in fact

found Miryam to be an immoral fiancée (Mat. 1:19) and if in fact

he had thereafter remarried subsequent to the annulment of the first marriage. (An engagement in that day had the binding force of a marriage and had to be broken by divorce.) Having said all this to point out the ramifications of the Matthew 19:9 exceptive clause, it should be added that this verse shows the higher moral demands of Brit Chadasha Torah/teaching and destroys any loop-hole lawless believers might try to use to contract serial marriages under the screen of justifiable divorces, thus masking lechery with legalism. Another exception is abandonment, according to I Cor.7:15.

The Greek word matheteuo is very important in Mt. 28:19-20. It

means "make a disciple of, teach." "Go (a command to shlichut

and kiruv outreach), therefore, make learners with a teacher

(that's what a talmid is), make them talmidim of mine, all the

ethnic peoples, giving them a tevilah of teshuva in ha-Shem of

HaAv and HaBen and HaRuach HaKodesh, instructing them that they

must keep all the commandments that you have received from me.

And, look, surely I am with you always, to the Kets of the Olam

Hazeh."

How can you obey this command if you are not regularly sharing

and/or teaching with countable inquirers? How can you obey Mt.

28:19-20 if you are not attempting to bring these people to take

the required immersion and be incorporated into the shared life

of a community of believers? It is not hearers of the Word who

are true disciples, but doers of the Word (7:24).

Mat. 23:39; 24:32 make important points about the relationship

between eschatology and Jewish outreach.

Prayerlessness opens one to temptation, whereas watchfulness in

prayer guards against this very danger. See Mat. 24:42-44;

25:1-13 26:38-41. Moshiach Yehoshua lived in this real world.

Moshiach Yehoshua preached a message about heaven and the Kingdom

of heaven/G-d (Mat. 10:7). And the message he preached was rooted

in the message of the prophets, which is this: As surely as there

was an Abraham, as surely as there was a Moses and an Exodus, as

surely as there was a Joshua and a conquest of Israel, as surely
as there was a David and his coming Messianic Davidic Throne
imminently present in Moshiach Yehoshua and his words and deeds
and in his resurrection and ascension, so just as surely there
will be a Day of the L-rd, when the world will come to an end.

The Day of the L-rd is a day of massacre, darkness, tears, and
woe, when G-d's burning fury would fall on sinners and when the
righteous remnant will be saved. This day came near when
prophesied invading armies actually did come and destroy the Beis
Hamikdash and Jerusalem, as they did In 586 B.C.E. and 70 C.E.

The fact that prophets were able to predict such an "imminent"

Day of the L-rd as these should convince people that the prophets

know what they're talking about when they prophesy the Day of the

L-rd and the end of the world. Certainly Yochanan of the Tevilah

of Teshuva and Moshiach Yehoshua saw the armies of Rome coming to

burn and destroy Jerusalem at least 40 years before they arrived.

Amos was one of the first prophets to preach about the Day of the

L-rd. He preached (Amos 5:20): "Will not the Day of the L-rd be

darkness, not light, totally dark, without a ray of light?" But

then Amos proclaims the Day of the L-rd in terms of the Moshiach

(Amos 9:11): "On that Day, I shall rebuild the tottering hut of

David, make good the gaps in it, restore its ruins and rebuild it

as it was in the days of old." In Matthew 24:3 we find Moshiach

Yehoshua's disciples, alert to these kinds of Scriptures,
quizzing Moshiach Yehoshua like this: "And while he was sitting
on the Mount of Olives the disciples came and asked him when they
were by themselves, "Tell us, when is this going to happen, and
what sign will there be of your coming and of the end of the
world?" Then, in the discourse that followed, Moshiach Yehoshua
predicted the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash and the
subsequent destruction of the world (allowing for enough of a
delay in the parousia for the Good News to be proclaimed
throughout the world Mat. 24:14).

The doctrine of the resurrection of the body is found in the

Psalms and in Isaiah 26:19 and Daniel 12:2. Moshiach Yehoshua

even saw this doctrine in the book of Jonah and pointed to this

book to clarify the relationship between the doctrine of the

resurrection and his own ministry. Regarding this, in Mt. 16:1-4

he faulted wicked mankind for its evil and willful refusal to use

G-d given inductive powers of reasoning to gather from all the

available data the correct meaning or conclusion.

Both David and Malachi called the Moshiach "L-rd." When Malachi

3:1 says "the L-rd" whom you seek will suddenly come to His Beis

Hamikdash, he uses the same Hebrew word HaAdon, (the L-rd) as

Zechariah does when he says "the L-rd of all the earth"

(Zechariah 4:14). In Mt. 16:16 Shliach Kefa identifies

Moshiach Yehoshua as the person referred to in Mal. 3:1-4 (see

Mark 1:2; Mat. 1:16).

Yochanan of the Tevilah of Teshuva was an antiestablishment

preacher who infuriated the "religious establishment watchdog"

Pharisees because Yochanan turned the Moshiach's coming wrath

against them and undercut their confidence in being saved by

virtue of their self-righteous boast in being religious and

Jewish. There is no privilege before G-d by virtue of natural

birth in being Jewish (Mt. 3:9), because both Jew and non-Jew are

born under the power of sin (Rom. 3:9; Ps. 51:5), and G-d is no

respector of persons (Acts 10:34).

At the time of Moshiach Yehoshua's ministry, Pontius Pilate had

just started his tour of duty as prefect (26 C.E.) in Jerusalem.

He was the Roman governor of Judea, Samaria, and Idumaea. In the

northern town of Tiberias on Lake Galilee, Herod Antipas, (a

Roman vassal) ruled over Galilee and the trans-Jordan area. His

half-brother Philip (whose wife he had taken) ruled from the

extreme north of Israel in Caesarea-Philippi. The Roman

government acknowledged the legitimacy of these Herods (sons by

different women of Herod the Great), though they ruled as

subordinate leaders or tetrarchs. This is why Pilate sent

Moshiach Yehoshua before the Roman "puppet" king Herod Antipas

for judgment. Mobs could be hired, and the chief kohanim had

obviously hired people of little Jewish religion to cry out for

the death of a fellow Jew on a holy day. The chief kohanim were

Sadducees who did not believe in the supernatural and saw

Moshiach Yehoshua as an aspiring political claimant hailed as

"Ben Dovid" (and heir to the throne) when he entered Jerusalem

and then came (without their authorization!) and began taking

authority over the Beis Hamikdash, an act which they also saw as

political, necessitating Moshiach Yehoshua's death, since a

popular uprising in favor of making Moshiach Yehoshua King would

be suicidal, bringing down the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash

and Jerusalem by the Roman Empire. The act of driving the money

changers out of the Beis Hamikdash seems to have been a carefully

calculated move on the part of Moshiach Yehoshua. It challenged

the authority of the chief kohen with a higher authority which

they tried unsuccessfully to dethrone by putting him to death.

But the quick work of the chief kohanim against Moshiach Yehoshua

avoided a full hearing before the Sanhedrin (Jewish supreme

court). Instead a technically illegal "emergency" meeting, not in

the Beis Hamikdash chamber in the daytime but in the Kohen

Gadol's home at night, was hurriedly called, and a mob

subservient to the chief kohanim harrassed Pilate until he gave

in and allowed the hanging on the Aitz to placate the mob and the

chief kohanim. All of the above throws light on the way to

interpret Mat. 27:25 in light of Josh. 2:19, since it is the

kohen's mob and not all the people speaking.

The Hagbahah (Lifting up) of Moshiach took place Yom Shishi, ca.

April 7, 30 C.E. He was pierced and hanged (Devarim 21:23;

Isaiah 53:5) about midday and was dead before dusk. He arose in

the early morning light on Yom Rishon morning (Sifrat Haomer of

Bikkurim, 16 Nisan), ca. April 9, 30 C.E., the Jews reckoning any

part of a day as a whole day, making Yom Shishi, Shabbos and Yom

Rishon three days from the death to Moshiach's Techiyas HaMesim,

Moshiach's Tish and Betrayal being Thursday night. Note also this

chronology: Rav Sha'ul becomes a believer and an eye-witness of

the Moshiach's Techiyas HaMesim just a very few years later.

Like Ya'akov, he was an unbeliever until the resurrection

appearance.

Finally, before we read the Besuras Hageulah of Mattityahu, let's

look at the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14: "Behold a virgin (HA'ALMA,

the Virgin)." In the Hebrew Bible this word is never used of a

married woman, but always used of a sexually mature unmarried

maiden with virginity assumed and even demanded, since an almah

who was not a virgin would appear to be bearing an illegitimate

child since an almah was by definition unmarried. Such a

deflowered young unmarried woman in Israel would not be called an

almah but either a bad woman (a prostitute) or a pitiful victim

of rape or a deceiving fornicating fiancée to be stoned because

she entered into a marriage without proofs of virginity...and in

Deuteronomy chapter 22, the word *almah* is not used even once when

discussing women of this sort (unmarried women whose virginity is

destroyed by rape or immorality). The amazing way of a man with

a maid (*almah*) in Proverbs 30:19 has to do with the mystery of

sexual attraction. Certainly, no one can prove sexual purity is

implicitly excluded in the case of this Proverbs 30:19 *almah*. No

king would want a mere unmarried woman whose sexual purity had

been given to another man; therefore the word must be translated

"virgins" in Song of Songs 6:8 where it is given in the plural.

After the almah slept with the king she was no longer an almah but a concubine or a queen (see the separate harem quarters for virgin: and concubines in Esther 2:13-14.) In Hebrew there is a technical word for the proofs of virginity B'TULIM (the blood stained garment of the marriage night) and a related technical word for the virgin B'TULAH, who at the same time may or may not be married (i.e. legally belong to a man she has not as yet slept with). But almah is the only word for an unmarried woman with sexual purity or virginity assumed. (See Edward Young's The Book of Isaiah, Vol 1 p.286f, Eerdmans, 1965). Mt. 1:23 quotes Isa. 7:14,"Look, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being

interpreted is, G-d with us."

Now this virgin from Galilee seems related to the tribe of Levi

on her mother's side (see Luke 1:5,36), but on her father's side

it seems certain that she was from the tribe of Judah and the

lineage of David. This is the sense of Romans 1:3 "who as to his

human nature was a descendent of David," II Timothy 2:8

"descended from David," and Hebrews 7:14 "it is clear that our

L-rd descended from Judah." As Edersheim has pointed out, kohanim

normally either married daughters of kohanim or nobility, so

Miryam's family on her father's side may shortly before have held

higher rank (presumably royal kinship in the line of David). See

on this Edersheim's *The Life and Times* p. 149. Luke 2:5 seems to indicate that Miryam too was of the house of David and was probably required to enroll. In any case Yosef, a descendent of the house of David, married Miryam and named the child, thus taking it as his own and thereby legally conferring on it all the Davidic hereditary rights. The legal right to the throne came through the father and depended on whether the father recognized the child as his son, which Yosef did by naming him--see Babylonian Talmud *Baba Bathra* 130a on Deuteronomy 21:16. Also, see Ignatius' *Epistle to the Ephesians*, "Miryam of the seed of David." If "Heli" is Miryam's father (Luke 3:23) and if "Jacob" is Yosef's father (Matt. 1:16), then Moshiach Yehoshua descended

naturally through the former and legally through the latter (see

Gleason Archer, Encyclopedia of Biblical Difficulties, p. 316)

and this would account for the alleged discrepancies between

Luke's and Mattityahu's genealogies. Incidentally, genealogy was

not left to guesswork in pious Jewish families. An accurate

genealogical family tree was transmitted generation to generation

over hundreds of years by religious Jews, particularly those

related to the tribes of Judah and Levi, where kehunnah

(priesthood) rights and throne rights were involved. These

records were kept in Jerusalem. Both Luke and Matthew had the

opportunity to inquire into these records.

The Jewish gematria for the name David spells the numerical equivalent of 14 in 1:17. You can see the play on words in the Hebrew of "Nazareth" and "Nazorean" in 2:23 (compare Netzaret to Natzri).

Some of the texts in Matthew that tell us that Matthew was convinced (as were many others) that Yehoshua was divine are 1:23; 2:11; 7:22; 12:8; 14:33; 28:17-19. Notice the texts that create major division markers in this Besuras Hageulah (see 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1).

Note 10:22. From the time of the death of Shliach Kefa under Nero in Rome the mere profession of the name of Moshiach, apart from any other charges could lead to a martyr's death.

A clue to effective street preaching is found in 13:34 and in the

brilliant use of parables in the open-air preaching of Moshiach

Yehoshua. They forced the audience to reflect on what he was

saying and yet parables removed a basis for an argument as far as

hostile listeners were concerned. Parables can be very short:

see Mt. 13:33. Though not necessarily, they can be allegorical:

see Mt. 13:36-43. They sometimes state their point as a moral of

the story: see 20:16. Sometimes a type of human character is set

forth as a warning or an exemplar (see 7:24-27). Sometimes we are

told how G-d works or governs or sees human response (see

13:18-30). Parables generally have a challenge in them, even to

the opponents in the audience. Using Mt. 13:33 as a model, write

a short parable with no more than 50 words that is suitable for

street preaching. For example, "The new birth is like the

metamorphosis from a caterpillar to a pupa to a Monarch

butterfly. Old things have passed away. Look, all things have

become new." Mattityahu's Gospel is very Jewish. In 15:2 he

refers to *nitalat yadayim* "washing (lit. lifting) of the hands,"

a human precept taught as doctrine by the Pharisees. If Mark

9:37 gives us any clue as to who the "least of these" is in Matt.

25:45, it must mean "all people" (see Gal. 6:10).

A major theme of Mattityahu's *Besuras Hageulah* is that G-d

expects people to recognize His power and to trust Him, that He

cares about them. Without this kind of faith it is impossible to please G-d (Heb. 11:6). See 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8. Acceptance of the Good News entails an Aitz of self-denying discipleship where in the old g-dless life is freely yielded up to destruction by the believer (see 10:38).

Along with many of the insights above, Robert Gundry in his commentary on Matthew (Eerdmans, 1982) shows that the important question to which the whole book intends to bring its readership to an affirmative answer is Mt. 12:23, "Can this be Ben Dovid, the Son of David (i.e. the Jewish Moshiach)? For Matthew's argument proving the answer to this question is "yes," see

9:27;12:23; 15:22; 21:9; 21:15 and all the quotations from the

Jewish Bible sprinkled throughout Mattityahu's Besuras Hageulah.

THE BESURAS HAGEULAH ACCORDING TO MARKOS

Whereas Mattityahu slanted his Besuras Hageulah to make it

especially appealing to Jewish people (presenting Yehoshua as the

royal Jewish Moshiach), Markos (Mark) is obviously talking to a

non-Jewish audience unfamiliar with Mark's own Jewish religious

background (see 7:3-4; 14:12; 15:42).

Mark wrote his Besuras Hageulah and published it in its final

form probably not much later than the Neronian persecution in Rome in C.E. 64-65, and possibly much earlier, perhaps as early as C.E. 55. Mark 13:14 (also II Thes. 2:3-12) seems to have Caligula in recent memory. This mad Roman Caesar commanded his statue to be set up in the Jerusalem Beis Hamikdash in C.E. 40, but was assassinated before the order was carried out. All this happened around 10 years after Moshiach Yehoshua concluded his ministry in Israel around C.E. 30. Undoubtedly the writing of this Besuras Hageulah is one of the things that prompted Shliach Sha'ul to say of Mark, "He is helpful to me in my ministry" (II Tim. 4:11). Certainly Mark's authorship of this Besuras Hageulah helps to account for the frequent mention of Mark's name in the rest of

the Brit Chadasha Scriptures, since without such authorship his

importance in the early Brit Chadasha kehillah would not be

easily explained.

There is a possibility (though the evidence is divided) that the

fleeing young man in Mark 14:51-52 is Mark himself, humbly not

mentioning his own name along with the eleven Shluchim. If so,

then Mark was an eye witness of the events in Gethsemane. We do

know that Mark could have been because the disciples used as a

meeting place "the house of Miryam the mother of Yochanan Mark"

(Acts 12:12), and there is a tradition that the Last Supper was

celebrated there (close by Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives--see

Mark 14:26).

It is also possible that the reason Mark went on the first

emissary journey of Moshiach's shlichut (C.E. 46-48) may have

been because he possessed an early version of his Besuras

Hageulah or was an eye-witness of some of the key incidents he

writes about in his Besuras Hageulah, and that Luke, with a

working draft of his Besuras Hageulah, in effect took Mark's

place in Rav Sha'ul's team of emissaries of Moshiach's shlichut.

Mark dropped out from Rav Sha'ul's mission team around C.E. 46

and Luke came onboard with Shliach Sha'ul around C.E. 50 (Acts

16:10). It appears that both Matthew and Luke used Mark in

writing their Besuras Hageulah. If one asks why there is more

than one Besuras Hageulah in the Brit Chadasha, one reason is

that everything must be established as true by two or three

witnesses (Deut. 19:15). Behind each Besuras Hageulah stands a

different Shliach of Moshiach, Kefa behind Markos, Sha'ul behind

Lukas, Yochanan behind Yochanan, and Mattityahu behind Mattityah,

all eye-witnesses of the Moshiach's Techiyas HaMesim.

Mark's Besuras Hageulah seems to be slanted from Shliach Kefa's

point of view, giving Shliach Kefa's direct eye witness account

(see 1:40; 3:5; 5:4-6) such as only a maggid and navi like

Shliach Kefa could have provided. Also, significant portion of

the narrative is structured around Shliach Kefa's personal

testimony, which shows that under pressure of persecution (such as in the Neronian persecution, perhaps) a disciple might deny the L-rd and still be forgiven later, since fear is not the unforgivable sin. Some scholars believe the events of Nero's persecution of the Brit Chadasha kehillah may have helped to shape the emphasis of Mark's material as it was finally published around the time of Nero's persecution (64 C.E.) A crisis occurred in Rome in the reign of Nero. Shliach Kefa and others died al kiddush ha-Shem. (Compare Matthean and Lucan parallels to Mark 10:30 and you will see that this Besuras Hageulah alone adds the words "with persecutions"). Denying oneself and taking up the Moshiach's Aitz was no metaphor but an all-consuming reality, "no

strange thing" but "like Master, like disciple." And just as the Moshiach's death made the deity of the Moshiach apparent to the Roman centurion at the Aitz (Mark 15:39), so too the brave, even joyful (Ya'akov 1:2) suffering of believers made their holy election manifest to many (Phil. 1:28). Our testimony is not only in words; it may be in a martyr's deeds. Mark's Besuras Hageulah preaches that in view of the imminent tribulation overtaking the Moshiach and his people, the Son of Man must suffer and so also must his kedoshim.

As William Lane has shown in his New International Commentary on Mark (Eerdmans, 1974), a point of climax to the first half of

Mark's Besuras Hageulah is reached at Caesarea Philippi with the

confession of Shliach Kefa that Yehoshua is the Moshiach (see

8:29). Mark's aim is to get the reader/listener to make the same

recognition as Shliach Kefa and the Roman centurion at the Aitz

(15:39). Because Nero made the followers of our Moshiach his

scapegoats for setting fire to Rome, the Followers of our

Moshiach were subjected to the Moshiach's temptations "with the

wild beasts" (1:12-13) in the gladiatorial arena and found

themselves being betrayed to the authorities by many "Judases"

(3:19). The believers in Rome carried the same Aitz with the

Moshiach of being misrepresented and falsely labelled (3:21-30).

Mark's Besuras Hageulah shows how the Aitz of persecution sifts

the true believers from the pseudo-believers and apostates and
betrayers (4:17-23), since following Moshiach may cost a disciple
all that he possesses, even his life (10:17-30).

Notice how Moshiach Yehoshua's own disciples flee in 14:41-52,
66-72 and Shliach Kefa denies the L-rd as well. The message to
the Romans who had fled to save their lives was that, if they
repented, G-d would forgive the cowardly and give them another
chance to make their confession, if need be with their own blood
in martyrdom. The Roman persecution becomes a paradigm for the
"great tribulation" existential situation of the believer who
must confess Moshiach Yehoshua openly in a dangerous, evil

anti-Moshiach world. For the believer is promised "persecutions"

(10:30) as the response of the world to his witness to Moshiach

Yehoshua. Yet the believer is commanded to make a radical

abandonment of life in this world as his response to the Besuras

Hageulah (8:34-38).

Shliach Kefa says, "Whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased

from sin" (I Shimon Kefa 4:1) and Mark says similarly of the

believer's sacrifice for the L-rd in the midst of persecution and

trial, "everyone will be salted by fire" (9:49-50). Apparently,

the reason for the writing of Mark's Besuras Hageulah was both to

preserve the witness of Shliach Kefa after his death and also to

sustain "tribulation saints" exposed to Messianic sufferings and

martyrdom (see 8:36; 10:29-31,39; 13:9,13).

Just as Mattityahu emphasizes that Moshiach is Adoneinu (see how

Moshiach Yehoshua is born as the fulfilment of the Immanuel or

G-d-with-us prophecy in the first chapter of Matthew and then has

all authority in heaven and earth in the last chapter), so this

same Moshiach Adoneinu theme is preached in Mark. The authority

of G-d is seen in Moshiach Yehoshua in the way he commands demons

to be quiet, the storm at sea to be still, disease to be healed,

the ocean surface to hold his weight, loaves and fishes to

multiply, blind eyes to see, deaf ears to hear, a fig tree to

wither, and his own body to be anointed for burial--all with the

divine grace that only G-d in human form could manifest.

At this time there were mystery religions and various sects with "in-the-know" initiates interested in secret religious knowledge, divination or fortunetelling, exorcism, magic, demon-worship, and other occult practices. Mark's Besuras Hageulah appeals to the curiosity of such an audience with a bigger divine mystery, namely the identity of the Moshiach, an undisclosed yet open secret which only the redeemed are privy to (8:18; 1:25,34; 3:12; 8:30; 1:43-45; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26; 9:9). Mark's Besuras Hageulah constitutes one long charismatic power encounter where Moshiach Yehoshua and those he authorizes (3:15; 6:7) totally storm Satan's kingdom (1:13; 3:26-27) and strike a lethal blow for G-d

and for those who have ears to hear and eyes to see the true

identity of Moshiach Yehoshua as the Son of G-d. (Note Mark 15:39

is not "Truly this man was a Son of G-d" but "the Son of G-d"

because predicate nouns that are definite nevertheless often lack

the definite article "the" when they precede the verb.) Also, the

title Bar Nosh Son of Man could mean both the Messianic figure in

Dn. 7:13-14 or a circumlocution for the first person singular

pronoun "I." Therefore, this added to the enigmatic aspect of

some of the L-rd's sayings in Mark, since it is only in the Son

of Man sayings after Mark 8:38 that the messianic secret" is

clearly revealed in Mark's Besuras Hageulah that Y'shua is the

Dn. 7:13 apocalyptic Judge appointed by the Father (see Mark

13:26).

This Besuras Hageulah shows the impotence of mere ritualistic religion to remove the defilement of the unregenerate nature (see 7:1-23) and contains teaching which calls for total war against one's sinful nature, a summons to nothing short of "a suicide of the flesh" as far as the cowardly, selfish, proud, unregenerate nature is concerned (see 9:42-50 where the salt that was used in the preparation of some sacrifices is used to point to the self-sacrifice in the face of persecution necessary to preserve new life and kingdom holiness). The old evil nature must be nailed to death in order that the new life in G-d can arise (Mark

8:35).

The importance of children's ministry is underlined in 10:13-16.

People in the Messianic community have the disciples' tendency to

hinder children's work, treating children as somehow less

important than adults. Moshiach Yehoshua, on the other hand,

sees them as closer to the kingdom and is all the more on the

alert that they not be lost. Any new congregation that has no

vision or time for children is itself immature.

The Romans were accustomed to authoritarian models for their

leadership, but Mark uses a story about the disciples (10:35-45)

to show that gentle servanthood is the better way. This message

is needed in many cultures today where leaders tend to assert

themselves with a high hand both in and out of a religious situation.

A key idea in Mark is the reprehensibility of unbelief. Even the demons believe (and shudder) that in Mashiach Yehoshua G-d is powerfully among them, yet the religious authorities were "delighted" (14:11) to hear that Mashiach Yehoshua could be betrayed into their hands so that they could reassert their own religious authority by killing him. Here we see a more-than-demonic reprehensibility in unregenerate religious man" and we understand why G-d's fury burns forever in hellish reprisal against those in government or religion who assert their own

authority against G-d and defiantly refuse, even in the face of

overwhelming evidence, to believe that Yehoshua is the Ben

HaElohim.

Those involved in the deliverance of the demonized should study

the Besuras Hageulah of Mark and pray so that they will be able

to drive out evil spirits (see 9:17-29). Demons are angels who

have left their place of integrity, their proper domain in

heaven, and have placed themselves under the rule of the prince

of the demonic spirits (Matt. 12:24), Hasatan. Hasatan opposes

the work of the Moshiach by sending demons into people who for

their part open themselves to the rule of the Devil and become

demonized. In this Besuras Hageulah, Hasatan is using people to

make a last-ditch stand against the manifest in-breaking of the

Messianic Kingdom; however, those who are delivered from evil

spirits by the L-rd enter into the Kingdom with spiritual

violence (see Luke 16:16; Mt 11:12).

In the Besuras Hageulah, we see Hasatan try to annul Moshiach's

ministry by his temptations in the wilderness, the region where

demons prowled (Dt. 32:17). After three unsuccessful

attempts, Hasatan then waits for an "opportune moment" (Luke

4:13) and sifts Shliach Kefa (Luke 22:31) and tries to tempt

Moshiach Yehoshua again, using Shliach Kefa (Matt. 16:23).

Finally Hasatan finds the opportunity he is looking for in the

person of Judas (Luke 22:3; Yochanan 6:70; 13:2). Hasatan puts

things into people's hearts, but we are not ignorant of his

devices and are alerted by a word of knowledge (Luke 22:21) or

other gifts of the Spirit. Satan can hinder us, however. He can

snatch the word (Luke 8:12) from the hearts of those who don't

belong to the L-rd, those who are ensnared by the Devil (II Tim.

2:25-26) because they don't resist his wiles (Eph. 6:11; 4:27; I

Shimon Kefa 5:8-9) or stand firm against his schemes (Eph.6:11).

A demoniac is a person controlled by demonic powers. When the

demonic spirits are cast out at the authority of the name of

Moshiach Yehoshua, this proves that the Satanic dominion will be

destroyed and is already in principle defeated (Luke 10:18;

11:20; Yochanan 12:31) and is being conquered by the Kingdom of

G-d.

An exorcism is a healing miracle (Luke 9:42). People are to be

delivered of the demonic and to be restored to their right mind

(Mark 5:15) and these signs are to accompany the preaching of the

Besuras Hageulah (Mark 16:17,20) because authority to do

exorcisms is granted to the preachers of the Besuras Hageulah

(Matt. 10:1;Mark 6:7). A person who wants to be delivered, who

wants to resist Satan, and who makes full use of the means of

grace to stay delivered is released from demonic powers by the

anointing of the Ruach Hakodesh (Matt. 12:28).

The exorcist sometimes feels tremendous heat in his hands when he lays them on the head of the demoniac. This is the anointing of the Ruach Hakodesh. The demons sometimes manifest by a terrible odor and also rigidity in the person's body and other phenomena, including assuming the voice of the demoniac.

When the demon manifested in Acts 16:18, Shliach Sha'ul addressed the demon in these words, "I command you, in the name of Moshiach Yehoshua, to come out of her." When Moshiach Yehoshua demands to know the demon's name (Mark 5:9), he is exposing its essence, the essential character of its nature, in order to take authority over that area of the demoniac's life that the demon is dominating. Is it a lying demon? A deceiving demon? A demon

generating false doctrine (I Tim. 4:1)? How has its essential character become a Satanic stronghold in the demoniac? Unless the cleansed demoniac becomes fully occupied with the Lord's authority and means of grace (see for example Acts 2:42), the person may actually fall into greater demonic bondage later (Matt.12:43-45).

Now let us look at the tevilah of teshuva in the Besuras Hageulah of Mark. The Jewish people practiced self-immersion in ritual-baths when a man or woman had become ritually defiled as after a nocturnal emission, a menstrual period, handling a corpse, etc. The water became a kind of living metaphor of

purification, and all proselytes to Judaism were required to enter the mikveh. When the navi Yochanan (Yochanan of the tevilah of teshuva) appeared in the wilderness announcing the dawn of universal Brit Chadasha Apocalyptic Messianic [i.e. Orthodox] Judaism, all Israelites were commanded to make teshuva and prepare to receive the Moshiach, the Moshiach of Israel. Many of the proud P'rushim (Pharisees) and Tz'dukim (Sadducees) and soferim (scribes, rabbis) refused to heed the prophet's warning, and so excluded themselves from becoming proselytes to Brit Chadasha Judaism. They lacked the circumcision of the Ruach Hakodesh, the Spirit of the G-d of Israel, and were heathen at heart because they refused to repent and obey the Word of the

L-rd.

In the beginning Shliach Kefa could only preach the raw glorious

facts of what the Shluchim "had seen with their eyes and touched

with their hands" (I Yochanan 1:1). The so-called Logos

Christology of Yochanan, though equally primitive and true, did

not form the main subject of Shliach Kefa's preaching as it has

been recorded for us in Mark and in Acts. Nevertheless, it is

true that the Torah of G-d is His Wisdom (chochmah) that was at

His Side in the beginning (Prov. 8:30 and 30:4). The Torah

demanded death for those who go their own way and refuse to

repent and go G-d's way. Then the Torah enfleshed himself as the

Moshiach, the Moshiach Yehoshua, and the Wisdom of G-d dwelled among us (Mt. 12:42; Yochanan 1:14). The Word of G-d who demanded the justice of death for evil-doers mercifully offered his own death for our sins (I Cor. 1:23-24,30) in order that we might repent and let him write himself into our hearts (Jer. 31:31-34; Rev. 3:20). However, the Moshiach warns, "Unless you repent, you shall all alike perish" (Luke 13:3,5). So true saving faith turns from evil to G-d (I Thes. 1:9) and involves repentance.

The first proof of our repentant obedience through faith is that we obey the L-rd by taking the tevilah of Brit Chadasha Biblical Judaism in the name of Elohim HaAv (Isa. 63:16), and his living Torah, the Moshiach (his Wisdom, the Ben HaElohim--Prov. 30:4),

as well as the Spirit of the Holy One, praised be He. The prophet Yochanan immersed Jewish people as a witness to their repentance. The Shluchim did likewise, using Moshiach's tevilah as a witness that the new believers had turned from going their own way and were now going to steadfastly and faithfully follow the L-rd in his Seder, the Brit Chadasha chavurah (table fellowship), the Brit Chadasha torah (teaching) of the Shluchim, and the corporate prayers (tefillos). (See Acts 2:42).

Is. 53:3 says that the Moshiach would be despised, lowest of men, one for whom the people would have no regard. Ps. 22:6-7 says that the people would sneer at him and scorn him, jeer him as a

worm, not a man. Some said that no good thing could come from Nazareth (Yochanan 1:46) and that no prophet comes out of the Galilee (Yochanan 7:52).

The unusual circumstances of Yehoshua's virgin birth is alluded to in Mark 6:3. To be born of a woman who got pregnant and had her baby in less time than she was actually married to a man looked like an illegitimate birth. The Pharisees seem to throw this up at Moshiach Yehoshua in Yochanan 8:41 as though the scandal of it had followed him from Nazareth to Jerusalem, "We are not illegitimate children." Also see Yochanan 9:29, "As for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from." He was known pejoratively as "the son of Miryam" (Mark 6:3). It was

contrary to Jewish accepted custom to call a man the son of his

mother, even when she was a widow. Jephthah was mockingly known

as the son of a prostitute (Jdg. 11:1). So Moshiach Yehoshua was

insulted as a mamzer (illegitimate child).

His legal father was poor, a humble workman. His mother was a

virgin from Galilee. No Jewish person would tend to get excited

about someone with those lowly credentials. Thus Is. 53:2-3 was

fulfilled.

Mark 15:47 shows that two Miryams, Moshiach Yehoshua's mother and

Miryam Magdalene, saw the tomb where Moshiach Yehoshua was laid,

the tomb that was soon to be empty. There was no confusion

regarding where the tomb was. Since women's testimony was not valued in Jewish culture at this time, it is obvious that this fact was not invented. If invention had been resorted to, male witnesses would have been claimed.

At the end of this Besuras Hageulah, the women see the empty tomb and have it explained by an angelic interpreter. The women do not tell the authorities but, as we learn from Luke's research, they instead tell the disciples who listened to the words of the women but considered them an "idle tale" (Ieros Luke 24:11).

However, Yochanan tells us that Shliach Kefa and apparently

Yochanan himself ran to the tomb to confirm what the women were saying. Shortly afterwards, the L-rd appeared to both Shliach

Kefa and Yochanan.

To summarize, it is possible that the fleeing naked boy in Mark

14:51-52 is Mark himself. Mark was not one of the 12 but he seems

to have been in their company from a very early period, and

Mark's Mother's home was used by the disciples as the meeting

place of the Jerusalem congregation (see Acts 12:12-17). If Mark

were 15 years old when Moshiach Yehoshua was arrested, he would

be 31 in C.E. 46 when he went with Shliach Sha'ul and Bar-Nabba

on the first leg of the first journey of Moshiach's shlichut, and

Mark would have been in his late forties when Shliach Kefa

mentions him at the end of I Shliach Kefa. Mark seems to be a

precocious child who was fortunate to be, from his earliest years, in the very best company, knowing all the Shluchim and the L-rd's brothers and Shliach Kefa, Shliach Sha'ul, Luke, Timothy and most, if not all, of the other principle people in the Brit Chadasha Jewish Scriptures. G-d chose him to be Shliach Kefa's secretary, and to be a kiruv outreach worker and a navi, and to make sure that Shliach Kefa's Besuras Hageulah was properly recorded in writing. Certainly he had an unusual anointing and a very privileged life experience to fulfill his ministry, as Shliach Sha'ul later admitted (II Tim. 4:11). His failure during the first journey of Moshiach's shlichut did not keep him from later acquitting his ministry in a

wonderful way.

On Yochanan Mark see Acts 12:25; 13:5,13; 15:37,39; Col. 4:10;

Philem. 24; II Tim. 4:11; I Shimon Kefa 5:13.

Alexander and Rufus (Mark 15:21) were famous believers known by

the original hearers of Mark's Besuras Hageulah. These two men

were famous because their very own father had actually helped

Moshiach Yehoshua carry his Aitz. (see also Rom. 16:13).

Moshiach Yehoshua was probably denied by Shliach Kefa around 3

A.M., but that Moshiach Yehoshua forgave him is implied by Mark

16:7. The night was divided into 9 P.M., 12 P.M. 3 A.M. (this was

called "cockcrow"--see 13:35) and 6 A.M (dawn).

We sing the Shema because of Mark 12:29.

MARK 13:13

And you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who

endures to the end will be saved.

THE BESURAS HAGEULAH ACCORDING TO LUKAS

By the grace of G-d, Lukas (Luke) may have been the greatest

emissary of Moshiach's shlichut, physician and kiruv outreach

minister of all time (as well as one of the greatest literary

artists and most important historians who ever lived). Some

scholars are now dating Luke's Besuras Hageulah earlier than once

thought--that is, before Rav Sha'ul's second imprisonment,
possibly even years earlier in the unpublished version used on
Moshiach's shlichut travels. Acts could have been written as
early as C.E. 63 (see notes on Acts), and the Besuras Hageulah of
Luke would have been written before Acts. Reliable tradition
says that Luke was a medical man from Antioch in Syria, where
Shliach Sha'ul began his first Moshiach's shlichut journey. Luke
went with Shliach Sha'ul and Silas at least from Troas to
Philippi (Acts 16:10-12) and rejoined Shliach Sha'ul later to
accompany him to Jerusalem (via Troas and Miletus), and to
witness Rav Sha'ul's imprisonment in Caesarea and Rome. It is
not improbable that Luke as we know it was fully written in the

early 60's and that Luke-Acts was published as early as C.E. 63,

only 33 years after the resurrection of Moshiach Yehoshua. As

Rav Sha'ul's co-worker in ministry as early as C.E. 50, Luke

probably had access to interview Miryam (see 2:19), Shliach Kefa,

Yochanan, Ya'akov the brother of the L-rd, Philip (the kiruv

outreach minister and one of the "seven") and many other early

disciples and eye-witnesses of the ministry of Moshiach Yehoshua,

eye-witnesses of the Resurrection, and eye-witnesses of the

events of Pentecost and thereafter. Since Titus is not mentioned

in Acts 20:4, it is possible that this reflects Luke's modesty

and that Titus is Luke's brother.

In the Besuras Hageulah of Luke we see a very human Moshiach

Yehoshua, capable of surprise, compassion, friendship, and love

of children. Here indeed with great vividness we see the people

(look at little Zacchaeus in 19:10), the press of the crowds, the

miracles, the rush of events, the long-awaited revival of the end

of the age. Here an anointed historian is apparently giving us

the fruit of actual interviews with eye-witnesses whose stories

he carefully recorded in polished, eloquent Greek.

And since Luke is not born Jewish, a key theme of undoubted

personal meaning to Luke is G-d's love for the outcast and the

idea of unworthiness (17:10; 18:9-14) and humility (3:8; 14:7-11;

17:10; 15:19; 18:9,14,17) with the balancing theme of praise (as

opposed to ingratitude--17:11-19) and joy to be made worthy to

join such a great host of Messianic witnesses. See 2:32 and

4:25-27; 7:9; 17:18 on the faith spreading beyond the boundaries

of Israel into the Gentiles. Or see 7:36-50 where the repentant

town prostitute is forgiven, but the cool, cunning, judgmental

religious prude Shimon is left out in the cold. Luke's model of

humility is Moshiach Yehoshua. Look at 8:56. What a divine

humility! Only G-d Himself could be humble enough to quench His

own praise to protect His own death on the Aitz!

Luke's primary motivation for watchful prayer is to intercede

that the unworthy "Shliach Kefa" within all of us won't be put to

the acid test (22:40,60-62) where apostasy leads to perdition.

In this case, one look from the L-rd is all it takes to know that

we are all unworthy servants. The prophetess Anna is a positive

model of watchful prayer, without which she might have missed

what was happening in the Spirit around her and would not have

been alert to witness the dedication of the baby Moshiach

Yehoshua in the Beis Hamikdash (2:36-38).

Those who say they don't see any place in the Bible where poverty

is a noble thing have not read Luke's account of the sacrifice of

the poor (2:24) and Yehoshua's foster father Yosef, a poor king's

son (a direct descendent of King Dovid, insuring that Moshiach

Yehoshua would be considered the same by Yosef's adopting him).

In Luke's Besuras Hageulah we see that only prophets and demons knew who Moshiach Yehoshua really was, although even in childhood a clue is given in the fact that when Moshiach Yehoshua disappears he is discovered again "after three days" (Luke 2:46) alive in Jerusalem. In 3:3 Yochanan of the tevilah of teshuva is pictured as a prophet. Prophets are interpreters of G-d's intentions. A real preacher must have this gift or otherwise he is just a religious lecturer. Today spiritual leaders, rather than full-time outreach ministers, generally are the ones who do Yochanan's tevilah of teshuva ministry because a tevilah requires a certain amount of pre- and post-tevilah instruction. Good

overseas Brit Chadasha kehillah-planting workers have follow-up ministers in their teams whom they put together in classes with the new believers so that local congregations with their own spiritual leaders naturally spin off from itinerant outreach campaigns.

Because 4:24 is true, the people in one's ministry team should be alerted that they are appreciated and highly esteemed.

Dr. Luke studied Yehoshua's healing methods and so should we by

carefully reading and re-reading this Besuras Hageulah. Some

people are offended by Luke's picture of the Moshiach, saying

Luke depicts him as a "healing G-d on two feet"--but Moshiach

Yehoshua is the healing Word of G-d walking among us (Psalm

107:20; Yochanan 1:14).

Because Luke was himself an emissary of Moshiach's shlichut, we should especially look at Luke 10, where Moshiach Yehoshua sends out the seventy (seventy-two in some manuscripts). These disciples had a mission to fulfill--do we? Luke 10:3 says that the L-rd sent them. An emissary of Moshiach's shlichut is someone whom the L-rd sends on His mission. Notice he sends them two by two, not one by one (10:1). Who is your partner-in-mission to give your testimony of what G-d has done for you binding attestation on the journeys where G-d sends you? Look at 10:4. No extensive fund-raising mandate is given and no vast sums need to

be stored up in order to set out. G-d himself is going to supply
on the way without begging or hoarding. Ch. 10:5 speaks of the
peace with G-d that comes with the knowledge of salvation from
eternal torment. This peace is a gift to be received and it comes
back to the one who gives it. How do we overcome Satan and live
in this peace? By continually giving the word of our testimony
in the holiness that comes with being under the blood of the Lamb
(Rev. 12:11). Notice, if there are those who want to walk in
this peace with you ("a son of peace"), you, if you are called to
be an itinerant emissary of Moshiach's shlichut, are to stay in
their house (10:7) and let it become G-d's house and your base of
operations, without flitting around in a double-minded way.

Because you eat or drink whatever they give you (10:7) their hospitality is a provision of G-d. Do you tend to refuse the kindness of others? Do you tend to be dissatisfied with what you receive? Ch. 10:8 was a warning against seeking excessive reward. However, with or without a tent-making secular profession, you are in an excellent position from your G-d-given base of operations to lead those you bring to discipleship through Moshiach's tevilah into planting a financially self-supporting congregation. This should be the goal of the emissary of Moshiach's shlichut in all his itinerations.

Ch. 10:9 commands, "Heal the sick," If you have a ministry, it

has part of the curative treatment of the Kingdom of G-d in it.

The resurrection is the Kingdom of G-d--9:27. Ch. 11:20 shows

that a sign that the resurrection reign of the Kingdom of G-d is

breaking into this age is the healing ministry. This means we

should start with the felt needs and pains of the people and use

these to manifest the love and mercy of G-d. Then help the

people get "infected" against their unregenerate former life with

a real inoculation of the Word of G-d and of the power of the

Ruach Hakodesh. Then help them learn how to use the Bible as

their own therapy system and help them experience how to live in

the fruit and gifts of the Ruach Hakodesh. Moshiach Yehoshua had

to deal publicly like this with the multitudes like a social

worker and healer, presenting his dangerous message indirectly through parables in order to get past Hasatan and the lynch mob so he could sift out and train only 120 solid disciples and thus plant his first congregation in Jerusalem. Healing can encompass social, vocational, psychological, spiritual, marital and other kinds of ills. In this Besuras Hageulah, physical and spiritual healing is accompanied by preaching. Yet the word of G-d is also healing in itself (Ps. 107:20). Notice 10:10-12 says that we are to tell people the consequences of rejecting the Besuras Hageulah once we have given them an opportunity to receive the message and they reject it. Ch.10:16 says we are not to take rejection personally or be overly

concerned about it since it may not be rejection of us at all,

but rather of Moshiach Yehoshua himself.

Ch. 21:8 warns of false prophets who will come using Yehoshua's

name and yet making great claims for themselves. Notice that

Luke 24:27 says that it is in the name of Yehoshua and absolutely

no other that repentance for the forgiveness of sins is to be

preached throughout the world. Mark 13:6 says such prophets will

deceive many. Luke 21:8 says not to join the religionists of

these false prophets, but to reject them just as they reject the

true Yehoshua and the true Besuras Hageulah (see 11:23). Often

such religions are controlled by legalists who have no heart for

the living Word but rather reshape the faith into dead rules

whereby they and no one else qualify for control and privilege,

and those who have broken down under their hypocritical system

they lack compassion to rescue (11:46,52).

Look at 8:39 on witnessing. Start with people you know and tell

them what G-d has done for you. Never get far away from the task

of personal witness (12:8).

We need to break every impossible, large task down into smaller,

possible ones, as the L-rd demonstrates by his administrative

hand in 9:14. We need to likewise start with the resources we

have and then get others to help us, believing G-d to stretch

everything miraculously to meet the need. Such faith will not be

disappointed.

Look at 9:23. The Aitz was a shameful thing that offended the

onlookers and made them scornful. It was something that set one

apart from the crowd. It was a burden only the Aitz-bearer

himself could carry (Gal. 6:5). It was something that put the

self to death and showed redemptive concern for one's enemies,

interceding for their benefit. It was an act of love with a

universal, divine dimension. What is your Aitz today? Are you

staying in the race with it? Or have you set it aside? The

religious people lacking an Aitz (the Pharisees etc) did not

enter the Kingdom of G-d, but the sinners and religious outcasts,

by means of faith bearing an Aitz, are seen to be pressing into

the narrow door of true discipleship (Luke 16:16) in Luke's

Besuras Hageulah.

For an explanation of Miryam's mikveh after childbirth and then

her period of uncleanness as far as the Sanctuary is concerned,

see Lev.12:1f in Hertz's Pentateuch.

The Great Physician is Yehoshua, the "beloved physician" is Luke,

and the first and foremost shliach to be used in healing ministry

is Shliach Kefa. We need to study these three physicians to learn

about healing ministry. There are at least seven purposes for

healing ministry given in the Besuras Hageulah of Luke. According

to Luke (Col. 4:14) in his Besuras Hageulah, in the ministry of

the L-rd's Body, the purpose of healing diseases and ordering
demons to leave people is: 1) for a testimony to them" (the
unredeemed)--5:14; 2) as credentials to convince Yochanan of the
tevilah of teshuva and others that Moshiach Yehoshua is Ercomenos
"The Coming One"--7:19,21; 3) for the purpose of spreading the
logos (word) and assembling many crowds, "many crowds were
assembling to listen and to be healed from their
sicknesses--5:15. Notice it says that the people came to hear
Moshiach Yehoshua but also to be cured from their diseases and to
be healed of the (unclean spirits or demons) troubling
them--6:18; 4) for the purpose of making disciples and "in the

Father" drawing more workers into the harvest (10:2) of kiruv

outreach ministry: Besides the twelve, the itinerant ministry

team of Moshiach Yehoshua travelling with him from village to

village included "some women who had been healed from evil

spirits and diseases, including Miryam the one called Magdalene,

from whom seven demons had gone out"--8:2. Some of these women

were so filled with gratitude for the mercy the L-rd had shown

them in their healing that these women actually helped fund the

mission work so that the ministry could continue, "providing for

them (Moshiach Yehoshua and the 12) from the possessions

belonging to them"-- 8:3; 5) for the purpose of demonstrating

that the time is short and the Kingdom of G-d has arrived and

come dangerously, wonderfully near, in fact, it has come "upon
you"--10:9; 11:20. This is so that people can see the turning of
the ages, that the new wine" of the Ruach Hakodesh and His Gifts
to us from the Father through the Son of G-d will be poured out
in the dawning light of the New Holy Age: 6) so that people will
glorify G-d (13:13); 7) so that people can have more assurance
of the power and authority of the Son of Man to forgive our sins
(5:23).

The motive for healing people is compassion for lost, hurting,
sheep without a shepherd who have been bound for a long time by
Hasatan (13:16) and need to be loosed and set free. In order to

have a small share in G-d's healing ministry, we need to believe

G-d's word that we have been given dunamis (power) and exousia

(authority) over all the demons and to heal diseases (9:1-2) and

the ones having need of healing he (Moshiach Yehoshua) was

curing--9:11. We need to rebuke high fevers (4:38) and command

demons to come out (4:36) and look to G-d's mercy to cleanse the

unclean (5:13).

We need to pray with anaideia (persistence) (11:8) for at least

four things in regard to healing ministry: 1) for the empowerment

of the Holy Spirit (11:13); 2) and for "the power of the L-rd was

in him (Moshiach Yehoshua) to cure" (5:17); 3) and for "power

from him (Moshiach Yehoshua) was going out and it was healing

everyone" (6:19) who touched him; 4) for humility to rejoice not

in the power that has been given to us (which leads to pride and

presumption) but to rejoice that our names are written in heaven

(10:20) and to seek not the acclaim of the crowds but

"wilderness" solitude with the Heavenly Father for deeper prayer

and communion with G-d to know his will (5:16).

Moshiach Yehoshua says, "Your faith has healed/saved/rescued/

delivered you" sozo in the perfect tense, signifying completed

action in the past with continuing results in the present

(18:42). We are told of a G-dly centurion and his highly valued

slave that was sick and close to death and how Moshiach Yehoshua

healed him without even visiting him and the messengers returned

to find the slave "being in good health" (7:10). Then the same

word is used in III Yochanan 1:3: "Beloved, concerning all

things I wish you to do well and "to be in good health," even as

it is well with your souls" We need to be willing to pray: O G-d,

have mercy on me the sinner" (18:13). G-d also wants to heal

this muteness we have, this lack of faith we have to speak in the

Spirit (1:20). The angel of the L-rd tells Yochanan's father,

"You will be silent and not able to speak because you did not

believe." At the proper time your faith will loose your tongue

and you will speak in the Spirit.

If G-d heals us and we live, this is fruitful service for us

(Phil. 1:25); but, if not, G-d works all things together for good

(Rom. 8:28) and we depart and be with Moshiach, which is far

better (Phil. 1:23).

LUKE 1:2

...the ones from (the) beginning (who were) eyewitnesses...

THE BESURAS HAGEULAH ACCORDING TO YOCHANAN

According to Irenaeus, a leader of the second century who was a

disciple of the Shliach Yochanan's disciple Polycarp, "Yochanan

the disciple of the L-rd, who leaned back on his breast,

published the Besuras Hageulah while he was resident at Ephesus

in Asia" (Irenaeus, Against Heresies, 3.1.2). Clement of

Alexandria (ca. C.E. 150-215), a very important Greek theologian

and writer, is quoted by the historian Eusebius as saying, "Last

of all Yochanan, perceiving that the bodily/physical facts had

been recorded in the Besuras Hageulahs, encouraged by his pupils,

and irresistibly moved/inspired by the Spirit, wrote a spiritual

gospel" (History of the Brit Chadasha kehillah 6.14.7). That

liberals of our day are sure that they know better than Irenaeus

and Clement of Alexandria that Yochanan did not write the Besuras

Hageulah of Yochanan is an awesome testimony to the proud

depravity of the human heart.

That this Besuras Hageulah is written by an eyewitness is obvious

in many places (see 1:14; 19:35). The author seems to assume our

knowledge of the other Besuras Hageulahs and does not appear

constrained to repeat their witness. Apparent contradictions

between Yochanan and the Synoptics are only that--apparent. They

can be resolved. But Yochanan's Besuras Hageulah complements our

knowledge derived from the other versions of the Besuras Hageulah

in many ways. For example, the political reason behind the

nailing of the Moshiach to the aitz is given for the historical

record in 11:48.

Ch. 21:18 seems to have the martyrdom of the Shliach Shliach Kefa

under Caesar Nero in recent memory, which could date the Besuras

Hageulah of Yochanan shortly after C.E. 64. If 21:23 is referring

to the death of the Shliach Yochanan, this would date the Besuras

Hageulah of Yochanan in its final published edition twenty-five

or more years later (ca. C.E. 90), which might explain why

passages like 16:2 and 9:22 were included in the Besuras Hageulah

of Yochanan as relevant to its later readers. These verses could

reflect the situation of the Brit Chadasha kehillah-synagogue

relations around C.E. 90 when a synagogue prayer was given an

anti-Messianic believers wording so as to force Messianic Jews to

exclude themselves from synagogue worship.

The end of the Besuras Hageulah of Yochanan seems to be interested in the question of the eschatological significance of why Yochanan lived to such a ripe old age while all the other Shluchim did not. At any rate, 19:27 shows that Yochanan lived for many years in Jerusalem. He was apparently from a wealthy family (Mark 1:20). His mother was apparently Salome, who may have been Miryam's sister, making Yochanan the cousin of Moshiach Yehoshua (see Mt. 27:56; Mark 15:40; Yochanan 19:25). If Moshiach Yehoshua and Yochanan were first cousins, in light of the fact that at this time Moshiach Yehoshua's half-brothers did not believe in him and that his home town rejected him, it is not hard to see how Yochanan could have qualified as "the disciple

Moshiach Yehoshua loved" (13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7,20). That

Yochanan was a relative would help to explain why Moshiach

Yehoshua gave him the charge to look after his mother. Also, it

is inexplicable that one so prominent as Yochanan should have his

name left out of the fourth Besuras Hageulah's narratives unless

Yochanan himself was the modest author. Also the expression "the

disciple Moshiach Yehoshua loved" emphasizes the fact that

Yochanan was not loved because he rose to prominence, but, just

the opposite, he rose to prominence because Moshiach Yehoshua

loved him.

The brothers Andrew and Simon Shliach Kefa were Yochanan's

business partners in a fishing business (Luke 5:10). Yochanan may

have had high-born or even Kohen Gadol connections in Jerusalem

(this was certainly true of Yehoshua's other cousin, Yochanan of

the tevilah of teshuva because, on the night of Moshiach

Yehoshua's arrest, the Shliach Yochanan apparently is known

personally by the Kohen Gadol and so Yochanan gains entrance to

the house of Caiaphas for himself and Shliach Kefa (Yochanan

18:15) and also knows the Kohen Gadol well enough to be able to

name his servants (see Yochanan 18:10 and compare the Synoptic

Besuras Hageulahs; also see 18:26).

Yochanan's connections also seem to have permitted him to

accompany the Kohen Gadol's party that ushered Moshiach Yehoshua

into the presence of Pilate, thus allowing Yochanan (and us) to hear the conversations that followed (see 18:28-19:16). But it was undoubtedly Yochanan's love for Moshiach Yehoshua that held him to take the risk of standing by him at the Aitz, which none of the other male disciples were willing to do.

Some time after the end of Rav Sha'ul's Ephesian ministry (C.E. 58), Yochanan left his home in Jerusalem (where the mother of Moshiach Yehoshua had stayed and may have been interviewed by Luke--Yochanan 19:27; Luke 1-2; Acts 21:17) and moved his base of operations from Jerusalem to Ephesus in W. Asia Minor (modern Turkey). It is probably from here that the Besuras Hageulah of

Yochanan was published somewhere between C.E. 64 and 90. But

since many conservative scholars believe Yochanan is not dead

when the appendix 21:23 was written (note that the word "vouches"

in 21:24 is in the present tense, martureo meaning testifies,

witnesses, vouches, as though Yochanan were still alive to make

his attestation), and since the Besuras Hageulah of Yochanan

seems to be unaware that the Beis Hamikdash has been destroyed

and that Jerusalem has been devastated, it is not impossible that

much of this Besuras Hageulah was written toward the end of the

reign of Nero around C.E. 68. Shliach Kefa seems to have been

martyred already (Yochanan 13:36), and Yochanan seems to

understand Moshiach Yehoshua's true meaning in the saying of

Yochanan 13:36 that he would die similarly.

Liberal scholars at one time gained quite a following by

asserting that the (unlettered, uneducated in the yeshivas)

Shliach Yochanan (see Acts 4:13) did not write this Besuras

Hageulah. However, today their theory has fallen into disrepute.

They may have underestimated the humility of Yochanan who, in

order to avoid using "I" or his own personal name, eliminated all

but the importance of his own personal eye-witness status (see

especially 13:23; 19:26f; 20:2-10) at extremely important points

such as the Last Supper, the Moshiach's Aitz, and the empty tomb

by referring to himself in the third person as "the disciple whom

Moshiach Yehoshua loved" (see 21:24 for his attestation as the

Moshiach's Shliach authority vouching for the veracity and

accuracy of this Besuras Hageulah).

Reliable tradition has Yochanan living to a ripe old age in Asia

Minor (specifically Ephesus) where a heretical Jewish Gnostic

teacher named Cerinthus flourished at the end of the 1st century

(around C.E. 100). If Yochanan's Besuras Hageulah were written

around this time, it contains a polemic against a heresy

Cerinthus promoted. One of the ideas of the heresy that later

became known as Gnosticism was the notion that G-d cannot take on

a material body and suffer and die. But the Moshiach Yehoshua

Yochanan describes weeps (11:33,35), gets tired (4:6), thirsty

(19:28), and behaves in a very human manner.

The deity of the Son is indicated in 5:26 (equal to the Father in

fullness of life); 17:5 (the same divine glory) 1:1 (the same

divine essential nature or being). But the papyri p66 and p75

(C.E. 200) have Monogenes Theos? ("G-d the Unique-in-Kind or

Only-Begotten Son") for Yochanan 1:18. Here Moshiach Yehoshua is

specifically referred to as G-d. Moshiach Yehoshua is called "G-d

the Only Son." He has a special relationship to His Father that

is not shared with Him by any man (1:18 5:18; 20:17). Notice the

various "I am" = Yahweh allusions (6:30; 8:28,58; 10:31; 13:19).

The Bible has been transmitted by faithful scribes, and the

science of textual criticism together with the Ruach Hakodesh and

faithful translations help us retrieve a reliable facsimile of

the original inerrant autograph writings. The Masoretic Text of

the Tanakh favorably compares in accuracy with much of the newly

discovered ancient Dead Sea Scrolls, proving that the Bible has

not been lost over time in transcription. Why were the scribes so

meticulously careful in their work? Read 5:39 for the answer. As

far as the inerrancy of the Bible is concerned, remember that

Moshiach Yehoshua said, "The Scriptures cannot be broken" (luo,

meaning destroyed, torn down, broken to pieces--Yochanan 10:35.

This same Greek word is used regarding the middle wall of

partition in Eph. 2:14 and Paul's ship wrecked at sea in Acts

27:41).

Ch. 3:34 shows that the Bible is G-d's own words communicated

through the Ruach Hakodesh by the Word Himself whom the Father

sent. No one else brings the canonical revelation of G-d, the

measuring standard of the truth of all prophecy and prophets.

Anyone who is content with another revelation or another religion

is a thief and a robber (10:1). G-d himself stands behind the

infallibility, inerrancy, and incorruptibility of his Word so

that the Scriptures cannot be broken (10:35). The Eternal

Paraclete (One who "stands by the side of" as Comforter,

Counselor, and Advocate) who has superintended the compilation

and transmission of the Bible is the Ruach Hakodesh (14:25-26;

16:5-15).

So Moshiach Yehoshua was G-d the Word (Yochanan 1:1) become

completely human (1:14). These passages reflect a polemic against

Cerinthus, who taught that the Moshiach did not die. To refute

proto-gnostic heresy, Yochanan begins by teaching that the cosmic

source of all life, the very light of G-d that enlightens

rationality all men--that is, the personal self-revelation of G-d

at the Father's side, His Word, came and was rejected by some and

received by others. Those who received Him became new creations

(1:12) born not of man but of G-d (1:13). The Eternal Word, G-d's

agent in creation, salvation, judgment, and revelation, took on
the frail and mortal being of man (1:14), whom human nature
screened the same glory that was veiled over in the Holy of
Holies in the Tent of the Tabernacle of Moses. G-d's glory is now
coming down and pitching his tent in the human life of the
Moshiach. As at the Transfiguration in the other Besuras
Hageulahs, so in the miraculous signs that Moshiach Yehoshua
performs in the Besuras Hageulah of Yochanan, this same glory
pierces the veil and shines out that we might and be saved
(20:30-31).

In ch. 2 the best wine is saved until last, for the Word

Incarnate is the fullest revelation of G-d (1:17). A wedding, symbolizing the messianic age, is the setting for the "water" of the old age being replaced by the "wine" of the abundant life with G-d in the new holy age now breaking in. By this miraculous sign, Moshiach Yehoshua let his glory as the pre-existent and eternal Word be seen by his disciples, who as a result, believed on him (see 2:11-12). Yochanan uses the feasts of the Jewish religion and the signs Moshiach Yehoshua performed during these feasts to make the point that the Moshiach is the all-important core of the faith of Abraham, Moshiach Yehoshua is the living Torah from the Father, and without him "you can do nothing" (15:5).

In chapter 6, the sign that Moshiach Yehoshua performed shows that he is the true manna in the wilderness on the way to the promised new life. Ch. 7:37-38 presents Yehoshua as the living water that replaces the water-pouring prayer for rain and he is the true light of the world replacing the illumination in the Jerusalem Beis Hamikdash court at Sukkot (the Feast of Tabernacles). In ch. 10 Moshiach Yehoshua (not the altar) is dedicated (see 10:36) on Chanukah (the Feast of Dedication) and in ch. 12 Moshiach Yehoshua becomes the replacement lamb for Pesach (Passover). Aspects of both Passover and Yom Kippur are subtly alluded to in the Passion narrative in the references to

the bones not broken (19:36; Ex. 12:46; Nu. 9:12), the hyssop

plant (19:29; Ex. 12:22) and the two victims, one released

(Barabbas), one sacrificed (Yehoshua).

Ch. 2:19 shows that the body of Yehoshua is the eternal sanctuary

of G-d where G-d is present with his people. Ch. 4:21-23 presents

Moshiach Yehoshua as the true Beis Hamikdash. The Ruach Hakodesh

and teaching men receive from him make pilgrimage to Jerusalem

for worship no longer necessary, for Moshiach is the resurrected

Word of G-d tabernacled among us (1:14). Ch. 8:56 shows that

Abraham believed in the Word of G-d and rejoiced in looking

forward to his day of fulfillment.

Look at 3:5. Those who have spiritually shared the mavev and

Techiyas HaMesim of Moshiach Yehoshua by means of the new birth

know the death they have experienced to their old life of the

flesh. They also know the birth in the new life of the Spirit

that they have experienced. As in Ez. 36:27, they have been

quickenened from above by the Spirit of G-d. How did this happen?

By the obedience of faith those with new hearts and new spirits

were led to the tevilah waters to begin their life of

discipleship, though it is G-d, not tevilah regeneration, that

draws people into the new life of the Holy Spirit. Yochanan 1:12

says that one does not "believe" (an extremely frequent word in

this Besuras Hageulah) on His Name unto salvation unless one

receives him personally.

No one can tell mankind about heaven except the man who came from

heaven, Moshiach Yehoshua the Word of G-d (3:13). The ascension

(Luke 24:51) proves that the Son of Man (a title of the Moshiach)

came from heaven (Daniel 7:13-14) and returned there (Psalm

110:1). Yochanan 1:1, 49-51 proves that the Word of G-d is the

Moshiach, the Son of Man. Psalm 2:7 says that the Messsiah is the

Son of G-d. Proverbs 30:4 says that the divine Wisdom is Son of

G-d; therefore, the divine Wisdom is the Moshiach, as Yochanan

preaches.

Look at 4:2. People must go from us to Moshiach Yehoshua and get

his witness inside themselves (not just our witness alone) in order to be saved (I Yochanan 5:10; Yochanan 7:17). People have got to understand this warning: make disciples or die (15:2).

Faithlessness to Moshiach Yehoshua leads to spiritual impotence and powerlessness (15:5). Brit Chadasha kehillah planting that lasts and the formation of faithful ministers who endure is the goal of everything (15:16).

G-d the Word is subordinate to Elohim HaAv (5:30), since the Father articulates the Word and not vice-versa. However, the Word is essentially equal with the Father and is very G-d (Yochanan 1:1,18; 10:30; 8:58; 14:9; 20:28). The Word of G-d was always

personal and was always G-d's image appointed from before all

time to be the Word of Judgment (5:26-27), and only he can

reflect the Father to us (6:46).

Ch. 6:39 shows that there is corporate eternal security for the

predestined remnant of G-d's people. However, individuals must

still make their individual calling and election sure by working

out individual salvation with fear and trembling (II Shimon Kefa

1:10; Phil. 2: 12). We can rest assured that the Bible does not

teach a doctrine of arbitrary secret double predestination.

However, Moshiach Yehoshua foreknew those who chose to disbelieve

(6:64) just as he foreknew that Judas was a devil (6:70). (The

Devil is always betraying G-d and if we are faithless we also can

become devils.) The predestinarian strain of passages in Yochanan

are verses like 6:44,65; 8:47; 18:37; 15:16. These are meant to

give comfort to the saints that it is a Mighty G-d who is doing

everything, and He planned it before the earth was created. The

Ruach Hakodesh is our friend and helper in court (Paraclete) and

everything we are and have and do is dependent on Him (1:32,33;

7:39; 3:5,8; 6:63; 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:3; 20:22,23). Look

at 12:6. Make sure you have a treasurer in your ministry so that

you are above suspicion (as Judas was not) with full

accountability of funds (see II Cor. 8:19-20).

Ch. 10:28-29 shows us that there is very definitely a doctrine of

assurance in Yochanan, so we need not doubt our salvation (see 5:24). However, 17:12 shows that there is also the human ability to choose to leave the truth and refuse the light (was not Judas as human as you or I?). So we must avoid the presumptuous error that goes with the doctrine of unconditional election and irresistible grace. Rather, we should fear G-d and live.

Ch.

8:42 shows that Moshiach Yehoshua and no one else is the final Shliach of G-d (Hebrews 3:1). Not only that, he is the fountainhead of the New Humanity, he is the Resurrection, the New Adam of the New Holy Age (11:25). Notice that the whole world is drawn to the person of Moshiach Yehoshua and, through him, to the

Father (12:32; 14:6). Moshiach Yehoshua alludes to the fall of

Adam in Yochanan 3, saying "you are children of your father the

devil," who has seduced humanity into an evil course that can

only be corrected in the new humanity birthed from above in the

Moshiach.

Ch. 14:12 makes clear that the miraculous deeds (such as are seen

in the gifts of the Ruach Hakodesh) are still for today.

Ch. 17:21-23 should lead us to want to transcend sectarian

differences between believers (though not compromise or betray

the truth in the process as in the easy relativism of the modern

age--see 18:38). Yochanan himself is the first witness of the 12

to look into the tomb and see that it is empty (20:5). Notice the

eyewitness detail from Shliach Kefa and Yochanan. The linen cloths that had once been wrapped around the Moshiach's body were lying on the ground and the kerchief which had been placed over the Moshiach's face was not with the linen cloths but was rolled up in a place by itself (20:7). The Holy One that was born of a virgin (Luke 1:35) was called back alive from the dead as

Mashiakh HaAdohn (Moshiach the Lord), the Judge of all men.

Yochanan is giving us the benefit of his own eyewitness testimony in his recounting of the Moshiach's resurrection appearances that follow.

Notice that the object of this Besuras Hageulah is that the

reader/listener believe (20:30-31) and have life. To encourage faith, to prove Moshiach Yehoshua is from G-d (9:31,33, 16), the Shliach has included seven miraculous signs, which are meant to also point beyond themselves symbolically and provide deep spiritual edification and point to the significance of who Moshiach Yehoshua is. These signs are the changing of the water of Judaism into joyous wine of the new Messianic age (2:1-11), the Brit Chadasha wine of grace and truth; the healing of the nobleman's son (4:46-54); the healing of the impotent man (5:10); the feeding of the five thousand (6:1-14) with the Bread of Life; the walking on the water (6:16-21); the healing of the blind man (9:1-12) by One who is the Light of the World, and the raising of

Lazarus (11:1-46) by the One who is the Resurrection and the Life

(11:25). By means of these signs, the reader/listener is

encouraged toward faith and new spiritual life so that a deep

communion is possible with the Savior by means of feeding on the

word in the chapters that follow, especially in the long

discourses which predominate from 12:23-17:26. But even as early

as 1:49 the reader is encouraged along with Nathanael that he

will see greater signs in the chapters to follow to convince the

doubting Thomases in the reading audience that they should make

their profession of faith and receive the gift of the new birth

unto Chayyei Olam (Eternal Life).

We must live in the Word of G-d (8:31), who is the true light that enlightens every man (1:9) and is the very image of G-d (Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3; 1:14; 14:9). Unless we are rooted and grounded in Scripture, finding our delight in the ceaseless study and practise of G-d's Word (Yochanan 8:44; Luke 8:13; Psalm 1:2), we may go to religious services but afterwards we will still think and act like the Devil. Our aim should be to think and act like G-d's Son (Phil. 2:5) and be used of G-d in doing his works (14:12; 9:4) because these testify of Moshiach Yehoshua (5:36) and of the Father (5:19,20; 14:10) and have their own intrinsic irrefutable power in challenging people to believe in Moshiach Yehoshua (10:38; 14:11). But we must be utterly dependent on the

Father for everything, as Moshiach Yehoshua was (3:27; 5:19,30;

26; 6:37; 4:34; 6:37,44; 17:6; 18:11; 17:2,24; 10:18) in prayer

(14:16; 16:26; 17:9,15,20), never forgetting that our minion

sender is Him (5:23,30; 6:37,39,44; 8:16,18,29; 17:18; 20:21).

The climax of the Moshiach's ministry is the raising of Lazarus

from the dead. The crowds were so large and enthusiastic at the

Triumphal Entry because news of this spectacular resurrection

miracle had spread everywhere (12:18). It prefigured the

infinitely greater resurrection that would occur shortly Yom

Rishon morning, April 9, C.E. 30.

Yochanan seems to have entered into the mind of Moshiach Yehoshua

more than any of the other Shliachs. It is interesting that

Yochanan 1:18 says the only begotten G-d is the one who is near

the kolpos (bosom, breast, chest, i.e. near the heart) of the

Father, and the disciple whom Moshiach Yehoshua loved is said to

be sitting at the Last Supper in the kolpos Moshiach Yehoshua

(13:23).

But Yochanan's spiritual insights also do not overlook the

ironic. For example, the first Gentile to unwittingly preach the

Besuras Hageulah (the Samaritan woman in chapter 4 is quite

deliberate in her preaching) is Pilate, who, as a kind of cruel

antiSemitic joke, writes on a sign to be displayed above Moshiach

Yehoshua's crown of thorns the words, "Moshiach Yehoshua of

Nazareth, the King of the Jews" and even beginning the business of publishing this Good News in the various languages of the world, starting with Aramaic, Latin and Greek. Moshiach Yehoshua is the Anointed Moshiach (see Psalm 45:6-8; Isaiah 61:1,2; Yochanan 1:41; 4:25-26; 3:28) and his first task is a Messianic deed (Yochanan 3:13-22; Psalm 69:9; Zech. 14:21; Mal. 3:1-5). In Yochanan's Besuras Hageulah the blind see, the lame leap, the poor are fed and made glad at miraculous banquets and the Son of Man comes as the eschatological judge of Daniel 7:13-14 who will raise the dead (note there are two resurrections in Yochanan's Besuras Hageulah just as there are in the book of Revelation--see

5:25-29 e.g. Rev.20:4-15). Yet Yochanan beholds the glory of his

lowly obscurity and rejection and death in service to His Father

(1:14; 12:23; 13:31; 2:11; 11:4).

When Yochanan quotes Moshiach Yehoshua as saying to the

unbelieving, worldly Jews, "You are from below, I am from above;

you are of this world, I am not of this world" (8:23), this

sounds very much like the book of Revelation, where there are two

worlds, the world of heaven and holiness and a Holy G-d and His

Moshiach, and the world of the devil and His Anti-Moshiach where

men do evil. In Yochanan, Moshiach Yehoshua lifts men to G-d and

reveals G-d to man as a ladder to heaven (1:51).

In Yochanan's Besuras Hageulah, this world cannot fool Moshiach

Yehoshua (2:24-25; 6:64), does not know G-d (17:25) or His
Moshiach (1:10) or those whom G-d has chosen out of this world
(17:14, 6, 16; 15:18-19). The unregenerate world has already been
condemned (3:18), has the wrath of G-d remaining on it (3:36),
has not received the Ruach Hakodesh (20:22), the Father's Word
does not abide in them (5:38), they do not have the love of G-d
in themselves (5:42), they are open to the Anti-Moshiach (5:43),
they receive glory from men and do not seek glory from G-d
(5:44), they do not (even if they call themselves Jews) believe
the Torah (5:47); unlike the Word (5:37) they have never seen the
Father's form or heard His voice; the Father has not drawn them

(6:37, 44); they have not heard from the Father and learned from

Him (6:45); any time is right for the unregenerate because there

is no divine timetable giving tension to their lives (7:6), no

"night" (9:4) they are racing against; the hatred of the world is

unknown to them (7:7). The unregenerate, because of His depraved

will, cannot properly evaluate and weigh the teachings of

Scripture (7:17) nor can such a one keep the law (7:19 in spite

of 9:28-29). The unregenerate cannot come to where Moshiach

Yehoshua is in heaven (7:34), does not know G-d (8:19)--neither

Moshiach Yehoshua nor the Father, does not know where Moshiach

Yehoshua comes from or where he goes (8:14). The word of Moshiach

Yehoshua finds no room in the unregenerate heart (8:37), they are

children of the devil (8:44). Unregenerates are liars who do not believe the truth because it is the truth and they have a lying nature (8:45). They cannot understand or hear the words of Moshiach Yehoshua (8:43) or continue in his word (8:31) because they are not of G-d (8:47). They think they see but they are blind (9:41). If they teach anything but leave out Moshiach Yehoshua, they are thieves and robbers (10:1). They hold up a false door to salvation because they are false teachers, the blind leading the blind. They can't hear the Shepherd's voice to go in and find pasture. The words of Moshiach Yehoshua bring division to them (10:19). They are not his sheep (10:26) and this

explains their unbelief.

Yehoshua is the well of salvation in Yochanan 4. What does it

mean to be born of "water" and Spirit (3:5)? The living water of

Chayyei Olam (Eternal Life) is the truth into which one is

immersed to worship G-d (4:10,14,23).

The proper interpretative key to the Tanakh is given in 5:39,46.

For example, the manna in the wilderness is a foretaste of

Moshiach Yehoshua the Bread of Heaven, etc. See also 8:56.

Notice that Judaism's treatment of Messianic Jews is a

fulfillment of prophecy (Yochanan 16:2).

Yochanan 1:3

In Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of men.

GEVUROT MEYRUACH HAKODESH (ACTS)

Acts was probably written at the end of Rav Sha'ul's first Roman

imprisonment (C.E. 62/63). Nero's persecution had not yet started

(Rome burned in C.E. 64), and a window of breathing time was

available for the philanthropy of Theophilus, the Roman nobleman

who may have underwritten the cost of publishing the two-part

work of Luke-Acts. Theophilus may have been a believer in Rome--

see Luke 1:1--even a public official (possibly addressed

pseudonymously) to whom Luke-Acts is dedicated. The reason for advocating this extremely early date is because of the shape of the material in Acts. It is not about the acts of the Shluchim, most of whom are hardly mentioned; it is an expansion of Rav Sha'ul's legal brief in Rome (with supplemental material), showing legal precedents in that whenever Shliach Sha'ul went before a Roman government official, whether it was Sergio Rav Sha'ulus or Galilo or the magistrates in Philippi or Governors Felix or Festus in Caeserea or even King Agrippa in Israel, Shliach Sha'ul was regarded as a Jew and his religion as Jewish and therefore legal according to Roman law. Only the riot-causing and unbelieving Jews, not the Romans, were declaring otherwise.

Ch. 26:32 is the key defense as far as Rav Sha'ul's legal brief is concerned, the legal ramifications of which would affect the safety of all believers throughout the Roman Empire. This idea forms the spine of the narrative of Acts, which would otherwise be like a loose miracle chronicle. It is very possible that Theophilus was not only a catechist but a supporter of Shliach Sha'ul at the time of his house arrest during his first Roman imprisonment. While Shliach Sha'ul was writing Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon we can imagine that Luke was not taking Roman saunas but, like a good historical journalist, was "rushing to deadline" with the story that could save his

friend Rav Sha'ul's life, win many more "Theophiluses" to the

L-rd, and help protect other "Rav Sha'uls" from being persecuted

in the Roman courts by litigating Besuras Hageulah-offended Jews.

In short, the book of Acts is not a mere history of the

beginnings of Messianic Faith; it is an apologetic chronicling of

the true "way" of Messianic, apocalyptic Biblical Judaism--the

legally privileged religion of the Jews and the universal,

Spirit-endorsed faith of the true G-d of the whole world, if only

Roman government officials and Jewish religious dignitaries could

be given by G-d eyes to see and ears to hear and understand the

colossal fulfillment of Scriptural revelation!

Shliach Sha'ul is really the central Shliach in the book of Acts

from the very beginning. For example, in chapter 1 notice the subtlety of the point Luke makes. Mere men use a "Jonah" lottery draw to choose the "fisher of men" replacement for "Judas," but Moshiach Yehoshua himself catches his choice not with a gigantic fish but by means of the house of "Judas" on the street called Straight in Damascus (compare 1:20 and 9:11). Matthias is chosen in 1:26 but Shliach Sha'ul overshadows both him and all the other Shluchim, because G-d, and not men, is writing the history of salvation in this story of the world-conquering expansion (from Jerusalem) of the Messianic remnant of Israel and the nations.

But Shliach Sha'ul is himself the most important witness for his

own defense. Like the Jewish establishment litigating against

him, Shliach Sha'ul was himself "fighting against G-d" (5:39),

and the risen L-rd himself won the fight on the road to Damascus.

Notice the first Brit Chadasha kehillah service is a 9:00 A.M.

Sunday morning, Pentecostal, dangerous, open-air, Jewish Beis

Hamikdash "street" meeting. The Great Commission was symbolically

and representatively fulfilled in the blink of an eye (in Zion),

for pilgrims had come from all over the world for the Feast of

Shavuot or Pentecost. But faith was necessary Miryam, and some

scoffers didn't have it, having a form of religion but denying

its power (2:13; II Tim. 3:5). Notice that the Brit Chadasha

kehillah was born and still thrives on aggressive, risky kiruv

outreach contact with unbelievers in the power of the

supernatural (2:41).

There is no rebuttal to a genuine power encounter (see 4:11). In

the book of Acts, as in the Elijah vs. prophets of Baal power

encounter in I Kings, the convicting, regenerating power of the

Besuras Hageulah itself and its accompanying healings and other

gifts of the Spirit differentiate who is G-d's spokesman and who

is merely a pretender to religious authority. Spirit-filled

ministers are needed as Messianic leaders to turn the lost sheep

away from the false shepherds of this world. Mere rationalists,

apologists and scholars--though needed--are not enough. In 1:6-8,

the Shluchim ask the risen L-rd Yehoshua a doctrinal question about the millennium, but he answers them with exhortation to receive an empowerment for the purpose of world outreach and Moshiach's shlichut keruv mission. Ch. 8:15-16 shows that people who had believed the Besuras Hageulah and were given the Moshiach's tevilah also expected a subsequent empowerment where the Ruach Hakodesh fell on them. In Acts 1 the shluchim joined in continuous prayer (1:11) and waited or "tarried" until what was promised (1:5; Luke 21:49) happened (2:1) in the form of a miracle of witness. Laity, both men and women, and clergy with anointed tongues boldly, almost recklessly (In the Beis Hamikdash area and on the streets in a dangerous city that hangs on an aitz

deviant religious personages) began preaching with miraculous, heaven-empowered locution. The confusion of tongues at Babylon (Gn. ch. 11) is also miraculously reversed as G-d is now graciously leading his people out to bring the Gentiles to his treasury (see Isaiah 66:18-21 and the collection journey of Acts 24:17-18). The fire of the burning bush and the fire on Mt. Sinai appeared on the heads of the Shliachs in Acts 2:3 to signify that the G-d who gave the Law to Moses and Israel was now giving the Ruach Hakodesh to Israel. In fact, the one G-d was now giving one message leading all nations to become one people. But 5:13 says that even then none of the religious people dared to join these

"Pentecostal" Jews.

However, many Pentecostals err in seeing tongues as a sufficient

sign that one is now completely filled with the fulness of the

Holy Spirit (see I Cor. 13:1 as a corrective on this). Acts only

begins (but does not stop there) with tongues as physical

evidence of empowerment. Boldness in witness, praise, new sight

(scales removed), prophesying, having compassion for an "enemy"

from an alien culture, healing, communal generosity, and many

other signs confirm the experience that the Ruach Hakodesh has

indeed fallen on a person. So if a Pentecostal speaks in a

language he doesn't know and thinks he stands in the fulness of

the Ruach Hakodesh, he had better keep reading from Acts 2:4 and

make sure his walk as a believer is fully in step with the aggressively preaching early Messianic community. We are now seeing many tongues-speakers who do not win souls or dirty their hands with aggressive, dangerous, open-air outreach but pride themselves on being "Pentecostal." Nothing could be further from the truth of the Book of Acts! These people should stop fighting about tongues and start leading people to salvation.

On the other hand, there are others who are also ignorant of the Scriptures: those who think they are ready for the ministry just because they are glib and articulate like Shliach Kefa was in the Besuras Hageulah narratives and yet also think they don't need

the empowerment and spiritual equipping Shliach Kefa received

(after he was humbled by near apostasy) at the beginning of the

book of Acts. What Shliach Kefa received was not just for Shliach

Kefa or just for back then. The promise is for today (2:39) and

for us; it is for our sons and our daughters. (Who says women,

even laywomen, can't preach? Look at 2:17; 21:9. There is no

clericalism or hatred of women here.) Every modern day "Shliach

Kefa" should pray Acts 4:29-31 every day, just as every Brit

Chadasha kehillah should have a benevolence provision (4:34-35).

Note what you do (2:41) if you want to receive Moshiach Yehoshua.

You repent (which may involve some pre-tevilah teaching, testing

or counseling), and you get buried or immersed in water, which is

a covenant sign that obligates you to obey "all that Moshiach Yehoshua commanded." This means you are obligated to become a learner with a teacher (a talmid or disciple), and the teaching you imbibe is the Moshiach's Shluchim's doctrinal understanding of the Bible. You also join a chavurah of Achim B'Moshiach (not a one-hour-a-week worship service--see 5:42), and you commit yourself to the Moshiach's Tish and to corporate davening with other talmidim (3:42). People should not mouth a sinner's prayer and wander off on their own, thinking they have received the Moshi'a and have Scripturally responded properly to His invitation. They have not, unless they have an excuse like the

repentant thief dying next to Yehoshua. Unless they are making a deathbed confession, becoming a believer involves attaching oneself to at least one other person in a discipleship relationship (see 17:34).

Look at 2:46. Note the combination of mass rally and small group fellowship meetings. There were no Brit Chadasha kehillah buildings. Only Solomon's Portico and private homes. The latter undoubtedly allowed people to have intimate meetings with their neighbors and relatives who were coming into salvation faith, and also allowed unbelievers to be introduced into the faith among people of similar ethnic and family ties. These homogeneous unit meetings allowed for the kind of web movement we saw earlier in

passages like Mark 1:29-31, as whole families and segments of a society flow into the faith together (see Donald McGavran's many books). We are not wise to neglect either of these kinds of meetings today. What Brit Chadasha kehillah in a metropolitan area with a Jewish or Muslim population can't have a Muslim house fellowship or a Jewish house fellowship? Without such small group meetings it is unlikely that many Muslims and Jews and various other ethnic segments will flow into weekend worship "rallies."

Ch. 5:12 shows that a 50-50 balance was reached in preaching to believers (in house fellowships) and in preaching within the hearing of unbelievers (in the Beis Hamikdash court). Most Brit

Chadasha kehillot fail miserably here, preaching 100% inside the

Brit Chadasha kehillah building (which itself finds no

endorsement in Scripture) with few, if any, unbelievers in

earshot.

Look at 3:23. Moses is quoted as suggesting that Moshiach

rejecters are not what they think they are. This means that Jews

are not really Jews in the fullest sense of the word (truly

circumcised, initiated members of G-d's covenant people of the

Ruach Hakodesh) if they have not received the Biblical Moshiach

their Scriptures point to.

In ch. 4 we see that the revival is going on outside the power

establishment, whose spokesmen deny the key doctrines even while

their leaders declare themselves literalist defenders of the
faith or fundamentalists (so it is today with the true revival,
with which politically minded "organization men" of religion
often are out of touch).

One of the themes in Acts is Romans 8:28. The book is filled with
reversals. Everything that men do that is bad G-d turns around
and makes into something good (see Acts 4:27-28). For example, in
ch. 6, G-d uses a Brit Chadasha kehillah squabble over money for
widows and turns it around to send Greek-speaking emissaries of
Moshiach's shlichut out to the Greek-speaking world to fulfill
the Great Commission. He also uses this "widow" problem to form a

women's sodality (I Tim. 5). Stephen and Philip were

Greek-speaking members of the "Seven" who were deacons authorized

to preach (see the requirement of being able to keep hold on the

"mysteries of the faith with a clear conscience" in I Tim. 3:9;

see also Acts 6:8-8:1; 8:5,26,40; Rom. 16:1; I Tim. 3:8-13) and

to distribute the L-rd's Supper and to do the work of

administration in the local Messianic community, particularly

caring for the poor and the sick. See diakoneoo (care for, take

care of, look after) in Acts 6:2 and diakonos (servant, minister,

deacon) in Philippians 6:1. I Tim. 3:13 shows that shamoshim who

have served well "gain an excellent standing," which may mean

that some of them will eventually become overseers or zekenim as

the L-rd sovereignly tests, trains, and places them in offices of responsibility in his kingdom. The office of shamosh seems to be a much more important office in the Brit Chadasha Scriptures than many believers view it. Any congregation with ten or fifteen shamoshim preaching in the jails, nursing homes, and street corners of its community would have to have some kind of impact.

But some Brit Chadasha kehillot are so dead they view the office many times as a mere ritual or ceremonial dignity, like pallbearers at a funeral.

The Romans 8:28 theme in Acts is seen in 15:36, where G-d reverses a fight between Shliach Sha'ul and Barnabas to multiply

traveling, Greek-speaking, Brit Chadasha kehillah planting

confraternities or sodalities. The effect of this was to minimize

cultural differences between communicators and receptors, leaving

Aramaic-speaking Hebrew emissaries of Moshiach's shlichut to win

those like themselves in Jerusalem, and placing Greek-speaking

Hellenistic Jewish emissaries of Moshiach's shlichut among people

more like themselves outside Jerusalem. The Greek-speaking Jews

did not see it as a religious duty to shy away from secular

knowledge (7:22), and were therefore better equipped

philosophically to do outreach to the secular peoples of their

day.

Another reversal motif is the way things keep getting worse for

Shliach Sha'ul as the story unfolds, with more and more plots to

kill him or detain him or hinder him; but G-d works all these

things for good to protect Shliach Sha'ul and keeps opening

bigger and bigger doors for Shliach Sha'ul until his enemies

(ironically and unwittingly) have even driven him to the Imperial

Palace of Rome to witness to Nero himself!

Stephen emphasizes signs and wonders in the ministry of Moses

(7:36), just as these were emphasized in the ministries of

Moshiach Yehoshua, Stephen, Philip and all the leaders in the

book of Acts. The point Stephen is making is that his people were

called to be a pilgrim people on the move for G-d with the L-rd's

Tabernacle, but they have degenerated into a rebel brood, holding

Herod's Beis Hamikdash hostage and killing G-d's prophets.

Because Stephen was a Hellenist, other Hellenists like Saul

(later known as Rav Sha'ul) saw it as their duty to silence such

a traitor in Jerusalem who was quite embarrassingly one of their

own. So the Hellenists like Saul went after their own kind in the

persecution. The irony is in another reversal. Saul the

persecutor would become Stephen's Greek-speaking successor and

would finish the work Saul tried to stop Stephen from doing.

The fear of G-d must increase dramatically in a population in

order to have a great revival. One of the purposes of the judgment miracles in 5:5-10; 12:23; 13:11 is to increase this fear so that the revival would catch fire and the localized objective could be achieved: to fill Jerusalem with the teaching of the Moshiach (5:28). The moral of 5:1-11 is that it is dangerous to one's health to "play the Believer" while really trying only to "con" G-d and his people.

Notice that the Besuras Hageulah is not an attempt to get people to change religious and cultural externals but to receive "new life" (5:20). See 26:23 for an excellent summary of the Besuras

Hageulah. A notorious heretic at the time Luke was writing was a man named Shimon the Magician. He was the first great cultist, a

kind of fountainhead for the later gnostic and other cults. He believed that he himself was someone great and had been given divine power. He was leading many astray with his self-serving new religion. But in the power encounter that is described in 8:9-24, Shimon is shown to be a religious charlatan, because he is unable to work the works of G-d, being a mere charmer of crowds and trafficker in demon magic by means of the evil spirit energizing him. All over the world vast numbers of people, Muslims and Jews included, are under the spell of similar personalities, who require not only an Oxford debate but also a simple Shliach Kefa power encounter.

Philip the Kiruv outreach minister/Shammash exits at the end of

chapter 8 but will re-enter the drama in ch. 21.

Ch. 9:5 shows how Shliach Sha'ul got the notion that the

eschatological Messianic community is the body of Moshiach, each

member exercising gifts that are essential to the other members.

Ch. 9:15-16 shows why Shliach Sha'ul is the central Shliach and

human actor in the Book of Acts. We see Shliach Sha'ul the

Hellenist in Stephen's danger in the midst of his own Hellenist

Jewish people (9:29), just as later we will see Rav Sha'ul the

Pharisee versus the circumcising Pharisaic party of 15:5. Not

only that, continually, throughout the entire Empire, we will see

Shliach Sha'ul the Roman versus the Roman Government. But Shliach

Sha'ul is in a sense a nobody (I Cor. 15:9) without even qualifications in his own life to be so much as a Brit Chadasha kehillah officer (compare hubristes, meaning a violent, insolent man in I Tim. 1:13 and Titus 1:7 orgilon, meaning not inclined to anger and also plekten, meaning not pugnacious). This was to show the grace of G-d, that behind Shliach Sha'ul is the Risen One who, by signs and wonders and "acts" of the Ruach Hakodesh, is turning that political and cultural and religious world upside down and graciously receiving sinners who don't deserve to be received, much less used in the ministry.

Notice 9:32-35 where one healing sweeps in a whole people

movement.

It is ironic, yet sometimes the religious convictions of people

keep them from obeying G-d. The Aramaic-speaking Jews were even

slower than the Hellenists in obeying the Great Commission.

Perhaps they had so much accumulated traditional and theological

baggage and were so fixed in their own cultural location that

they could not change or adapt their strategy (as a sent-out

cross-cultural emissary of Moshiach's shlichut for people

culturally distant from themselves. To be fair, however, some

were called to stay within their own (Jewish) people group and

reach out to them (Gal. 2:7,9), and of these Shliach Kefa and

Yochanan eventually became emissaries of Moshiach's shlichut to

the Gentiles as well, because Yochanan later ministered in

Ephesus and Shliach Kefa in Rome.

Read 10:28-29 to see how G-d had to change the thinking of

monocultural emissaries of Moshiach's shlichut to make them

cross-cultural emissaries of Moshiach's shlichut. Because, under

the law of Moses, the Gentiles had to be circumcised to be clean,

Jews were not to visit

uncircumcised Gentiles (and thus cermonially defile themselves).

This was also a matter of religious pride, just as clergy would

not want to be seen visiting a house of prostitution for the

purpose of winning prostitutes to G-d, partly because of the way

it would look, that is, quite defiling to their reputation. But

in ch. 10 G-d convinces Shliach Kefa to obey him, and when the

Gentiles have the Ruach Hakodesh fall on them, Shliach Kefa makes

no qualitative differentiation between what happened to Jews in

Acts 2 and what happened to Gentiles in Acts 10 (see 10:44-48 and

11:15-17). In fact, for Shliach Kefa (and apparently for the

theologian Luke) tongues are the initial physical evidence

(notice the causal force of "gar" in Acts 10:46) for the tevilah

in the Ruach Hakodesh. (See Acts 15:8).

Ch. 11:19-26 is an important section for the light it might throw

on the identity of the author of Hebrews. Luke was, by reliable

tradition, from the Brit Chadasha kehillah in Antioch, Syria.

That would mean that he knew Barnabas personally. The kind things

he says about Barnabas here and in chapter 4 are probably

inserted lest Rav Sha'ul's split with him in ch. 15 cast an

aspersion on his character. "For he was a good man" in 11:24

leaves the impression that Barnabas may very well be dead by the

date Luke is writing. Since Barnabas and Apollos are two people

often asserted to be the author of Hebrews, by the process of

elimination Apollos becomes the more likely of the two. Luke is

very selective about whose names he mentions in the book of Acts.

The people he mentions are either authors of Scripture, key

prophets and pioneers in the early days of Messianic Judaism, or

associates of Shliach Sha'ul. Just being one of the 12 will not

get the history of your ministry included in Luke's book! The

main reason Apollos is mentioned in chs. 18 and 19 and at length

in I Cor. may very well be because he is an acknowledged prophet

and author of the book of Hebrews. We cannot be certain of this,

but it seems probable.

Ch. 12:24 gives a contributing factor in a revival: knowledge of

the Scriptures increases. Ch. 19:9-10 shows Shliach Sha'ul

starting a two-year school for active ministers, congregation

planters, kiruv outreach ministers, teachers, and emissaries of

Moshiach's shlichut. It was a Ruach Hakodesh Messianic Yeshivah

probably influenced by the type of education Shliach Sha'ul

himself received in Gamaliel's yeshiva (academy) in Jerusalem.

Very few institutions in the world today offer the type of

education that Shliach Sha'ul received, and yet the Bible says

that we are to follow Shliach Sha'ul as our example (I Cor. 11:1;

4:16; Phil. 3:17). Shliach Sha'ul studied with Gamaliel and

mastered the Hebrew text and the Messianic prophecies as a

trained scribe (copiest/technical Bible expert/teacher). When

Shliach Sha'ul completed his course of study under Gamaliel the

Elder (Acts 22:3), Shliach Sha'ul received s'micha or the laying

on of hands as authorization to teach and to transmit the rabbi's

traditions. Later, his technical learning gave him entree to

speaking in every city where his travels took him. Shliach Sha'ul was not merely a tent-maker. He was not only a man filled with the Holy Spirit. He was a student of the Word who had a great teacher. Apparently, Shliach Sha'ul gave s'micha to some of his graduates because had they not been authorized by his ministry school to preach as emissaries of Moshiach's shlichut and kiruv outreach ministers and teachers, it is hard to understand how Rav Sha'ul's activity in the school could have resulted in "all the inhabitants of the province of Asia, both Jews and Gentiles" being able to hear the Lord's message (notice the conjunction "oste" introducing a result clause in Acts 19:10).

Look at 13:2-3. You must have a call to be a cross-cultural minister of the Besuras Hageulah, and you should be sent or acknowledged by a body of believers (see Rom. 10:15) who recognize that you are equipped and properly trained. It was the Holy Spirit who sent Shliach Sha'ul and Barnabas apart to be sent out as ministers, but it was also a body of believers who acknowledged this (see also I Tim. 4:14 for Timothy's s'micha). Shliach Sha'ul and Barnabas were not merely self-appointed and self-accountable and self-commissioned, but were under the authority of a body of believers.

We must suit the style of our preaching to our audience, though the basic content does not change. Compare 13:17f (a sermon

preached to a Jewish audience) and 17:23f (a sermon preached to a Gentile audience).

Ch. 14:3 infers that G-d wants a few fearless preachers, and then revival can break out in your area. Ch. 14:8-10 infers that we should pray for the gifts of healing and then look for people who have G-d-given faith to receive their healings. But, since G-d is doing everything, and we are nothing, prayer is the key.

Notice ch. 14:23. The ministers who were sent out from Antioch organized believers into groups and then returned and appointed elders over them as G-d raised these up so that they could be

recognized within the local bodies. This is ordination. Then the

emissaries of Moshiach's shlichut went back and gave a report to

the sending body of believers (14:27-28).

Yeshu'at Eloheinu by the Chen v'Chesed Hashem (unmerited favor)

through emunah alone and not by works of the flesh or religion or

merit is the Besuras Hageulah that Shliach Sha'ul has to fight

for in ch. 15. Ch. 15:10-11 are key verses here against the

Galatians Judaizing heresy in 15:5-6.

Note how Timothy has to enculturate to win the target ethnic

population to which G-d has sent him--16:3.

Ch. 17:2 shows Shliach Sha'ul using his rabbinic education, his

talent and art as a rhetorician, and his knowledge of the Scriptures. Elsewhere we see that he also used his secular tent-making ability (18:3-4; 20:33-35) to earn a living, which gave him capital to travel and economic independence, as well as a traveling industry to pay his associates. These abilities, plus his bilingual and writing gifts, as well as his Roman citizenship, were all providential equipment from G-d, without which he could not have done what he did in thirty years of preaching, teaching, and writing: help to spread the Besuras Hageulah throughout the entire Roman Empire.

Ch. 17:16-17 shows Shliach Sha'ul stirred up with indignation in his heart against sin, which propelled him to preach. This

passage also shows Shliach Sha'ul experiencing what every foreign

emissary of Moshiach's shlichut experiences-- culture shock.

Notice the importance of debate in his ministry. Signs and

wonders are not all Shliach Sha'ul had to help him; he also

argued long and hard to win people to the Moshiach.

Notice that 20:7 indicates that they had Sunday meetings that

started on Saturday, because the Jews reckoned a day from dusk to

dusk. Thus both the Shabbos and the Lord's Day (I Cor. 16:2; Rev.

1:10) are on the primitive religious calendar. Indeed the

believers met daily (Acts 2:46). Messianic Muslims have the

liberty to meet on Friday because it is the Eternal Atonement

Day. Messianic Jews have the liberty to meet on Saturday (as is the custom of all Messianic Jews in the book of Acts), for one reason, because the Moshiach did not come to abolish the Law of Moses (Mt. 5:17). Also Saturday evening is the beginning of Sunday, the Eternal Resurrection Day. More than that, every day is the day that the L-rd has made, and each person should be convinced in his own mind, rather than be forced to submit to the observance of days for their own sake (see Rom. 14:5-8).

Look at 20:24. Has G-d given you a mission, a shlichut such that when you finish it you can die in peace?

Ch. 21:24 says that Shliach Sha'ul still regularly observed the

Law (see also 24:14). He did it not in order to be justified

before G-d on the basis of legalistic deserts. How could he have

avoided observing the Law if he desired to remain as a Jew to the

Jews, who by definition (at that time) observed the Law?

Ch. 22:21-22 is a key theme in Acts--the jealousy of the Jews,

their anger at the thought that G-d would choose the Gentiles to

share their religious privileges, and (to add injury to insult,

so to speak) give these religious privileges to the Gentiles free

as an act of unmerited favor, not on the proud basis of merit and

law-keeping deserts.

In ch. 27 G-d uses a hurricane and peril at sea to show that

Shliach Sha'ul is G-d's prophet (his obedient Jonah!), and,

ironically, that it is the Romans, and not his prophet Shliach

Sha'ul, who are on trial before the same bar of divine justice

that Pilate was ironically hauled in front of when he met

Moshiach Yehoshua at Pesach season C.E. 30.

Ch. 28:14 says "And so we came to Rome." Luke has been driving

toward this sentence throughout his whole narrative. The maximum

length of protective custody was two years. Apparently Shliach

Sha'ul was released in 62/63 after two years of house arrest.

Luke stops the story there. He was rearrested in 65-68, stood

trial again in Rome, and shortly after he wrote II Timothy, was

beheaded by order of Nero or his (supreme) court or delegated

authorities.

Solomon's Porch was probably on the east side of the Beis

Hamikdash, near the Beautiful Gate, where Shliach Kefa and

Yochanan ministered to the man lame from birth in Acts 3. The

Beautiful Gate led into the Women's Court, beyond which women

were not permitted. A shady area of roof supported by columns

surrounded the level courtyard. It was in this area, in the

portico called (King) Shlomo's that the first believers held

weekly open-air meetings within ear-shot of unbelievers. In this

regard, street preachers should remember that an

open-air preacher should not wear fine clothes (Mt. 11:7-8; Mark

1:6); every street sermon needs a baseline of humility. That is,

Yehoshua says (5:19), "Tell them how much the L-rd has done for

you, and what mercy He has shown you.

ACTS 2:42

And they continued devotedly in the torah of the Moshiach's

Shluchim and the chavurah and the betzi'at halechem and the

davening of tevillos.

MOSHIACH'S LETTER THROUGH THE SHLIACH SHA'UL
TO THE BRIT CHADASHA KEHILLAH IN ROME

It is C.E. 56/57 in Corinth, Greece. Shliach Sha'ul knows he may

be killed shortly in Jerusalem, but he feels compelled,

especially for the sake of the Jewish-Gentile world-wide body of

the L-rd's people, to risk the trip to Jerusalem anyway.

Therefore, if he may never make it to Rome personally, as had

been his ambition for many years, the next best thing to going

there is to send a complete summmary of his Besuras Hageulah. A

Greek-speaking deaconess from a nearby congregation named Phoebe,

was on hand and willing to make the perilous journey to deliver

the letter to the believers in Rome.

Because we know that Aquila and Priscilla were in Ephesus around

C.E. 55 (I Cor. 16:19) and in C.E. 65-68 (II Tim. 4:19), we do not know for sure whether Rom. 16 is intended for them in Ephesus (Phoebe stopping there along the way to Rome, delivering a copy of Romans to the Ephesians) or in Rome, though many scholars, perhaps lacking sufficient evidence, believe this couple is back in Rome where they originated (Acts 18:2). In any case, Shliach Sha'ul of course has no way of knowing that he himself will be in Rome in less than three years and as a prisoner. This happens just a little over four years before Nero has his famous fire set in Rome (C.E. 64) and then blames the Roman believers for it and starts his notorious persecution, in the course of which Shliach

Sha'ul and Shliach Kefa are eventually martyred according to reliable tradition.

Some of the things Shliach Sha'ul says in the letter to the Romans he has probably already said around eight or so years before when he wrote Galatians (compare Gal. 3:6-9 to Rom.4).

However, when he wrote to the Galatians (probably from Antioch, Syria around C.E. 48/49 just prior the Acts 15 Jerusalem Council), Shliach Sha'ul was dealing with other matters.

Galatians was very likely the earliest of his canonical epistles, and it had to be very polemical and self-defensive because Judaizers were preaching a false Besuras Hageulah and were calling Rav Sha'ul's status as a Shliach into question.

Therefore, a calmer exposition of the Besuras Hageulah itself was needed, especially one that took a more comprehensive look at the Jews and Gentiles as heirs of Abraham, in view of the fact that Jews were already showing (in the more than twenty-five years since the resurrection of the Moshiach) an amazing resistance to the Besuras Hageulah, an unbelief that seemed to throw the veracity of the Tanakh's promises to them into question. In fact, their amazing unbelief seemed to throw doubt as well on the credibility of Moshiach Yehoshua as the Moshiach of Israel and even on the salvation of Israel itself. Shliach Sha'ul had to explain all of this in terms of the Shluchim's authoritative

Besuras Hageulah he preached in all the Brit Chadasha kehillot.

Since some Gentiles were beginning to lose patience with the Jews

because of the persecutions caused by unbelieving Jews in the

synagogues, Rav Sha'ul needed to explain the fidelity of G-d, the

wrath of G-d, His righteousness as an unearnable gift, His

awesome election, and the need, therefore, to fear G-d in utter

humility rather than get proud and arrogant against those of the

Jewish people who were unbelieving.

For Rav Sha'ul's Besuras Hageulah proclaims that salvation is a

work that is G-d's work from first to last. The call of G-d's

unmerited favor, the mercy of his forgiving love, the gift of

aquittal and righteous status before his judgment throne, his

regenerating us by calling a new creation forth out of nothing

(see Rom. 4:17; 9:7-8), all this--in short, the Besuras Hageulah

--springs from G-d alone, disclosed to us in Abraham's faith (Gn.

15:6; Rom. 4:3,9,20-22), and revealed to us through saving faith

alone (Rom. 3:21-31). G-d's salvation is the work of G-d and not

of man and is altogether by emunah (faith) (Rom. 1:17; 3:28).

Romans 9:11-12 argues that G-d's salvation is a work solely of

G-d that leaves man with nothing to boast in. G-d's purpose in

alerting Rebecca that Jacob was chosen beforehand and selected as

a "vessel of mercy was to show that the basis of salvation is

unmerited favor rather than by "works of the law" (mitzvot or

ma'asim), which is a rabbinic expression. Works of the law were not mere self-selected good deeds or acts of charity but were the statutory works (supposedly 613 commandments by a later count), the doing of which legalists among the Jews assumed would fulfill the law and become the basis for justification and salvation (see Rom. 9:31-33). Apparently this was Rav Sha'ul's "Besuras Hageulah" when he was Saul the the persecutor (Phil. 3:2-9) before he was regenerated on the Damascus Road and made into a new creation as a gracious act of the One who was his enemy. Rav Sha'ul's salvation and acquired righteous status before G-d's judgment throne was completely apart from any principle of

deserts, wages, reward, debt, or obligation placed on G-d by

human effort (Rom. 3:28; 4:2-8) since Rav Sha'ul was a culpable

persecutor with a blind heart and a darkened understanding.

Legalistic religious merit-earning is impossible anyway, for no

one will be justified (acquitted of guilt and pronounced

righteous) by deeds prescribed by the law (Rom. 3:20-21) for the

law only increases the knowledge of sin (3:20).

Romans 9:11-12 says that we are not saved by works but because of

Him who calls us. However, Col. 3:12 says, "As G-d's chosen ones,

clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness,

and patience." So G-d's call and election does require a human

response (II Shimon Kefa 1:10; Phil. 2:12), and man is

responsible before G-d for his own decisions. The Jacobs of the world may have been chosen, but the Esaus of the world did sell their birthright, "which is also what they were destined for" (I Shimon Kefa 2:8). Therefore, Esau could not say to G-d, "Why have you made me thus" (Rom. 9:20)? The Pharisees did "reject G-d's purpose for themselves" (Luke 1:30) so G-d's gracious invitation is not irresistible. Remember the rich young ruler? G-d desires everyone to be saved (I Tim. 2:4) and takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ez. 33:11). Nevertheless, if anyone is puffed up and thinks he is something because he has come to salvation, through faith, let him be humbled in the fact that "as

many as had been destined or ordained (tasso meaning belong to, be ordered among) for Chayyei Olam (Eternal Life) became believers" (Acts 13:48). A man's salvation is not his own doing, it is all of G-d (Yochanan 1:13; Rom. 8:29-30) and all of grace (Eph. 2:8-9). Rom. 8:30 speaks of G-d's calling us, his summons to us. It also speaks about his deciding beforehand (proorizo, to meaning to predestine) which has to do with the eternal divine determination of salvation. (See Ps. 139:16; Jer. 1:5; Gal. 1:15; Eph. 1:4-5; I Th. 5:9; II Th. 2:13; Rev.13:8; 17:8; Yochanan 6:44; Rom. 11:5). This doctrine should not lead us to boast against those who lack faith, but rather to fear (Rom. 11:18-21) and examine ourselves to see if our faith is real and alive and

active in love. True faith will compel us to witness, even if our

witnessing makes us suffer for the sake of the elect (Col. 1:24;

II Tim. 2:10), since how can they believe without a witness (Rom.

10:14)? This doctrine should not lead us into libertinism and

lethargy, since these very godless sins would themselves throw

our salvation into question (I Cor.6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Mt.

24:42-51).

Shliach Sha'ul begins his Besuras Hageulah by placing everyone in

the world, Jews and Gentiles alike, guilty and condemned already

before the divine bar of justice--without excuse (anapologetous,

1:20; 2:1). Shliach Sha'ul declares that the Creator in his

creation is rationally knowable, capable of being known (gnoston
1:19) because his eternal power and divine nature shine forth to
the eye of reason (noeo to understand, 1:20) from His creation of
the cosmos (1:20). Moreover, man has an intuitive moral
awareness, not written down at the hand of Moses, but a nomos
agrafos, an unwritten law written on the heart. G-d has not left
himself without a witness of his will, because the existence of
this G-d-given moral law written on the heart is attested by the
law-regulated conduct of Gentile nations who don't possess the
law of Moses, and is also attested by the conscience, and by the
accusing or excusing thoughts of man (2:14-15). Therefore,
mankind knows he is worthy of death (1:32) when he refuses the

Creator the thanksgiving and service which is His due (1:21) and
instead knowingly (1:19,21, 28,32) affronts the divine majesty
with idolatrous acts of vileness (1:21-32) in the bondage of the
power of sin, even while he suppresses the truth in
unrighteousness (1:18).

The religious person is also under the power of sin (3:9). So
anyone, even a Jew knowledgeable enough to teach the ethics of
Torah, who condemns lesbians, homosexual offenders, and the whole
array of evil-doers in ch. 1, sure that these evil-doers, and not
he himself also, is lost--any religious person such as this--is
condemning himself as well (2:1), because knowing the good and

the proper thing to do is not enough. One must do the good (2:13, 25-27), something which is impossible for the aggregation of the old humanity fallen from its original glory (3:23), also impossible for anyone (3:9-23), Jew or Gentile, enslaved by the law of sin (7:23) unless the effecting will (7:18) of the new humanity in Moshiach Yehoshua the Moshiach is received from the Father by means of the Ruach Hakodesh in a new birth (6:4) from one humanity to the other (see chs. 5-7), with the result that the power of sin is broken (6:1-7:25).

One must decide which cosmology to believe, Rav Sha'ul's or modern evolutionists. Shliach Sha'ul says that sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way

death came to all men, because all sinned (Rom. 5:12).

Evolutionists say that the first hominids evolved over five

million years ago in Africa and that one branch of hominids,

called homo erectus, spread across the globe some time after 1.6

million years ago. Homo sapiens (the name given to the subspecies

we think of as modern humans) is said to have come from Africa

some time in the last 500,000 years. These scientists can't agree

as to whether the Neanderthal brutes are evolutionary

grandparents or only distant cousins of modern man. Of course,

these kinds of speculations are presented with more dogmatic

certainty than the evidence warrants. But the point is that in

such an unscriptural cosmology "Adam" didn't exist, much less sin

or introduce death. But if Shliach Sha'ul were wrong about the

first Adam, how can we trust what he says about the second Adam?

It is better to trust in the L-rd and not lean on one's own

understanding. None of the fossil remains of subhuman or hominid

species give infallible proof that these animals possessed a

complex culture or complex language or moral awareness or

awareness of G-d's glorious presence or any of the other

characeristics of Biblical mankind as depicted in Genesis 2-3.

And since the fossil record can by no means corroborate the

speculations of evolutionary theory (the fossil record lacks

transitional forms between the major kinds of living things), it

is folly to put one's trust in fantasies that try to pose as scientific fact. However, since the Genesis account does not fix the exact antiquity of either the universe or mankind, we cannot be dogmatic about when the first man was created. However, we must be dogmatic that there was a first man and that he did fall from the goodness with which he was endowed at creation. Man did not accidentally come into existence nor is he gratuitously evolving upward from the brute. Rather, in the Fall, man is devolving inexorably downward toward the brute, and the number of the Beast is 666 (Rev. 13:18).

The watery grave of Moshiach's tevilah is described in ch. 6.

Shliach Sha'ul says we must consider our old life of sin dead (a deed man can't sin) and our new life risen in the newness of our existence in the One who rose not only from the water but also from the grave. Shliach Sha'ul emphasizes here that since it is true that we are delivered from sin, we must act delivered (6:2).

The Besuras Hageulah is that G-d has provided a way for faith to reach out and appropriate both release from condemnation (Rom. 8:1) and peace with G-d (Rom. 5:1). The law brings "knowledge of sin," provides an occasion for disobedience, causes sin to be "counted," and so results in death (3:20; 4:15; 5:12-14; 7:7-11) but the free gift of G-d is Chayyei Olam (Eternal Life) through

Moshiach Yehoshua our L-rd (6:23).

No less a prestigious scholar than Ernst Kasemann (who is by no means a Pentecostal) says in his exegetical commentary on Romans that 8:26 is referring to speaking in tongues (see p. 240-242, Commentary on Romans, Eerdmans, 1980).

In chs 9-11, Shliach Sha'ul deals with the problem of Israel's unbelief, showing that a vast remnant of the Jewish people will at last believe, and that it is only because of their unbelief that G-d has dealt severely with them. This should sober any "believer" who thinks he has a privileged religious status and can live any way he wants and "once saved always be saved." It was precisely this presumptuousness that led to Israel's mining

out with G-d and Shliach Sha'ul specifically warns believers to avoid this error (11:23). Shliach Sha'ul had learned only too well that the proud religious Pharisee, certain of his election to the point of presumption, had better not trifle with a G-d who hardens or quickens whom He pleases according to His sovereign choice (9:6-29).

The purpose of Moshiach's world shlichut is to provoke the Gentiles to faith and the Jews to jealousy, so that by the inclusion of the latter in the body of Moshiach will come the resurrection of the dead and the fulness of the new age (11:14-15). Therefore, a carnal hatred of Jews and Zionists

rather than a zeal for their salvation is the attitude of someone

so lost and in darkness that the very trigger of the new holy

age, the salvation of the Jews, is totally lost sight of.

Shliach Sha'ul concludes his letter by exhorting believers to

excel in the graces of a believer and to know and use the

spiritual gifts given, making real friends with the poor

(ch. 12), being obedient to duly constituted civil authority

(ch. 13), and showing mutual love and forbearance in regard to

disputed items like unkosher food, wine, etc (14:1-15:13) for the

sake of unity and the salvation of those for whom Moshiach

Yehoshua died. An important theme in Romans has to do with the

great peril of death threatening mankind, since death is not just

a natural phenomenon but the wages of sin and the wrath of G-d

that is revealed from heaven. It is impossible to preach with

power the deliverance of Moshiach Yehoshua who rescues us from

G-d's wrath/death sentence (I Thes. 1:10) unless one fully

understand this theme. See Rom. 5:12,15-19; Rom. 1:18,32; Rom

2:5,8; 3:5; 4:15,25; 5:9-10,14,21; 6:2-5, 9-10,13,16,21,23;

7:4-5,10-11,,13, 24; 8:1-2,6,13,36,38; 9:22; 12:19 13:4; 14:7. It

is the death of the Moshiach that absorbs the wrath against us

and reconciles us to G-d (5:10) so that death is gain and to

depart and be with Moshiach is far better (Phil. 1:21,23).

MOSHIACH'S LETTER THROUGH THE SHLIACH SHA'UL
TO THE BRIT CHADASHA KEHILLAH IN CORINTH (I)

Shliach Sha'ul writes I Corinthians roughly C.E. 55 from Ephesus.

While on his second emissary of Moshiach's shlichut journey (C.E.

50-52) Shliach Sha'ul had spent some time with Aquila and

Priscilla in Corinth. An important synagogue leader named Crispus

and his household had surprised the local Jewish congregation by

becoming believers. A rather substantial messianic congregation

came into existence during Rav Sha'ul's year and a half stay

there in Corinth starting around C.E. 50-51 (at which time he

wrote I and II Thessalonians).

We are told he set up a rival messianic synagogue in the house of a regenerated G-d-fearer (formerly a Gentile follower of Judaism but uncircumcised) named Titius Justus right next door to where the unbelieving Jews were meeting in their synagogue (Acts 18:7).

Shliach Sha'ul was very weak and fearful at this time (I Cor.

2:3) but Silas and Timothy arrived with good news about the

Thessalonian congregation (I Thes. 3:6) and Shliach Sha'ul

received a vision assuring him of protection and of many souls

(Acts 18:9-11), so Shliach Sha'ul began to preach with great

power and an impressive revival began.

Then, after Aquila and Priscilla moved their base of operations

to Ephesus, the capital of Asia Minor (modern Turkey), Apollos (the probable author of Hebrews) joined Aquila and Priscilla for a time and then left for Corinth. Meanwhile, Shliach Sha'ul arrived in Ephesus and established a Messianic yeshiva for raising up new Messianic ministries all over the area. During this two-year period (ca. C.E. 53-55), as he held his discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus, he sent a letter (now lost) to the Brit Chadasha kehillah in Corinth by the hands of Timothy urging the Corinthians not to associate with immoral men (I Cor. 5:9-11). A reply to his letter was delivered to Rav Sha'ul at Ephesus by a group from Corinth including Stephanas,

Fortunatus, and Achaicus. This letter apparently took exception

to Rav Sha'ul's teachings and posed certain questions to Shliach

Sha'ul regarding marriage and singleness, food sacrificed to

idols, spiritual gifts, and the special Moshiach's shlichut

offering (cf. Gal. 2:10) for the Messianic Jews in Israel that

Shliach Sha'ul was collecting. Shliach Sha'ul then dictated this

letter known as I Corinthians sometime between 54 and 56 C.E.

Shliach Sha'ul had been alerted from travellers (the household of

a woman named Chloe) between Corinth and Ephesus that there were

religious divisions or factions in the Brit Chadasha kehillah

based on the prideful tendency to make heroes of men. These

personality cults threatened to destroy the community itself

(chs. 1-4). One clique championed Apollos, another Shliach Kefa, another Shliach Sha'ul, and one seemed to turn its nose up at any preacher and place Moshiach (as they defined him) at the head of their schismatic party. The Corinthians seemed to consider themselves gifts to their teachers; they did not see that the teachers were in fact gifts to them. Comparing teacher to teacher, they did not realize that it is the Moshiach, not any mere human, who is "wisdom from G-d" (and much else--see 1:30).

Shliach Sha'ul also heard something else that disturbed him--a case of incest was going on unchallenged (ch. 5). Also there were court cases between believers (6:1-8) bringing scandal on the

Brit Chadasha kehillah in the eyes of outsiders. Not only that, certain libertines were abusing the freedom of believers by indulging in fornication 6:9-20), and there was charismatic chaos in the Brit Chadasha kehillah which had even disrupted the reverent decorum demanded by the Moshiach's Tish (chs. 11-15).

Women were apparently at fault in this, too, manifesting insubordination, and shouting out questions to their husbands and lacking modesty and proper respect in their dress.

There were some who thought themselves prophets and therefore saw no need to be concerned about whatever authority, as Shliach to the Gentiles, that Shliach Sha'ul might try to assert. Some wanted to speak in tongues all the time in the services and some

lacked all fear of G-d when they came to the Moshiach's Tish, not
bothering to make teshuva beforehand of sensual disobedience and
self-important rebellion. Some were only too quick to downgrade
Shliach Sha'ul and look with awe on certain "super-shluchim" from
Jerusalem who, unlike Shliach Sha'ul, made stiff financial
demands and didn't work with their hands but were "brilliant"
rhetoricians and seemed on the verge of taking advantage of Rav
Sha'ul's absence to "camp out" on his ministry and disconnect him
from the affections of the Corinthians (9:1-7 and see II Cor.
11:5-6).

Among this hodge-podge of rebels were some who taught an

over-realized eschatology where they were already reigning (not suffering like Rav Sha'ul) as kings with immortal souls (4:8).

Therefore, such mundane and materialistic considerations as

poverty, illness, hardship, and tribulation were things not to be

reckoned with by such charismatic "kings" as themselves (nor a

future bodily resurrection either--15:12)! What mattered was the

charismatic now of ecstasy, and the rapturous escape from mundane

suffering, and the hype of awesome teachers who swept these

Corinthians off their hyper-charismatic feet. The foolish idea

(1:18) that true believers are suffering servants of the

Suffering Servant (if we suffer with him now we will reign with

him later--Phil. 1:29; II Tim. 2:11-12; II Cor. 1:5) seems to

have been unimpressive to these Corinthians, as was Shliach Sha'ul himself. And the idea that we will be vindicated only at the future resurrection of the dead was not a palatable idea for preaching to Greek audiences. Much more attractive was the notion that true believers were already transformed and even now living in a new age which allows no place for suffering now and no need for a future resurrection of the body later.

Notice, however, Shliach Sha'ul anticipated an overly enthusiastic anti-charismatic backlash because he specifically warns against forbidding (either tacitly or bluntly) speaking in tongues and quenching the Spirit in the area of prophesying (I

Cor. 11:39-40). Therefore, Shliach Sha'ul is saying, you rebellious super-charismatics and also you anti-charismatics, both of you stay together in unity and make sure you find the balance in heeding the authority of the Scriptures! Is the L-rd's house nothing but giving a message in tongues? Is the L-rd's house nothing but giving the interpretation? Is the L-rd's house nothing but people getting healed? Allow diversity of the gifts, Shliach Sha'ul is saying (see 12:29-31); he is not arguing that these gifts are impossible for some to attain, as I Cor. 14:26 shows.

There seems to have been a large host of teachers (4:15) living off the fat of this large congregation, including a few "sabra

snobs" (men whom Shliach Sha'ul sarcastically calls

"super-Shluchim" in II Cor. 11) who presumed on the fact that

they were ethnically Jewish, and were coming in to attempt to

mutineer Rav Sha'ul's mission field away from him in his absence,

making subtle and not so subtle innuendos undercutting Rav

Sha'ul's perogatives as a shliach and attempting to establish

their own (see I Cor. 9 and II Cor. 11).

There was a tendency toward intellectual pretension in Corinth,

though the people themselves were hardly philosophers. A certain

incipient Gnostic tendency to see salvation as something acquired

by knowledge was already in the Brit Chadasha kehillah. The

people were being puffed up by a merely human wisdom that was not

from the Spirit. The later Gnostics taught that matter was evil,

and this premise led some to a life of forced celibacy while

others became promiscuous sexually, seeing the body, as opposed

to the spirit, as an indifferent issue, the undefiled spirit

alone being considered important. Against such antinomian

amorality, Shliach Sha'ul warns if someone claims to be a

believer and is immoral or an idolater or greedy or drunken

(5:9-11), he or she must be expelled from the congregation (I

Cor. 5:2). Note the sins of 6:9-10 and the fearful wage they earn

and are paid: Gehinnom!

Some in Corinth reasoned that since an idol is "nothing" (I Cor.

8:4), believers have the freedom to join the heathen in using

pagan forms of idol worship with an easy conscience. But Shliach

Sha'ul warns about the brother who is ruined by watching such a

bad example (I Cor. 8:10-11). Shliach Sha'ul also views the body

as made for the L-rd and for the resurrection, and these twin

ideas lead to the Rav Sha'uline teaching on liberty and holiness.

The whole epistle of I Corinthians is a wonderful exposition of

divine wisdom on the difference between freedom and license as

these impinge on koinonia (fellowship) between brethren and the

Moshiach in all areas of life.

The advantage of celibacy--for those who need not marry to avoid

burning with inward desire (7:9)--is not in the superiority of asceticism over marriage, but in the greater freedom the single person has to please the L-rd (without the often conflicting demand to please the spouse). Notice also that married people will have trouble in this life (7:28) whereas the widow who does not remarry is happier in Rav Sha'ul's opinion (7:40). He is basing this assessment on eschatological reality: the new Adam is already alive from the dead and in him the new humanity of the new holy age (where ultimately people are neither married nor given in marriage-Mk. 12:25) is already spiritually alive from the dead and is ready to appear at any moment; therefore, since the form of this age is passing away (7:31), even those who have

wives should come up to speed with reality and live as though

they had none (7:29), which means serving the L-rd with

singleminded passion, and not in denying conjugal rights (7:3-5).

The great crisis that is coming on the world, especially the

Great Tribulation, makes the unmarried person's lot seem

especially attractive to Shliach Sha'ul (7:26; see Mt. 24:19).

This book was written to correct the false doctrine of

super-charismatics and anti-charismatic reactionaries and also

those who are ignorantly overawed by anyone with the 1st century

equivalent of a Ph.D. in Philosophy or Rhetoric, especially a

philosopher who says "the dead are not raised" (see 15:12).

There was jealousy and strife and quarreling in the congregation

and schisms based on hero worship and the narrow-minded tendency

to divide into factions. There were puffed-up, arrogant "eloquent

teachers" who had a rebellious and independent attitude toward

Shliach Sha'ul (see end of chapter 4).

The eschatological perspective that colors the whole epistle is

10:11. Has "the end of the ages" dawned on your life? Does that

time perspective color all your thinking and priorities? If it

doesn't you are an "infant" in Moshiach, a carnal believer,

according to Shliach Sha'ul, and you will not agree with him when

he gets down to the touchy business of divorce and remarriage and

other matters--see I Cor. 7:11.

The charismatic "word" (1:5) and "knowledge" (1:5) gifts are part of the way the testimony of Rav Sha'ul's Besuras Hageulah was confirmed in the Corinthian congregation. Rav Sha'ul's preaching was with the demonstration of the Ruach Hakodesh--2:4. Shliach Sha'ul signals in 1:5, at the very beginning of the iggeret, that the gifts of the Ruach Hakodesh have been an enrichment (1:5) to the congregation and that Shliach Sha'ul is for and not against the charismatic gifts (1:7). We will see later that he insists on intelligibility and order in the use of the gifts, but he commands that they not be quenched or outlawed or despised by the anti-charismatic reactionaries. Rav Sha'ul's remarks on the Moshiach being the only ground of

boasting because He is the only true wisdom are based on the

Hebrew Bible. Proverbs 8:30 and 30:4 and Psalm 107:20 and 33:6

are important pictures of G-d's wisdom and its saving activity.

The saving, creative primordial Wisdom at G-d's side, Wisdom the

Ben HaElohim (Proverbs 30:4) of the Tanakh, the chochmah of the

Biblical Wisdom Literature (Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Ya'akov)

Shliach Sha'ul sees as none other than Moshiach Yehoshua. Shliach

Sha'ul is saying, "Stop the quarreling and boasting in mere human

rhetorical and worldly, carnal wisdom and stop forming schisms or

divisions (1:10,11:18) around these infantile considerations, and

consider this: that the so-called wisdom of Greek philosophers

and Jewish rabbis has been brought to nothing by the folly of

G-d's wisdom, which is the death and resurrection of the Moshiach

and the turning point of the ages at His Aitz and empty tomb,

where G-d decisively judges and brings to an end the present age

(see on this Gordon Fee's commentary on I Corinthians, Eerdmans

Publishers, 1987). In view of this act of G-d, everyone is in

one of two categories--the "perishing" or "those being saved."

The message may be a scandal or an offense to Jews ("What? Our

President executed in the electric chair by a foreign government

at the request of our wisest leaders?"). The message may be folly

or madness to Greeks ("What? a G-d who came to earth and

inadvertently got himself nailed up by his worshippers?") but you

have to be called to get the message, Shliach Sha'ul is saying in

1:23-24, and the message you get is the power of G-d confirmed

even by charismatic gifts in operation in the body (1:5-6; 12:8),

though all things must be done decently and in order, and in the

interest of intelligibility lest outsiders say "you are mad."

(Deliverance Brit Chadasha kehillot that want to turn the whole

worship service into an exorcism could also learn something from

I Cor. 14:23.)

G-d intends to make fools out of everyone on earth and even the

"fools" G-d chose for salvation have to become fools for Moshiach

in order to become wise, because Moshiach resurrected from a

foolish Aitz is the only real wisdom and righteousness and

sanctification and redemption. One spiritual gift in I

Corinthians is the gift of Shliach (12:28). The Shliach lays the

foundation of the new kehillah. The Shliach plants the

congregation (4:15), the navi waters the new planting, the

spiritual leader oversees or inspects its growth, the kiruv

outreach minister builds it up with new-born growth from the

world, and the teacher edifies the new planting in the Word.

Actually G-d does all these things but he uses his gifts to

accomplish his work.

Shliach Sha'ul believed in a millenium. See 6:2 and compare with

Rev. 20:4, Mt. 19:28; Lu 22:30.

The kohen-like "ritual eating" of the L-rd's Supper requires

teshuva (see Lv. 7:20-21). Relate this to "eating and

drinking condemnation of yourself" in I Cor. 11:29.

I Cor. 15 says that the Besuras Hageulah is that the Moshiach

died, was buried, and was raised on the third day, according to

the Scriptures. What Scriptures? Leviticus 9 promises the

glorious Presence of the L-rd will appear to you if the enjoined

sacrifice is accepted (9:1,5-7, 23); Yehoshua is the Word of

G-d's Presence appearing among us as Immanuel (G-d-with-us). This

promise pertains to "the eighth day," symbolizing the first day

of the B'ria Chadasha, the day after the Seventh Day or Shabbos.

For more specific references to the Third Day as the time of

eschatological theophany, see Ex. 19:11,18 and eschatological

Techiyas HaMesim (see Hosea 6:2). There are according to the

Bible three types of people: a person who is not devoid of the

Holy Spirit and is therefore a believer, in fact a mature

believer--I Cor. 2:6--capable of assimilating holy wisdom); a

person devoid of the Holy Spirit who is a mere "natural man" and

therefore "does not receive the things of the Spirit"--I Cor.

2:14); a person who has the Holy Spirit but acts like a natural

man because he is stunted in growth and is a mere infant in the

Lord and can only imbibe the milk of the Word.

There were some aberrant teachers in Corinth who tried to assert another (inadmissible) category of person, the pneumatiki, the Spiritual ones. These Greeks were among those causing, reproach among outsiders by splitting the congregation into philosophical factions and settling Brit Chadasha kehillah disputes in secular courts and also creating disorder in the charismatic congregational meetings. These Greek teachers were against Rav Sha'ul's doctrines. They denied the future resurrection of the body (I Cor. 15:12) and claimed on the basis of their Spiritual gifts to have arrived at the Eschaton or Future Age already (I Cor. 4:8), already to have possessed all wisdom (I Cor. 4:10), denigrating present physical existence, not becoming at all

perturbed by the presence of an incestuous man in their membership (I Cor. 5), and including among their numbers certain eschatological "women who refused relations with their husbands...in effect sending them either to get a divorce or to go to the prostitutes (I Cor. 6-7). Rav Sha'ul's letter is meant to set these independent-minded and arrogant people straight and to reassert Rav Sha'ul's authority as Moshiach's Shliach to build up the Kehillah.

GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (I Cor.12:8-10)

-word of wisdom: see Acts 16:7;

-word of knowledge: see Acts 5:1-10;

-faith: see Luke 7:7-9, for an example of mountain-moving

(Mt.17:20) faith; -gifts of healings: see Acts 3:6-16;

-workings of miraculous powers: see Yochanan 11:42-43;

-prophecy: see I Kings 17:1;

-discerning of spirits: see I Kings 22:22;

-gift of tongues: see I Cor. 14:6;

-interpretation of tongues: see I Cor. 14:13;

MOSHIACH'S LETTER THROUGH THE SHLIACH SHA'UL TO THE BRIT CHADASHA KEHILLAH IN CORINTH (II)

Shliach Sha'ul has just undergone horrendous tribulation and has

almost been killed in Ephesus. Apollos (the probably author of

Hebrews) was with Shliach Sha'ul in Ephesus when Shliach Sha'ul

wrote I Corinthians. The scholar Hugh Montefiore believes that

Apollos wrote the Book of Hebrews and sent it to Corinth from

Ephesus before Shliach Sha'ul wrote I Corinthians in the C.E. mid

50's. This is indeed possible. II Corinthians is written shortly

after I Corinthians, both epistles probably being written C.E.

55/56, I Corinthians written from Ephesus, II Corinthians

probably from Macedonia (see II Cor. 2:13; 7:5). Shliach Sha'ul

planted congregations in Macedonia in Philippi and Thessalonica.

In II Corinthians, carnal or worldly wisdom is still a focus of

his attack as it was in I Corinthians. See sofia sarkike in I

Corinthians 1:12.

As we will prove when we get to Galatians, it is the regenerate

community of the redeemed who are sealed (sphragisamenos--II Cor.

1:22) as are the 144,000 sealed before the Great Tribulation

(Rev. 7:4--see the same Greek word), because both are the

eschatological Israel of G-d of Galatians 6:16, a term of such

ultimate end-time magnitude that it will exclude neither national

Israel (Rom. 11:26-27) nor the Jewish remnant throughout the ages

nor the remnant of regenerated, righteous Gentiles.

3:14-18 and 4:1-6 describes the uncircumcised heart.

5:10 tells why we must be absolutely holy and blameless in the

body. Also we must always avoid the Greek tendency to separate

the spiritual side of our lives from the physical; and that means

we must be holy and blameless in spirit and in body.

Can you become an shliach? Not all the Shluchim saw the L-rd (see

8:23). There are still shluchim in that sense of

congregation-planters today. Have you been called and set apart

by a body to go out and collect at least 2 or more witnesses

together every week in His Name to celebrate the Word and make

talmidim? The seal of your Shlichut (to prove you are a shliach)

will be the congregation you establish (I Cor. 9:2).

Chapters 11 and 12 I use almost verbatim at times in The Rabbi

From Tarsus (VHS Home Video, Word, Inc, 1986).? In this passage

Shliach Sha'ul attacks the "super-shluchim" who come from

Jerusalem and try to undermine Rav Sha'ul's preaching.

Chapters 11 and 12 are the most autobiographical parts of Rav

Sha'ul's writings. Here as in Galatians we can see shades of

Jeremiah in Shliach Sha'ul, who consciously uses some of

Jeremiah's diction.

After sending the letter called I Corinthians from Ephesus,

Shliach Sha'ul felt the state of the Brit Chadasha kehillah was

so chaotic that sending Timothy was not enough (Timothy may have

been ill-treated during his visit) and that it was obligatory

that the shliach himself make a personal visit to Corinth.

Unfortunately, there he was opposed by someone who, it seems,

rejected Rav Sha'ul's authority as Moshiach's Shliach and caused

a great deal of pain (II Cor. 2:1,5) which necessitated Rav

Sha'ul's tactical retreat (he wanted to give them time to get

their house in order before more serious censure was necessary).

Shliach Sha'ul rebuked the congregation and withdrew to Ephesus

where he wrote a severe letter (now lost) to the Corinthians.

This lost letter of ultimatum Shliach Sha'ul sent by the hand of

Titus (who appears to have been less timid than Timothy). After a

trip to Troas (part of modern Turkey) and Macedonia (part of this

area is in modern Greece, ancient Macedonia being where the Brit

Chadasha kehillot at Philippi and Thessalonica were located),

Shliach Sha'ul finally located Titus, extremely anxious to hear if the Corinthian congregation was reconciled to Shliach Sha'ul as a result of his "sorrowful" letter. Relieved that the majority were repentant but apparently also somewhat angered that a stubborn nest of opposition to Rav Sha'ul's Shlichut still remained as a minority in the congregation, Shliach Sha'ul wrote this letter (our II Corinthians) and sent it by the hand of Titus C.E. 55/56 in order that the rebels could be completely neutralized and the Moshiach's Shlichut offering for the poor Jewish Messianic Kedoshim in Israel could be raised and prepared for Shliach Sha'ul when he arrived there on his way to Jerusalem (see on this II Cor. chs. 8-9; Rom. 15:25-28; I Cor. 16:1-4; Gal.

2:6-10).

Apparently, though he was much relieved that the majority were

coming around to him, Shliach Sha'ul felt he should include in II

Corinthians more warnings comparable to what he said in I Cor.

4:18-21. The corps of liberal rebels in Corinth opposed Shliach

Sha'ul by criticizing his wisdom as inferior, his attitude as

despicably meek, his personal demeanor as weak, his rhetorical

ability as a speaker of no account, his planning as full of

vacillation, his demeanor too emotional, his fund-raising too

exacting, his letters too disturbing, his claims too boastful,

his demand for separation unto holiness too restrictive, and his

refusal to accept financial help too unprofessional and even unloving. But Shliach Sha'ul reminded the Corinthians that those who would criticize him lacked his endurance in suffering or his charismatic power to do the signs and wonders that were the works of an Shliach (see II Cor. 12:12). Notice how he repeats the warning from I Cor. 4:18-21 in II Cor. 12:20-13:3,9-10. Ch. 13:1-10 states the purpose for the letter. Certain rebels had been putting Shliach Sha'ul to the test, doubting that the risen Moshiach was speaking through him (13:3), and now he commands them to test themselves and repent, because when he comes he will put anyone under the ban who is living immorally under a cloak of critical arrogance (see also Yehuda 16 on sexually immoral "fault

finders").

Part of Rav Sha'ul's credentials as a real emissary from the

Moshiach and L-rd was the Moshiach-like suffering he had endured

(see 4:8-10; 6:4-10; 11:23-33; 12:10). The Corinthians had

interpreted this as weakness and had been more impressed with

certain "super-Shluchim" who demanded first class treatment and

were lording it over the Brit Chadasha kehillah in a

heavy-handed, yet rhetorically gifted, way. Shliach Sha'ul was

not impressed with mere ear-tickling words. If the Risen L-rd was

with these Jewish superstars from Jerusalem, where was their Aitz

of meekness and suffering and self-denial and where were their

charismatic signs and wonders? Apparently they acted in an insolent way to Shliach Sha'ul and tried to steal the congregation, poisoning the people against Shliach Sha'ul so they could boast in another man's labor (10:15; 11:20). He was not afraid of them and was ready to confront them and unmask their false front. They were evil workmen and false Shluchim, emissaries of Hasatan--that eloquent liar who is leading the whole world into his seductive delusion and destruction. Like the Snake in the Garden with his designs on that virgin Eve, these insolent false Shluchim have a cunning plan to corrupt the Corinthian congregation whom Shliach Sha'ul has wedded in covenant freedom to G-d, by enslaving the Corinthians to

themselves and to another Moshiach Yehoshua, not the Moshiach

Yehoshua who sets us free from insolent money-grubbing and

ruthless Brit Chadasha kehillah political coups d'etat. No, these

super Jewish Shluchim preach another Moshiach Yehoshua (11:4)

which is a fraud of their own devising, one that is suitable to

their own lucrative (2:37) Besuras Hageulah, a different Besuras

Hageulah that offers a different spirit.

In another place (II Thes. 2:11) Shliach Sha'ul speaks of a

powerful delusion people receive who reject the sanctifying

Spirit of G-d and the love of the truth. This demonic and

deceiving spirit can be received when a false Besuras Hageulah

with a false Moshiach Yehoshua is believed in. These Shluchim were false precisely because their "Yehoshua" was false, making their basis of authority false. The Ruach Hakodesh of G-d leads a true Shliach to declare that the true Moshiach Yehoshua, humbled in maveh, exalted in his Techiyas HaMesim, is Adoneinu (I Cor. 12:3). Anyone preaching a different Moshiach Yehoshua in a different spirit is not from G-d. Such a man is a false Shliach sent not by G-d but by Hasatan. Shliach Sha'ul was determined to confront these men who were taking advantage of the serious rebellion in the Corinthian congregation to try to move in and cut Shliach Sha'ul off, asserting their own different Besuras Hageulah and spirit and "Moshiach Yehoshua" in order to

commandeer the congregation in a different direction away from

Rav Sha'ul's teaching. Shliach Sha'ul was determined that the

people he had won to the L-rd know how to judge a true Shliach

and how to judge whether they were walking in the faith.

What was the thorn in Rav Sha'ul's flesh of 12:6-7? We do not

know. But it was probably some physical weakness that was both

humiliating and demonically incited. G-d allowed it because it

kept Shliach Sha'ul from becoming conceited as a result of all

the revelations and heavenly wisdom he received from G-d, and

therefore G-d did not take this condition away from him. Gal.

4:15 speaks of an infirmity that may have had to do with Rav

Sha'ul's vision or problem with it (see also the possible vision problem implied in Gal. 6:11). This certainly would have been humbling, to go around the world claiming to have seen the Lord on the Damascus Road and to have had visions beyond any mortal who ever lived, and yet be plagued with attacks where he had trouble even seeing as well as a normal person. But this is speculative, and we will never know the exact malady. The point is God often gives a counter-balancing "thorn" along with exultant privilege, and he does it for a reason that works together for good for us (Rom. 3:21), because he loves us and doesn't want us to become conceited or to get so strong in ourselves that we forget our total dependence and competence is

from Him (3:4-6; 12:7-10).

A Messianic minister who must raise funds for the L-rd's work

should study carefully 8:1-9:15.

As Shliach Sha'ul writes this letter he has just had a brush with

death (probably nearly being killed in Ephesus) and is filled

with comfort and joy in the L-rd (see ch. 1) as he meditates on

the ministry, on the subject of death as it affects a believer,

and on the new creation and the Brit Chadasha. See chapters 3-5.

esp. 5:17.

MOSHIACH'S LETTER THROUGH THE SHLIACH SHA'UL
TO THE BRIT CHADASHA KEHILLAH IN GALATIA

The Brit Chadasha kehillot mentioned by Luke in Acts 13 and 14

lie within the Roman province of Galatia. If Shliach Sha'ul wrote

his letter to the Galatians from Antioch, Syria around 48/49

subsequent to his first emissary of Moshiach's shlichut journey

and just prior to the Jerusalem Council to resolve the Judaizing

question, then this letter is Rav Sha'ul's first epistle and the

following synchronization between Acts and Galatians is possible:

Gal. 1:18-24 - Acts 9:23-30; II Cor. 11:32 (ca.C.E.35/36); Gal.

2:1-10 = Acts 11:30; 12:25 (C.E. 46)

The reason, according to this chronology, that the extremely

relevant Jerusalem Council decisions of Acts 15 are not mentioned

in Rav Sha'ul's letter to the Galatians is that the Jerusalem

Council has not yet convened when Rav Sha'ul's letter was

written.

Beginning with Acts 13:14 we read of certain peoples that Shliach

Sha'ul and Barnabus reached out to in 47-48 C.E. in what is now

modern Turkey. Then in Acts 15:1 we hear of certain Pharisees who

were travelling around from Jerusalem and teaching that there was

no salvation from Gehinnom without circumcision. Now Shliach

Sha'ul was a Pharisee. He knew all about a legalistic religion

based on merit and the notion that religious ritual and good

works could lead one to salvation. Also he knew that to accept

the burden of circumcision meant to take on the obligation of all

the ceremonial and legal commands of Moses (Gal. 5:3).

But on the road to Damascus, Shliach Sha'ul had received a

different kind of circumcision. The downward pull of his old

nature had been cut free and a living Law, Yehoshua the Word of

G-d, had written himself on the tablets of Rav Sha'ul's heart by

the Spirit of G-d. Now it was no longer the old, stoney-hearted,

unregenerate Pharisee Saul who lives but the risen Moshiach

Yehoshua who lives and reigns in Shliach Sha'ul (on the new

creation, see Gal. 6:14-15; II Cor.3:18; 4:16; 5:17; 13:5). The

Shliach had seen on the Damascus Road that the dead letter of the

old legalistic religion could never create new spiritual life in

him as Ha'Av had done through the risen Moshiach and the Ruach

Hakodesh (see the formula for G-d as HaAv, HaBen, and HaRuach

HaKodesh in II Cor. 13:13; cf. Mt. 28:19). Only the living Word

Yehoshua the Moshiach could make Shliach Sha'ul into a new

creation. Therefore, the proud legalist was now dead, and, as a

new creation rabbi, could never preach mere legalisms again (Gal.

5:11) again. Now Shliach Sha'ul must preach only the Moshiach

alive and able to forgive our sins and give us new spiritual life

by his death and resurrection in our place.

The message of Galatians clarifies the authentic Besuras Hageulah

of the Moshiach. The ceremonies and specific legal rules G-d

imposed on the Jews during the era of Law under Moses were never

intended to eclipse the new Torah (teaching) meant to go into

effect when the Moshiach came. The purpose of the Law of Moses

was to be a pointer to sin and to the righteous way of Abraham:

faith. The Law was not meant to distract the Jewish people from

the teaching of the Moshiach when he came and ushered in the era

of the Spirit, when all nations, not just the Jewish nation, were

to be made students (disciples) of his Torah, his Messianic

teaching. Those who had ears to hear Deuteronomy 18:18-19, Isaiah

42:4, and Jeremiah 31:31-34 could understand this. Shliach

Sha'ul knew these Scripture: as a trained rabbi, but he had to be

regenerated to understand them (I Cor. 2:14). When he was filled

with the Holy Spirit and became a prophet, he was not ignorant of

the signs of the times or of the proper interpretation of the

Word of G-d. A new era had begun and the teaching of the

Moshiach through his Shluchim must not take a back seat to the

Law of Moses. If that happened, whatever

eclipsed the true Besuras Hageulah, whatever ceremonies or

religious rules were thrust forward to take preeminence over the

Moshiach's message, whatever teachings might be set forth in

competition to the Besuras Hageulah, would be the legalisms and

teachings of a different Besuras Hageulah and would therefore be

accursed, even if offered by an angel from heaven (1:8), even

Gabriel himself. (Muslims should take note here.).

Therefore, when certain Jewish legalists visited the Galatian congregations and taught these Gentiles that they had to get themselves circumcised and keep Jewish observances and rules to be saved, this poisonous heresy demanded the strongest possible antidote. Shliach Sha'ulis shocked, he writes, that they are so quickly changing to another Besuras Hageulah, which isn't a Besuras Hageulah at all and there will be hell to pay for its perpetrators (1:6-10).

In 1:11-2:10 Shliach Sha'ul declares that G-d himself gave him the true Besuras Hageulah of Chesed; no man gave this message to him. Shliach Sha'ul persecuted the early preachers of Yehoshua

until the risen Moshiach, the death-conquering Word of G-d,
stopped Rav Sha'ul and gave him the true Besuras Hageulah to
preach, which the other Shluchim in Jerusalem approved as
correct.

So if anyone claims to be a prophet and wants to preach the
Besuras Hageulah, he ought to recognize that what Shliach Sha'ul
is telling the Galatians is from the L-rd. Unless he recognizes
this, his preaching should not be recognized (I Cor. 14:37-38).

The Shluchim in the early days had divided up the Shlichut under
the leading of Adonoi. Shliach Kefa and Yochanan and Ya'akov
agreed to preach to the Jews. Shliach Sha'ul and Barnabus agreed
to leave Israel and go to the Gentiles all over the world, and to

send an offering for the poor Messianic Jewish believers in the Holy Land. However, since fellowship with Gentiles was thought to be defiling to a Jew, Shliach Kefa was afraid of getting the Jewish believers in Moshiach Yehoshua angry, so when he came to Antioch in Syria, Shliach Sha'ul had to rebuke him for withdrawing from table fellowship with his Gentile brothers in the L-rd. Shliach Sha'ul tells this story (2:11-14) to prove that his own status as a Shliach was in no way inferior to Shliach Kefa's. The Galatians had better listen to him then and have nothing to do with the Judaizing false prophets who have come to them preaching a different Besuras Hageulah and apparently

disparaging Rav Sha'ul's credentials as a Shliach. What is the true Besuras Hageulah? Can a man put his faith in keeping the religious laws of any prophet, Moses or whomever, and be forgiven and regarded as right with G-d? Or will G-d credit us as being righteous if we forsake salvation through law-keeping and put our faith in Moshiach Yehoshua the Moshiach?

Shliach Sha'ul explains the Besuras Hageulah in the first person in Romans 7. But here it is also helpful. Moshiach Yehoshua took the penalty of the law when he died for my sin, and since G-d sees me as dead with Moshiach Yehoshua (law does not apply to dead men) and alive in his new life of righteousness, I am free.

To try to keep laws to be saved would mean the Moshiach died for

nothing. In that case I would no longer be free but under the

law's condemnation. (See 2:17-21 and 3:10-14).

Stop being foolish, Shliach Sha'ul is saying! New life in the

Ruach Hakodesh and miracles do not come by endless legalisms but

by having faith (3:1-5)! Look at Abraham. The Law was not given

to Moses until 430 years after Abraham. And Law requires works,

but Abraham hadn't done any when G-d looked at his faith and

regarded him as righteous. Moshiach Yehoshua took the covenant

curse of the law's reprisal against us law-breakers, so if we

refuse to receive his mercy to us and try to save ourselves by

keeping laws, we will not succeed but the curse against us will,

and by our lack of faith we will condemn ourselves.

To paraphrase Galatians for Muslims: Don't have the nature of

Ishmael, the son of a slave woman! Don't be an unspiritual slave

of endless legalisms, like many orthodox Jews and Muslims. Be

free like new creation Muslims and like your father Abraham!

Any rudimentary notion in the world that keeps us under its

worldly sway is what Moshiach Yehoshua came to free us from. We

were called to freedom and good works prompted by faith working

through love (Gal. 5:6) and prompted by the presence of the Ruach

Hakodesh in our lives. Therefore, put to death your old life

without Moshiach Yehoshua at its center so you will really belong

to the L-rd. Don't use your freedom as an excuse to sin. If you

are truly guided by the Ruach Hakodesh, you will not live in the

wicked lusts of your old life. See 5:19-21 and the warning at the

end of 5:21. Pray every day as you meditate on G-d's Word for

the Ruach Hakodesh to cultivate the nine fruits of the Spirit in

your life: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,

faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. In Muslim lands, it is

only self-interest that makes some teachers try to get New

Creation Muslims to change the true Besuras Hageulah to a false

one. Some messianic Muslims, wanting to escape persecution

(6:12), try to force a false Besuras Hageulah on the ignorant.

But those who have died to the world know better. They know that

the only thing that matters is becoming a new creation (see

6:12-16).

Notice your obligation to your teacher (6:6).

We are not living under the epoch of Law but Chesed (Ro. 6:14)

because the law was not made for the righteous but for adulterers

(I Tim. 1:9). Yet we are not free from G-d's law but are under

Moshiach's law (I Cor. 9:21). We must put our old nature to

death. However, Moshiach's law is not dead. Today we have lawless

"scribes and Pharisees" in the Brit Chadasha kehillah who do not

obey Moshiach's radical laws. Moshiach Yehoshua says, "If you

even look with lust at a woman you are an adulterer," and

Moshiach Yehoshua says to the woman who has divorced the husband

of her youth, "Let her remain unmarried (I Cor.7:11)." But the

lawless "scribes and Pharisees" in the Brit Chadasha kehillah

look at the divorcee with lustful eyes and tell her to marry as

often as she likes. Lawless disciples should re-read Matthew

7:23--the word there is not "evildoers" or ye that work iniquity"

but "workers of lawlessness".

The Jews who were zealous for the Torah's Jewish lifestyle (not

as a way of salvation upstaging Moshiach Yehoshua) in Acts 21:20

are not rebuked by Shliach Sha'ul. Rav Sha'ul lived as an

observant Jew and the Jewish community of Messianic believer: in

Jerusalem lived this way as well. Not only that, Shliach Sha'ul

put himself as if he were under the epoch of law in order to win

those who were under the law (I Cor. 9:20). Shliach Sha'ul is not

fighting the Jewish lifestyle of Torah observance in his letter

to the Galatians. Shliach Sha'ul himself lived this lifestyle.

Shliach Sha'ul is not talking about of Moshiach's shlichut

identification with observant Jews. Shliach Sha'ul is fighting a

false Besuras Hageulah of salvation through endless Jewish

legalisms and works-righteousness merit that upstages the way of

faith that Abraham took, which is also the way of faith in the

death and Techiyas HaMesim of Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach Yehoshua

(Gen 15:6; Hab.2:4).

The role of Shliach is not well understood today. Galatians 2:9

says there are people set apart with a gift and calling to go to

a particular culture or country or ethnic or language group and

start a congregation (I Cor. 4:15) or ministry-training school

(Acts 19:9-10) among an unreached people. The passage in II Cor.

8:23 shows that these emissaries were not always eye-witnesses of

the resurrection of the Moshiach. See also Rom. 16:7; I Cor.

12:28; Eph. 2:20. Therefore, there are shluchim today.

A Kiruv outreach minister may assist in planting a congregation.

But a shliach does the work of an outreach minister among the

people where G-d has gifted him or her linguistically or

culturally to raise up a new congregation with its own native

spiritual leaders, teachers, prophets, and kiruv outreach

workers. The shliach is first on the scene and starts with

nothing but a vision and a resolution to start a prayer meeting

or a Bible study or a witnessing campaign or an outreach meeting

or some pioneer effort that will result in people taking the

Moshiach's tevilah and being incorporated into the new house Brit

Chadasha kehillah or body of believers. The shliach starts with

absolutely nothing--he or she does not build on anyone else's

foundation. The gift is that of a pioneer with a certain

adaptability of personality and a supernatural love for people

whose culture or color of skin or language is different. This man

(extremely Jewish) named Shliach Sha'ul loved these Greeks and

won great numbers to the L-rd. constantly going where no Brit

Chadasha kehillah existed among the Greeks and starting them from

nothing. Do you have the vision of a shliach to start a new

congregation in virgin territory? Are you a shliach?

One of the problems in American Brit Chadasha kehillot is that

everybody is too enamored with an American "melting pot" model of

the Brit Chadasha kehillah. The Brit Chadasha Scriptures are much

more socially realistic than that. People do not "melt" into a

pot. People are different. The Greeks in Corinth had a

drastically different culture than the Jews in Jerusalem. If the

Corinthian Brit Chadasha kehillah were simply imported to Israel

or the Jerusalem Brit Chadasha kehillah imported to Corinth

neither Brit Chadasha kehillah would grow. Shliach Sha'ul had a

different gift than Ya'akov. Shliach Sha'ul could relate to

Greeks better than Ya'akov could. Shliach Sha'ul did not win many

Jews to the L-rd. Ya'akov did. Most Followers of our Moshiach in

America don't see these nuances when they read Acts 21:20 or

Galatians 2:9. Most people do not understand that the Shluchim

were cultural

specialists. Shliach Sha'ul became like the Greeks to win the

Greeks and Paul started Hellenistic Greek Brit Chadasha kehillot.

Ya'akov became like the Jews to win the Jews and started

Messianic Jewish synagogues. Shliach Sha'ul did not see thousands

of Jews won into his Hellenistic Greek Brit Chadasha kehillot,

but Ya'akov did see thousands of Jews won into his Messianic

synagogues (see Acts 21:20). Now there were Jews like Aquilla and

Priscilla in Rav Sha'ul's Greek Brit Chadasha kehillot and there

were Greeks like Titus in Ya'akov's Messianic synagogue, so these

congregations were integrated and not segregated. However, the

style of the cultural flavor of the congregations in Corinth and

Jerusalem were not the same, and the Brit Chadasha kehillot were

culturally attuned to be more successful in one place than the

other.

Look at Gal. 6:15-16. Replacement theology is wrong when it

thinks that uncircumcision is anything. "Dual Covenant" liberals

are wrong when it thinks that circumcision is anything. Both are

wrong because a new creation is everything, even when national

Israel comes to salvation. Whoever separates from this teaching

will forfeit his crown and his citizenship in the Israel of G-d.

("Dual Covenant" theologians maintain that Jewish people do not

need to believe in Moshiach Yehoshua to be saved. They maintain

that Jewish people can be saved through another covenant, G-d's

promise to Abraham. Such liberals resent the Besuras Hageulah

being preached to Israel.) It is true that G-d warns the nations

that he will punish them if their anti-Semitism causes them to

curse and persecute the Jewish people. So true followers of the

Moshiach should always bless the Jewish people and pray for their salvation. However, there is nothing more anti-Semitic than refusing to tell a dying people the way of escape from eternal destruction.

If "Israel after the flesh" does not receive the second circumcision (the new birth of regeneration), they are children of Hagar (Gal. 4:21f), those who say they are Jews and are not (Rev. 2:9). Without the new birth, they are not the Israel of G-d (Gal. 6:16), because not all Israel (who are descended from Israel) is (eschatological redeemed) Israel (Rom. 9:6). How are we going to provoke them to jealousy to get saved if you tell

them they already have an operative, saving, covenantal

relationship with the G-d of Israel and already have an

unconditional land lease to live in safety in Israel. Study

Jeremiah's book again. This is not his Besuras Hageulah. The

covenant was with Abraham and his seed (singular), which is

Moshiach, and whoever does not love the L-rd Yehoshua is

accursed. It is true that whoever tries to take the Promised

Land away from the Jewish people is also cursed by the Law and

the prophets, although, in Scripture, these same accursed

Babylonians etc are also the instruments of G-d to expel the Jews

from their land if the Jews continue in unbelief (but see Zech.

1:15). The L-rd is the owner of the land and the Jewish

expulsions and returns in Scripture are G-d's way of preaching to the nations what's in store for them (expulsion from the presence of G-d into hell) if they continue in unbelief like this blind nation) Israel. On the other hand, the G-d who promises the resurrection of the dead is to be believed precisely because he is the G-d who has resurrected Israel from her national grave.

He guards her and curses her enemies and leads her according to his purposes even in her blindness and unbelief. The Brit

Chadasha kehillah must not arrogantly steal her promises or her status or her prerogatives, nor must she take a condescending or hateful or proud attitude toward Israel (Rom. 11:18-20).

In the same way that Dispensationalism can lead to an inadequate view of the Brit Chadasha kehillah, Covenant Theology can lead to an inadequate view of national Israel. By separating the "Brit Chadasha kehillah" from being in any sense part of "Israel," the Dispensationalists make the same kind of unscriptural distinction that Covenant theologians make when they equate "the Brit Chadasha kehillah" and "Israel." Romans 11, as it is interpreted in terms consistent with Rav Sha'ul's other writings, shows that both the "Brit Chadasha kehillah" (or the true remnant from the Jews and the Gentiles of the world) and also natural "Israel" (genealogical "seed" of Abraham) must be grafted by faith into ideal "Israel" (the Jerusalem above, the Israel of G-d, as

opposed to the Israel after the flesh--I Cor. 10:18). Not all

(natural) "Israel" is (ideal) "Israel", but the redeemed remnant

on earth (from the Jews and the Gentiles of the world) is the

true circumcision (Phil. 3:3). An ideal term for Israel may be

found in Isaiah 44:2, where the word (Yeshurun) is an honorific

title in contrast to Jacob whose name means deceiver/

overreacher. "The Upright One" is not the deceiver, it is a

nation of Israelites who are without deceit (Yochanan 1:47).

Shliach Sha'ul uses the word for olive tree (found in Jer. 11:16

and Hos. 14:6) for the symbol of Ideal Israel in Rom. 11:17.

Shliach Sha'ul did not make the collection journey just as an

individual Jew paying his respects to the Fatherland. Shliach

Sha'ul was reporting to the Sanhedrin-substitute, the council of

Zion's Zekenim of (pre-70 C.E. Holocaust) Brit Chadasha Judaism.

Shliach Sha'ul made this reporting lest he had run in vain,

because salvation is "of the Jews" and of Zion. As far as Gal.

4:10 is concerned, a word needs to be said about Shabbos

observance. There were Messianic jews in Rome who observed the

Shabbos and there were Gentiles who did not, and Shliach Sha'ul

does not denigrate the Shabbos or forbid Messianic services on

that day (see Romans 14:5). Although the Shabbos commandments are

not imposed on Gentiles by Shliach Sha'ul, the Brit Chadasha

Scriptures records services on both Motzei Shabbos and Yom Rishon

(Acts 20:7) on the Gentile field of ministry. Acts 20:7 records a

Motza'ei-Shabbat service. Motzei-Shabbos means "departure of the

Shabbos" and is the period beginning with sunset following the

Shabbos and extending to midnight. Since the Bible defines a day

from sundown to sundown (Gen. 1:5; Lev. 23:32) this is the end of

the Shabbos and the beginning of Yom Rishon, Yom HaAdon. This

means that Acts 20:7 shows the Brit Chadasha kehillah on the

Gentile field meeting on both Shabbos and Yom HaAdon. Rav

Sha'ul's normal routine, wherever he went, would have been to

have preached the Besuras Hageulah in a synagogue in the context

of a Shabbos Hebrew service, so Shliach Sha'ul himself observed

Shabbos and made it a day of Jewish ministry, even while he was winning new believers and founding a Brit Chadasha kehillah. We must also remember that Rav Sha'ul's Besuras Hageulah to the Gentiles could not be effective in actual practice if his commission as a shliach had not been acknowledged by a law-observant Messianic Jewish remnant in Zion. The law of the Moshiach (the Besuras Hageulah--I Cor. 9:21) did not originate with Shliach Sha'ul; the law of the Moshiach had gone forth from Zion, from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:3; 42:4).

When Shliach Sha'ul submitted his message to the Shliach in Jerusalem, they authorized him to continue his emphasis of a circumcision-free message to Gentiles. However, there was no

such emphasis in the Besuras Hageulah that was preached in

Jerusalem to Jews who were already circumcised and were planning

on circumcising their eight-day-old male babies. Acts 21:20

proves that the Jerusalem form of pristine Brit Chadasha Judaism

(which is the canonical pattern for Jews) did not follow a

Besuras Hageulah which apostatized from the Sinai Covenant and

its mitzvot. Shliach Sha'ul himself observes the law by

preaching the Besuras Hageulah on Shabbos as a rabbi every week

when he is not in prison.

Gal. 4:8-10 is not an attack on Judaism (this was the religion of

the Shluchim) but on an abberant form of the saving message of

the Shluchim that tries to convince Gentiles that the Moshiach is not enough to save them, because they must also depend on their own legalistic works in order to be saved, especially the work of circumcision. Shliach Sha'ul preached that a new creation, not a new culture or a new legalism, is needed to turn around a sinner bound for the destruction of G-d's judgment.

The message of Galatians is this warning: preach the true new creation Besuras Hageulah or be accursed by G-d.

The stoixeia tou kosmou (4:3,9) are the elementary, rudimentary principles or spirits (Col. 2:8) behind false religion (religion not grounded in the inerrant new creation faith of the Kitvei Hakodesh and the Brit Chadasha Scriptures).

MOSHIACH'S LETTER THROUGH THE SHLIACH SHA'UL TO THE

BRIT CHADASHA KEHILLAH IN EPHESUS

The date is probably 60/61 C.E.; the place, probably Rome. It has

been several years since Shliach Sha'ul has visited the Gentiles

in the Brit Chadasha kehillot in Asia Minor spread out around its

capital Ephesus. Shliach Sha'ul was first there briefly in 51

C.E. and then again in 55-57 C.E. But at this later time, Shliach

Sha'ul was more of an urban seminary professor-yeshiva dean

training leaders, than a rural pioneer congregation planter in

direct contact with a local assembly. II Timothy 4:19 may

indicate that the people Rav Sha'ul greets in Romans 16 are

Ephesians (see Romans 16:3 and the notes on Romans). But he wrote

that letter to the Romans in 57 C.E. and so many new believers

and congregations have been added since then who have never met

Rav Sha'ul that he doesn't know the people in the Brit Chadasha

kehillot as intimately and therefore does not give this letter,

which is really a kind of written prayer, the personal quality

Shliach Sha'ul normally exhibits in his epistles.

In Ephesians Shliach Sha'ul contemplates a new human race, and he

marvels at the new birth through which G-d has created this

resurrected humanity (2:10).

Shliach Sha'ul thinks of the new birth in different ways. One way

is in 2:6 where he sees a spiritual ascension already in progress

with a heavenly residence already reserved (1:3) as we are being

raised and enthroned in the Spirit with the Moshiach (1:20). How

awesome is the new birth!

This epistle is so dense it is almost impossible to teach what is

in it by a dry listing of topics. A very loose paraphrase of what

Shliach Sha'ul is saying will be better, as follows: Oh to have

the dull heart circumcised so that he has eyes to see and a mind

of wisdom to know what is happening as one united, spiritually

quickened humanity is ascending from the spiritually moribund
other humanity! What riches are being inherited! What power (the
power that raised Moshiach Yehoshua from the dead) is being
manifested! What a hidden mystery is unveiled! You who are not
Jews--what a marvel!--you have been predestinated to this new
humanity before the world was formed! You who had no share in
what the Jews were promised have been made full partners with
them, receiving the pledge of the inheritance, the promised Ruach
Hakodesh (1:13-14). The hostility between you who are not Jews
and you who are has been abolished. The mechitzah (separation in
the Beis Hamikdash) has been broken down. (See JNTP, 1989, Eph.

2:14.) How? In the death of the Moshiach on the execution stake where there came forth a peace for Jews and non-Jews spiritually resurrected in one transcendent new humanity. (Eph. 2:12 speaks of "the commonwealth of Israel" in a way inferring that Gentile followers of our Moshiach are no longer aliens there, just as Phil. 3:3 speaks of them with Messianic Jews as "the circumcision" and Gal. 6:16; 4:26 speaks of "the Israel of G-d" and "the Jerusalem above," all pictures of this marvelous eschatological heavenly Israel which includes even Gentiles! Acts 21:20 shows that Jews who believed in Moshiach Yehoshua and preached him and celebrated him in the context of the Torah-observance of Jewish life-style were just as validly true

believers as Gentiles who remained largely distant from Jewish

culture. They were both one body according to Eph. 2, one

commonwealth, one Israel of G-d, one Jerusalem above.)

Those who say that the Moshiach's Kehillah has nothing to do with

Israel should remember that such a doctrine could never have been

preached before C.E. 100. The doctrine assumes something never

assumed by the Brit Chadasha Scriptures: namely, a breach between

the remnant Israel of G-d of Jewish birth on the land of Israel

and the Gentile "G-d-fearers" admitted into fellowship with the

remnant of Israel by the Brit Chadasha gerousia or council

meeting in Israel in Acts 15. The Bible, while it predicts the

return of the nation of Israel to the land in the last days and while it anticipates Jews becoming Messianic Jews in the last days, nowhere treats these miracles as a separate and unrelated development from His saving a remnant from the world. There is only one L-rd and he has only one body and one Besuras Hageulah and one redeemed remnant set apart for salvation and He is only returning once to deliver them. He does not have two returns for two different peoples nor does He have two ways to salvation or two saving covenants.

If Shliach Sha'ul had been preaching a separate program of salvation for the Gentiles, the persecution he encountered would

hardly have been of the intensity that it was. What infuriated so many people about Rav Sha'ul's Besuras Hageulah was that he was admitting former Goyishe sinners into full membership into redeemed eschatological Israel without circumcising them into total submission to the Torah of Moshe. He said that he was not doing this but that G-d was grafting in the wild olive branch!

Into what? Into Ideal Israel, the Israel above, eschatological Israel. And "Israel after the flesh" also had to be grafted in by G-d. Shliach Sha'ul was not leading the mission to create a Brit Chadasha kehillah separate from Israel. Shliach Sha'ul risked his life with his final trip to Jerusalem to prove that this was precisely what he was not doing. Shliach Sha'ul was

admitting as full proselytes to Moshiach's Judaism everyone he won to the L-rd. This is why so many people wanted to kill him and were slandering him and discrediting him. Shliach Sha'ul was making a shambles of Diaspora Judaism in the eyes of so many of his enemies because he was admitting people as Moshiach's talmidim according to the Acts 15 gerousia and the Besuras Hageulah of remnant Israel preached by the Council of the Elders of Israel rather than according to the Sanhedrin. It's true that in Acts 21:28-29 he did not take his formerly heathen disciples into the Beis Hamikdash area in Jerusalem (as he was falsely accused); however, he does say in Eph. 2:11 that Gentiles were

alienated from the citizenship of Israel and were strangers of the covenants of promise, indicating that this is no longer the case as far as eschatological redeemed Israel is concerned. So their uncircumcision is in the flesh only and not in the Spirit or in the Messianic Age that is already dawning (compare Eph. 2:11 to Phil. 3:3).

Rav Sha'ul's martyrdom was caused by his zeal to prove (by that last Jerusalem trip and the collection journey) that there is only one eschatological Israel and only one door into it. He was a marked man (more in prison than out of prison) from this point on in his ministry, but he risked everything anyway, because there were those in Rav Sha'ul's lifetime that wanted to see a

separation between the Jews and Rav Sha'ul's Brit Chadasha

kehillah. There were unbelieving Jews and Jewish apostates in

Jerusalem whose theology also wanted to cut Rav Sha'ul's "Brit

Chadasha kehillah" off from "Israel" and see them as two and not

one. What made them murderously angry was when he said that "we

are the true circumcision" and "the Israel of G-d" and they knew

that he was referring first to Messianic Jews but also to Titus

and Luke and all the full (yet uncircumcised) proselytes along

with Messianic Jews as the only remnant of Israel. The resident

aliens who were regenerated in the Moshiach Yehoshua were no

longer aliens to the spiritual commonwealth of Israel even if

they were Gentile by birth. They were grafted in by rebirth, even

if the apostate political and religious leaders could not see

this.

Brit Chadasha Judaism is the true religion presented in the pages

of the Brit Chadasha. Gentile proselytes are allowed to come into

the faith (Acts 15) without circumcision of the flesh. But

circumcision of the heart (a spiritual new creation where the old

nature is cut away) is the sine qua non (indispensable condition)

of membership in the eschatological redeemed Israel of G-d.

Furthermore, only the Brit Chadasha Scriptures can define the

faith. When the Gentile clergy and their structures are allowed

to define the faith (instead of the Jewish Bible), then we have

things like the worship of the Queen of Heaven and other

non-Jewish heresies.

G-d has an ultimate purpose: it is to display us (2:7) raised up

and enthroned with Moshiach in the Heavenly realms. As far as the

sofia tou Theou is concerned, G-d is using our salvation and

ministry in the ekklesia to send a message to the demonic

strongholds who are watching us (3:10) and in spiritual conflict

with us (6:12). What is being revealed to them and the whole

cosmos is G-d's secret plan, never revealed before except in Rav

Sha'ul's ministry, which is the musterion tou Xristou which is

Moshiach in the Gentiles and the Jews in the Brit Chadasha

kehillah, (see Col. 1:27). See Eph. 1:9; 3:3; 5:32; 6:19; Col.

1:26; 4:3.

In Phil. 3:3 and Gal. 6:15-16 Shliach Sha'ul is talking to

would-be proselytes to Israel's Messianic religion/kingdom or

"heavenly realm" (Eph. 1:3,20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12) and Shliach

Sha'ul is assuring these Gentiles that they already have what the

Judaizers are offering them--they are already spiritually

enthroned in the redeemed eschatological Israel of G-d and the

free Jerusalem above (Gal. 4:26). See also Rev. 20:4; Eph.

2:11-13.

To have the faith to see this is a gift from G-d. You had nothing

to do with the origin of this faith. The faith didn't come from

you, because if it did you could boast about it (2:8-9).

Here's another way of seeing the new birth. The true people of

G-d are His household, which rises on the Beis Hamikdash

foundation of the inerrant canonical prophecy entrusted to the

Shluchim and prophets (3:20). The keystone which holds together

the standing structure of prophecy and people alike is Moshiach

Yehoshua himself. G-d clothes Himself in this growing

construction, this living Beis Hamikdash, like a Spirit putting

on a body, a body that is full of the peace of Him who died and

rose and ascended and fills everything.

All this was revealed to Shliach Sha'ul for the sake of those who are not Jews, that they may become heirs with the Jews, and thus grasp the unfathomable love of the Moshiach.

What then are the practical ramifications of these first three chapters? Continuing to paraphrase, we could say the following:

Patiently bear with one another in love to maintain the unity of the faith through the equipping process as all grows to maturity in this new humanity. Who does the equipping? The shluchim and nevi'im and kiruv outreach ministers and ro'im and morim. Who do they equip? The kedoshim. For what purpose? For the work of the ministry in the world until the perfect new humanity is built up

and is complete.

All of these gifts equip the for service to the world out of

which is growing a perfect new humanity, one that is expanding

qualitatively and quantitatively. The Moshiach himself is joining

this body together and enabling each part to love the other so

that all can grow.

Then Shliach Sha'ul exhorts that we are to avoid having the

futile mind of the Gentiles who love debauchery. Cut off,

circumcise away, the old man of lust and rottenness and get the

new mind G-d wants for you. Watch lying and gnawing anger and

stealing and foul talk and don't grieve your seal of salvation,

the Ruach Hakodesh. Cut out bawdy humor, drinking, and
fornication. Any filthy unclean person nursing idolatrous lust
makes G-d angry and will never see heaven. Live totally
transparent lives and have nothing to do with deeds done in
secret darkness. Wake up! If you desire to get high, let it be by
being filled with Ruach Hakodesh and not with wine! Fill your
life with G-dly music and not with whatever is a waste of time!

Stay in G-d's order and in his love, which means that husbands
are to love their wives (who are to respect their husbands) as
their own bodies (a wife is one body with her husband). This
means we must stop all carping, all incessant wrangling. And it

also means being tenderhearted and forgiving toward one another.

Children, take note of a special promise just for you. With

6:1-4, Rav Sha'ul pauses for a brief sermon to children and

includes their fathers in his audience as well.

The battle against demonic powers is described at the end of the

book in chapter 6 and the weapons are laid out, each with its

purpose, so that the believer will know how to resist the devil

and stand his ground against every temptation to sin and so

escape the defilement that leads to death and press on to the

upward call of Moshiach Yehoshua to abundant and holy Chayyei

Olam (Eternal Life).

The Greek word eklegomai means "I choose, I select, I pick out.

"Those so "picked out" are called the eklektos. "Many are

invited/summoned but few are picked out" (Matt. 22:14). As far as

the Jewish people are concerned, "there is a remnant (those that

are left as survivors after the divine wrath burns away the rest)

picked out by grace (Rom. 11:5). "What Israel sought so earnestly

it did not obtain, but the picked out ones did" (Rom. 11:7). We

endure all we endure for the sake of the picked out ones (who

will trust Moshiach but haven't yet), that they too may

obtain...salvation" (II Tim. 2:10). G-d's picked out ones are

"strangers in the world" (I Shimon Kefa 1:1).

G-d is free to pick out as He chooses. Rom. 9:16 says that G-d's choice" does not...depend on man's desire or effort, but on G-d's mercy" (Rom. 9:16; also Yochanan 1:13). There were two twins in Rebecca's womb but only one was picked out. "Even before they had been born or had done anything good or bad (so that G-d's election purpose of election might continue, not by works but by His summons)" Rebecca was told that G-d's favor was on the twin named Jacob (Rom. 9:11-13). Shliach Sha'ul was a proud persecutor and did not merit G-d's mercy. He was the chief of sinners (I Tim. 1:15). "But for that very reason I received mercy, so that (purpose! in) me, as the foremost, Moshiach

Yehoshua might display the utmost patience, making me an example

to those who would come to believe in him for Chayyei Olam

(Eternal Life)" (I Tim. 1:16). G-d's free and undeserved choice

means that the one who is picked out is picked out for a purpose,

a divine purpose, and with a special responsibility to serve the

G-d who chose him. Eph. 1:4 says that the "picked out" ones are

chosen for the purpose of good works (Eph. 2:10) and for

citizenship as fellow-heirs with the saints in the household of

G-d (Eph.2:19). Also the picked out ones are chosen to become

servants of the Besuras Hageulah (Eph. 3:7) and for the purpose

of being holy and blameless in His sight and so that we "might

live for the praise of His glory" (Eph. 1:12); also so that we might come to the "unity and to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Moshiach" (Eph. 4:13) and so that "in the ages to come He might show the immeasurable riches of His unmerited favor/grace in kindness toward us in Moshiach Yehoshua" (Eph. 2:7). Another purpose of our election is that we be no longer children and that we get our doctrine straight (Eph. 4:14) and that we find our fruitful place in the Body of G-d's people (Eph. 4:16).

Charis is the action of One who volunteers to do something, to which He is not bound. No human act or attitude influences G-d to act as he does. When G-d chooses to provide salvation, he does so

freely as a gift (Eph. 2:8) and for no other reason than "out of

the great love with which He loved us" (Eph. 2:4).

Therefore, we must be kind to one another, "tenderhearted,

forgiving one another, as G-d in Moshiach has forgiven you" (Eph.

4:32).

G-d has given us not only the gift of salvation but a commission

(Eph. 3:2). Is it for Greek ministry? Jewish ministry? What? For

Shliach Sha'ul it was to "bring to the Gentiles the news of the

boundless riches of Moshiach" (Eph. 3:8).

PREDESTINATION

Acts 4:28 (Everything that happened to Moshiach Yehoshua was

predestined) Rom. 8:29,30, I Cor. 2:7, Eph.1:5, Eph. 1:11,

Ephesians 4:11.

MOSHIACH'S LETTER THROUGH THE SHLIACH SHA'UL TO THE

BRIT CHADASHA KEHILLAH IN PHILIPPI

The place is probably Rome around C.E. 61. Here is a prisoner in

a possible "death row" situation with the nerve-racking

possibility that the Roman executioner will come bursting in and

drag him off to his death by beheading at any moment. His

co-worker has recently almost died as well (2:27). And yet,

despite the precarious nature of this uncertain life-or-death

situation, Rav Sha'ul is so filled with joy that he is bursting

with it as he writes a "thank you note" for a love offering the

Brit Chadasha kehillah at Philippi has sent him. Who but

Yehoshua can give this kind of peace to us? It is not mere human

bravery but the peace of G-d that transcends all understanding

(4:7)

Every cross-cultural minister has to send thank you notes from

time to time. Often a fund-raising letter must be written as

well. II Corinthians 8 and 9 should be studied as an excellent

example of how to write a letter soliciting funds, while

Philippians should be seen as a model of a thank you letter

(which is also a powerful stimulus to further giving).

Shliach Sha'ul had received regular support from this

congregation (see 4:15 and II Cor. 11:8). One of the Philippians,

Epaphroditus, had carried an offering to Rav Sha'ul from the Brit

Chadasha kehillah and in the process had become ill and almost

died, but was now recovered. From him Shliach Sha'ul learns about

the divisions in the congregation focussing around two women who

can't see eye to eye (4:2-3). 1:17-2:18 are aimed at that

problem, since if the Philippians will contemplate the self-

emptying humility of G-d the Word in the Incarnation, each will

surely be able to empty his or her own self and work for

Moshiach-minded unity in the congregation. The critique of "envy

and rivalry in 1:15 may be an indirect message to the ladies as

well. Shliach Sha'ul writes this letter to deal with that

potential "Brit Chadasha kehillah-split" situation and to warn

about the Judaizing legalists whom he calls the "mutilation"

party, because they were the Jews who went about Rav Sha'ul's

field of ministry insisting on circumcision and legalistic ritual

and rule-keeping as the condition for one's being saved (see

3:2-11).

What is the immediate source of Rav Sha'ul's joy as he writes

this letter? He is filled with awe at how G-d has taken his

adversities and his chains and made them a spotlight to get more

and more of the palace guard and everyone else around the city to

begin to see and notice the dying and suffering yet risen

Moshiach that Shliach Sha'ul preaches! Also, Rav Sha'ul's

fellow preachers in the city are starting to preach with more

boldness, too, though some with a spirit of rivalry (possibly

distancing themselves from Shliach Sha'ul as preachers outside of

jail sometimes do toward preachers inside of jail). These latter

anti-Rav Sha'ul preachers are operating from an angry and

contentious and malevolent motivation, which usually happens when

a few preachers in one city notice that one preacher (in this

case Rav Sha'ul) is getting all the attention and they aren't.

But Shliach Sha'ul doesn't care that these people want to hurt

him with their attitude and thus add to his afflictions. He isn't thinking about himself (he's like Timothy--2:20-21). He is rejoicing that the Besuras Hageulah is going out in greater power. Shliach Sha'ul is looking on the good side of the picture instead of the bad (4:8). And he is not focussing on the human righteousness through religious works (3:9) of any preacher, including himself. Shliach Sha'ul is looking at the righteousness of the Moshiach. As far as his witness is concerned, Shliach Sha'ul knows that only by dying to self can he be in fellowship with the sufferings of Yehoshua. For Moshiach Yehoshua makes the power of his resurrection known only to those who are conformed

to his righteous witness in death (3:10), to those who work out

their salvation with fear and trembling (3:11; 2:12).

Now Shliach Sha'ul turns a wrathful eye toward a scourge in the

early Brit Chadasha kehillah that we will hear more about from II

Shliach Kefa and Yehuda and Revelation. These are the libertines,

those "followers of our Moshiach" who refuse any suffering or any

denial of their sensual appetites and gross indulgences (which

they think are their due as the liberty of a true believer).

These are the drunkards and fornicators and wife-swappers and

homosexuals and swindlers and thieves and adulterers and greedy

businessmen and hate-filled causers of discord who claim to be

"followers of our Moshiach" but are, as far as the Brit Chadasha
kehillah is concerned, causing trouble within and a bad testimony
without. Shliach Sha'ul has warned in several places that these
people, if they don't repent of living this way, are going to
hell (see Gal. 5:19-21; I Cor. 6:9-11; see also II Cor. 5:10;
Gal. 6:7-9 about being judged according to deeds done "in the
body."). Now Shliach Sha'ul deals with antinomians (lawless
disciples) again in Phil. 3:17-21. They are enemies of the
suffering of the Aitz of Moshiach that all believers must
maintain a share in. Their true G-d is their appetite and this
they serve religiously while making a false profession at
Messianic worship services. Their destiny is destruction (3:19),

because G-d, increasingly furious, isn't fooled by them.

Those who aspire to leadership in G-d's house had better live

like Rav Sha'ul (3:17) and make very certain that there is no

libertine tendency in their lives. This is why one's G-d-given

ability to control sexual appetite and abstain from liquor and

materialism and greed and thievery and slander and immorality or

unfaithfulness are all key qualities that a minister must have

(see I Tim.3:2), and--if he doesn't--he'd better roll up his

sleeves and go look for another profession. If G-d graciously

calls you to his work, he will graciously give you the

qualifications for the job. If he hasn't given them to you, don't

apply. Not many should be teachers (Ya'akov 3:1). When Shliach

Sha'ul speaks of Timothy as a son who faithfully serves his

father in the Besuras Hageulah, he may be alluding to the kohen's

father-son ministry formation we see in places like Lv. 8 where

father and son are both ordained as kohanim and the son continues

the ministry after the father's death.

Philippians at a glance: Shliach Sha'ul exhorts the believers at

Philippi and especially two feuding women members of the Brit

Chadasha kehillah, Euodias and Syntyche, to become like Moshiach

Yehoshua. These ladies must avoid being blameworthy on the Day

of Moshiach (1:10). They must learn to agree in the L-rd (1:27)

and to think the same thing in all humility (4:2; 1:27; 2:3,20)

and peace (1:2; 4:7,9) without eris (strife, discord, contention)

or eriteia (selfish ambition or rivalry--1:15-17; 2:3) or

grumblings and arguments (2:14) and so preach the Besuras

Hageulah purely, with pure motives (agnos 1:17). Look at

Moshiach Yehoshua. He humbled himself and became obedient unto

death. So must we become conformed (take on the same form,

summorfizo) conformed to his death, as far as pride or

self-seeking is concerned (2:6; compare 2:3), like Timothy

(2:21-22) or "your shliach" Epaphroditus who risked his life and

nearly died (2:27-30) or Shliach Sha'ul himself whose life is

presently hanging in the balance (2:23) in a life or death

struggle for the defense of Besuras Hageulah (1:12-13, 16, 29-30). By turning their back on their life in this world and by risking death for the Besuras Hageulah, these men are being conformed to Moshiach in his death. These are models (3:17) of what a minister or a ministry is (2:17,25,30; 4:18) and what all of us must press on to become (3:12-16) as we all do the same thing, which is to contend for and defend the Besuras Hageulah (1:7,16,27) with deep affection, compassion, high esteem, and sympathy for all who share or participate or become ministry partners in this same struggle and affliction (1:5,7-9, 16, 30:2:1,10; 4:14), including the necessary matter of giving and receiving (4:15,16-17) and the (spiritual) profit accumulating in

one's (heavenly) account (4:17-18).

In the face of all the sorrow of this dying, persecuting,

anti-G-d world (2:27), let us take our minds off of earthly

things (3:19) and let us look on the bright side (1:18; 3:20;

4:5,8,13) and rejoice (1:4,25; 2:17-19,28-29; 3:1; 4:1,4,9). This

is our safeguard (3:1). What is the bright side? Even the worst

that can happen to Shliach Sha'ul is actually getting people in

Nero's household saved! (See 4:22; 1:12-13.) And what else is the

bright side? Think of it! Whatever happens turns out for our

deliverance (1:19) since living is Moshiach and dying is gain

(1:21), since what we've lost in this life for His sake is

kenodocia vainglory (2:3) and profasis pretense (1:18) and

skubalon refuse (3:8) but what we gain is far better, to go and

be with Moshiach (1:23). Only let us live this life In a manner

worthy of Moshiach, being courageous and fearless no matter what

happens (1:14,20,28; 2:12; 4:6).

MOSHIACH'S LETTER THROUGH THE SHLIACH SHA'UL TO THE BRIT CHADASHA KEHILLAH IN COLOSSAE

The target of Rav Sha'ul's letter (written probably ca. C.E.60/61

during the early part of Rav Sha'ul's house arrest in Rome and

during the same period Shliach Sha'ul wrote Ephesians) to the

believers at Colossee, a town not too far from Ephesus in modern

Turkey, is "philosophy" (2:8). A philosophy is a teaching from

man, a purely human speculation not grounded in sound exegesis of

the inerrant Scriptures. There is a Pharisaic temptation in every

congregation or denomination to begin to stir in human

philosophies and serve them up as part of Scriptural "orthodoxy."

It is a great shame that no one took the trouble to teach

Colossians to the Arabs in Mecca and Medina at the time of the

birth of Islam. Let's go back and look at the "philosophy" that

Shliach Sha'ul was attacking in Colossae when he wrote this

letter from Rome. There is nothing more dangerous than a

Biblically ungrounded mystic who is ignorant of the Word of G-d

(the closed canon of the inerrant measuring standard for all

extra-Biblical "prophecy"). Such a person does not bother to

bring every visionary's thought captive to obey G-d's Word (II

Cor. 10:5), but instead takes his stand on visions he has

received from angels (heedless of the warning of Gal. 1:8) and

goes into great detail about what he has seen (Col. 2:18).

There were some people like this endangering the Brit Chadasha

kehillah at Colossae. They were trying to take believers captive

with their philosophy (2:8). These heretics remind us of a

curious blend of Islamic mysticism and Rabbinic legalism, just as

the guise of the rabbi with his gnostic love of lore and

casuistry is discernible underneath the turban of a Sufi sheikh.

The heretics Shliach Sha'ul warned the Colossians about were

mystical and legalistic. At the same time they had gnostic

tendencies, which meant that they offered their "knowledge" (the

Greek word for knowledge is gnosis) as a way of salvation.

Apparently they were more impressed with the agency of an angel

than they were with a Moshiach like Yehoshua, as far as the

mediation of revelation was concerned.

Since a mystic could take his stand on what an angel had told him

(hadn't angels brought Moses the Torah--Acts 7:53?), and since an

angel could supposedly administer reprisals for breaking the

rules of Torah, these Colossian heretics seemingly advocated

strict adherence to legal observances, rituals, food laws,

festivals, and other religious legalisms in order to placate

these angels and ward off their demon-like displeasure. These

Colossian heretics appeared in the vicinity of the Brit Chadasha

kehillah of Colossae with their learned air of gnostic

superiority and, turning their nose up at the "elementary"

teachings that Epaphras (who lacked their educational "gnosis")

had communicated to the believers, they attempted to take the

congregation captive with their hollow and deceptive philosophy.

The Pharisees had a fine way of setting aside the Bible in order

to observe their humanly concocted philosophical traditions (Mark

7:9). The great danger for them in their exercise of human

arrogance was that they thought they knew as much about G-d apart

from his Word as they could learn in His Word, for they put their

traditions and interpretations right alongside the Bible and held

them in just as high authority and awe as the Bible.

Consequently, when the Moshiach came they were not ready for his

coming. Their eyes were on their own "signs" in their own

Philosophia (Col. 2:8) philosophical traditions and teachings and

supposedly great teachers and not on the inerrant Bible.

Consequently, they were not able to "get real" and they missed

G-d's purpose for their lives (Luke 7:30).

The Colossian false teachers had more than Pharisaic pride. As

mystics they may have attempted to short-circuit the Moshiach as

mediator and attain an immediate knowledge of G-d without the

mediation of the eikon tou Theos the "image" of G-d (1:15), the

enfleshed Word, Moshiach Yehoshua. However, Shliach Sha'ul

countered this teaching: the pleroma "fullness" the false

teachers offered the Colossians did not reside in their mystical

knowledge of G-d but in Moshiach himself (2:9). Rav Sha'ul's

watch-word is Chritos en umin E elpis tes doxa ("Moshiach in you

the hope of glory" --1:27). All the fullness of Theotetos (deity)

lives in bodily form and is mediated for our saving benefit

through Moshiach, Shliach Sha'ul argues.

The stoixeia of the cosmos are possibly the spiritual forces

behind false religions (see I Cor. 10:20-21), especially angelic,

that is demonic forces, which bring unregenerate man into

religious bondage (see Gal. 4:3,9). Our old nature and old self

that lived bound in that old world has died with Moshiach (2:20).

Angels or demons or so-called "astral powers" (who supposedly

directed the course of the stars and the calendar) or heavenly

hosts (such as in "saint" veneration--see the word threskeia in

2:18) do not have to be placated (as these heretics taught) by

various religious and ascetic practices. We have been rescued

from the power of darkness (1:12) and transferred to a different world where Moshiach alone is preeminent. Although visions per se should not be despised (Acts 2:17), we do not take our stand on visions (3:18), or let anyone judge us or disqualify us because of some self-imposed religious observance (2:16,18). See ethelothreskia in 2:23. The L-rd Moshiach Yehoshua, who makes men new creations, will never take a back seat to legalisms or religious philosophy or angels bringing visions and laws (2:13-15)! This religious excess baggage can be discarded because we already have full assurance and certainty of salvation, pleroforia (2:2).

There is a circumcision we have that makes us supernaturally

grafted into G-d's people. It is Moshiach who has cut away the
heathen heart's downward pull, the akrobustia tes sarkos (2:13).

It is Moshiach who has circumcised our innerman with the
purifying and covenant sealing experience of the new birth,

Shliach Sha'ul declares, and no other circumcision is needed, nor

any legalism! Our conversion "covenant cut" was made by the hand

of G-d (2:11) and like old skin our old life has been cut away

and lies on the floor like surgical waste products. Therefore, we

are to know no man after the "flesh" (3:22). We need to keep our

thoughts on the things above where we have, spiritually speaking,

died (3:3) and been raised (3:1). We need to live in that and let

G-d cut away idolatrous pleonexia (covetousness) and other

vestiges of the old nature and the old self.

Our purpose, if we "get real" is found in Col. 1:25,28-29. But

getting "real" requires first that we get a new self (3:10), a

new creation existence where the self is renewed in the image of

G-d, Moshiach Himself (1:15-16). Everything else is shadow, He is

the substance. There is no hidden, invisible, esoteric realm

that He is not manifest Lord and Victor over (2:15). Therefore,

we must put away the alienated, estranged mind that is at enmity

with G-d (1:21). The old self and its works of darkness must

die. We must not be puffed up by the mind of the flesh (2:18) or

taken captive by those things which have only the appearance of

wisdom (2:23). Instead we must come to true wisdom in the

knowledge of G-d's will (1:9), thereby bearing fruit and growing

(1:6,10).

In preaching all of this, the L-rd wants us to be gracious and to

make our words palatable (4:6). Then we will be a faithful

brother and minister (1:2,7) not moving away from our hope (1:23)

and therefore we will have love for all the saints (1:4-5).

Looking again at what this letter teaches about Moshiach, we ask

ourselves, who is this Word of G-d named Moshiach Yehoshua? He is

the image of the invisible G-d, the ruling heir of all creation

(1:15) and it is only through him that we inherit anything

(1:18). He is G-d's agent in creation (what liar would say G-d

does not use His Word in creation?) and all creation holds

together and is sustained from collapsing into nothingness by Him

(1:16,17). He is uncreated (He is "before all things"--1:17). He

is G-d's agent of reconciliation and judgment as the head of the

called out redeemed assembly of the people of G-d (1:18,20). In

fact, putting true believers under legalisms (an endless list of

can't do's and must do's) will provide no safeguard against the

old nature (sarks) arousing itself in us. Put to death this old

worldly nature daily, Shliach Sha'ul commands, and set your mind

on heavenly concerns. Devote yourself to prayer and

spiritual music and Bible study and thankful service (4:2,12;

3:16-17). Remember: a poisonous snake in the baby's crib must be killed, not merely toyed with by means of gamey rules, which have no power in restraining the coiling venomous flesh, the sensual indulgence, of the unregenerate and devilish creature, the old man unrenewed in Moshiach Yehoshua Moshiach. (See chapter 2:20-3:11; 4:12). We need not fear demons or angels because by regenerating us, G-d has rescued us from the dominion of demonic darkness (1:13) and brought us into the kingdom of His Word (Moshiach Yehoshua), His Ben HaElohim He loves, in whom we have redemption and acquittal, the forgiveness of sins.

This is a very important section of the Bible for viewing Judaism

and Islam correctly. Such teachings should be used with

Colossians 4:5 very definitely in mind. But visions per se should

not be despised (Acts 2:17), and when philosophers or poets agree

with the Besuras Hageulah, it may not hurt to quote them (see

Acts 17:28; I Cor. 15:32-33; Titus 1:12 where Shliach Sha'ul

quotes Epimenides of Cnossos, Menander, and Callimachus of

Alexandria).

Notice that according to this letter we must preach not merely

"the Aitz." We must preach "the blood of His Aitz, the

kapparah."

MOSHIACH'S LETTER THROUGH THE SHLIACH SHA'UL TO THE

BRIT CHADASHA KEHILLAH IN THESSALONIKA(I)

In only one month's time in C.E. 50, amidst great persecution

both in Philippi and in Thessalonica, Shliach Sha'ul, Silas, and

Timothy had started a new congregation in Thessalonica in

Macedonia (north of ancient Greece)! Then this city was the

capital of Macedonia, a Roman province, on the main highway to

Rome. Like New York and London today, it was in G-d's plan a

strategic target for kiruv outreach. The area is the northern

part of modern Greece today.

These two letters to the Brit Chadasha kehillah at Thessalonica

were probably written rather close together, one after the other,

from Corinth during the second of Rav Sha'ul's three

congregation-planting journeys. By studying Acts 17-18 and I and

II Thessalonians we see the rapid way Shliach Sha'ul worked as he

moved around the world with a couple of associates.

Knowing where to find a captive audience of his easiest potential

people to be won (the Gentile G-d-fearers in the Hellenistic

Jewish synagogues), Shliach Sha'ul would preach as a rabbi for a

few Shabbos and thus become known to many people quickly. Those

who were convicted or interested he undoubtedly spent many hours

meeting with in their homes, not wasting a single precious day

nor losing any time seeing the potential leaders immersed into

discipleship so that these in turn could later immerse the rest

in the absence of the Shliach and his associates, and a

congregation could then form in one of the leaders' homes.

Then, even if Shliach Sha'ul would have wanted to be the

congregational leader of the new believers for a time, usually

persecution prevented him and he had to make a quick exit to the

next virgin territory where another congregation-planting

challenge awaited him. However, here is where his two assistants

were so crucial. One shliach's assistant could return to the

newly planted congregation as a letter carrier, follow-up preacher, and messenger, reporting back to Shliach Sha'ul so that a second letter could be dispatched to answer doctrinal questions or deal with potential problems developing. The other assistant could work with Shliach Sha'ul or, when a new congregation in the next area began appearing, could be freed from staying with Shliach Sha'ul to do the same thing the other assistant was doing but in the newly planted congregation Shliach Sha'ul was already exiting!

The King James Version of Acts 13:13 calls this shliach's congregation-planting kiruv outreach team a "company." What a brilliant methodology G-d had developed for it! Dealing with

three new Brit Chadasha kehillah plantings at a time, Shliach

Sha'ul and his company of only three or so men could hop like a

three-legged spider across the world, leaving new Brit Chadasha

kehillot behind everywhere they went, some in just a few weeks,

yet with excellent communications and follow-up, even in a day

without modern telephones, planes, and automobiles!

Rav Sha'ul's tent-making secular profession was critical to him

in being able to move fast without having to constantly take time

off to do fund-raising. He could arrive at a new area, set up

shop and integrate into the local economy with enough prosperity

in his vocational pursuit to have instant credibility as an

honest businessman who was at the same time an itinerate religious speaker without pecuniary motives. Then, with this secular respectability as a bottom line, the local towns people perceived Shliach Sha'ul as a worshipper worth listening to, especially since he was a trained scribe who knew the Hebrew Scriptures as an educated rabbi. Not only did his preaching with tears let the love of G-d shine through, but also his power-encounters with sickness and the demonic, as well as his debating skills held forth the W-rd of G-d with such authority that really there was no competition or incentive to follow anyone else, as far as those who were hungry for G-d were concerned.

Therefore, since his secular work was critical to his credibility and conservation of time as well as independence and mobility, Shliach Sha'ul was extremely concerned with some of the attitudes toward work of the immature believers at Thessalonica. In their ignorance they seemed to feel that, since the L-rd's Coming was near at hand, and since menial, mundane manual labor was perceived by them to be spiritually trivial, irrelevant, and beneath the status of their newly acquired religious dignity (pride was entering the picture!), they had quit their jobs, weren't really looking for work, but were lying around like religious bums. Some may even have thought that, just because

they were new believers, perhaps someone owed them a living or

should support them (see II Thes. 3:10).

Being unemployed was probably unwittingly getting them depressed.

Also, the Thessalonians had been persecuted and may have had a

few narrow escapes with death. Then too there may have been a few

funerals in their community of believers, and consolation was

needed because, though many had hoped that Moshiach Yehoshua the

King would arrive without delay, someone may have died and

seemingly missed the L-rd's parousia or Coming. Shliach Sha'ul

assures them, however, that the dead will rise first at the time

the living are changed when the L-rd comes, and therefore there

will be no disadvantage to a believer's "falling asleep" as far as receiving a resurrection body at the rapture is concerned (see I Thes. 4:13-18). But there was a need to stay alert and to keep the heart's hope based squarely on nothing but I Thes. 1:10, "to wait for his Ben HaElohim from heaven, whom He raised from the dead-- Moshiach Yehoshua, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming... the wrath to which we have not been appointed" (I Thes.5:9).

There also may have been a tendency by some to overdo the "holy kissing" (I Thes. 5:26), because a spouse may have changed partners in the congregation and Shliach Sha'ul promises G-d's vengeance (I Thes. 4:5-6) for this Judas-like act of betraying a

brother and destroying his home by stealing his wife.

Notice there also may have been some heathenish rebellion against

Rav Sha'ul's "theology" connected with this adulterous sexual

affair in the Brit Chadasha kehillah (4:7-8). Rebellion against

authority goes hand in hand with sexual immorality (see also II

Shimon Kefa 2:10; Yehuda 8), so whenever a rebel appears on the

scene with a new theology and an arrogant attitude toward those

over him in the L-rd, it often happens that all this is nothing

more than a cover for an undercover and illicit sexual liaison.

Notice 5:1-2. Shliach Sha'ul was reluctant to give us a neat

dispensational chart of exactly how things end.

To "live a life worthy of G-d" is the key to ethics (2:12). To

stay alert means to keep our hope squarely on nothing but I Thes.

1:10, which means that we are obeying chapter 5.

The characteristics of a true servant of the Besuras Hageulah are

found in 2:3-7.

Those who think that Satan doesn't exist or can't hinder or that

believers don't suffer should read 2:18 and 3:1-5.

On the rapture, see NIV Study Bible note on I Thes. 4:17, which

says, "Some hold that this (the rapture) will be secret, but

Shliach Sha'ul seems to be describing something open and public,

with loud voices and a trumpet blast."

In I Thes. 2:9 we find Shliach Sha'ul working "night and

day," and, of course, Hasatan and his co-workers are also working

(2:16, 18; 3:5). Shliach Sha'ul knew that all believers are

appointed to suffer persecution (3:3) and this was part of his

own calling when he saw the risen L-rd (Acts 9:16). See the key

word thlipsis (affliction, tribulation, persecution, oppression,

distress that is brought about by outward circumstances) is

repeated in I Thes. 1:6; 3:3,7; II Thes. 1:4,6. Moshiach

Yehoshua warns that a day of universal and climactic thlipsis is

coming on the world (Mark 13:19-20) so terrible, that unless the

L-rd shortens those days no one could be saved. However, for the sake of the elect, who apparently see some of those days, the time of distress is cut short. When Shliach Sha'ul is writing, Claudius Caesar is already persecuting Jews in Rome, expelling them from the city. Nero is then a mad teenager waiting for his murderous opportunity (he will kill both Shliach Sha'ul and Shliach Kefa in only 14-17 years in an initial fulfillment of the Mark 13:19-20 prophecy). Then, only 10 years before, the Roman Emperor Caligula raised the specter of Antiochus Epiphanes redivivus, likewise threatening to erect an "abomination that causes desolation," namely his own heathen idol in the Beis Hamikdash in C.E. 40 as a narrowly averted replay of 167 B.C.E.

But, it is interesting that later, as all these horrors are rapidly approaching, Shliach Sha'ul is more focussed on the coming of the L-rd and divine deliverance than he is on Satan's expanding, intimidating activities (see Phil. 1:19; II Tim. 4:8, 17-18).

Why is doing the work of G-d so important? See 1:3, 2:9, 2:13

(Satan is also working, hindering the Besuras Hageulah through those who are blinded by him,--see 2:16 and 2:18.)

3:5 We need to make sure our labor is not in vain because of

Satanic temptation.

3:13 What is our work? It is the Father's work? What is our

fatherly work? See 2:11-12

MOSHIACH'S LETTER THROUGH THE SHLIACH SHA'UL TO THE

BRIT CHADASHA KEHILLAH IN THESSALONIKA (II)

This letter was written shortly after I Thessalonians in C.E. 50.

The believers have been persecuted severely, so much so that they

seem to think that the Day of the L-rd has arrived. Shliach

Sha'ul says, no, the Anti-Moshiach is not here yet and is being

restrained from coming on the scene. When Moshiach Yehoshua

returns he will destroy the Anti-Moshiach, who must be revealed

first.

This whole scenario of end-time events is an imminent possibility

so that the coming of the L-rd is at hand. Yet this gives no

warrant for anyone to live in idleness and sponge off the

wealthier believers. Those who refuse to obey Rav Sha'ul's

instructions to get busy and stop being "busy bodies" (3:11) are

to be admonished as brothers (not enemies) and then withdrawn

from until they repent (3:14). No one is allowed to make himself

a burden on others (3:8). Everyone is to follow the example

Shliach Sha'ul and his associates set when they worked night and

day, with secular jobs and in the ministry (3:7-10).

It should be noted that the end-time scenario of events that Shliach Sha'ul gives in II Thessalonians is given in that ever evocative, always contemporary, language of apocalyptic prophecy and not in language to be interpreted too prosaically. Those who fasten on a humdrum, vapid reading of the language of Revelation or Daniel or Mark 13 or II Thessalonians 2 usually declare that the European Common Market is this or Mussolini is that and are proven as wrong as a person is who reads a cryptogram as though it were a simple shopping list.

There is a literal rapture and there is and will be literal tribulation and there have been, are, and will be manifestations

of Satan, including a climatic figure called the "man of lawlessness" (2:3). But, in Scripture, what happens in these events is not prosaically described in the clinical detail or the journalistic realism with which a scientist or a television newsman would speak today, but in the ceaselessly evocative language of Biblical allusion, motif, symbol, etc. To use a ridiculous illustration, the "son of perdition" (2:3) does not of course mean that the Anti-Moshiach's father will be named Mr. Perdition. This is a Hebraism and a poetic way of saying his characteristic nature and destiny is ruin and destruction or hell. Ch. 2:8 says Moshiach Yehoshua will destroy the

Anti-Moshiach with the breath of his mouth. That will literally

happen, the Anti-Moshiach will be destroyed, but that is a poetic

and not a literal picture of how it will happen. To read that

with prosaic and graphic literalness, as though one man, by

means of a kind of lethal halitosis, kills another man, is as

silly as it is blasphemous Ch. 2:8 is meant to evoke, in a signal

stroke, all the density of Isaiah 11:4, Exodus 15:8; Job 4:9, and

other allusions. Those who knew the Scriptures like true prophets

could understand this kind of language. Those who didn't had to

study the Word until they could follow the cryptic, telegraphic

symbolism of Apocalyptic language.

By the same token, those who say that the Beis Hamikdash must be

literally rebuilt and the Anti-Moshiach must literally sit in it

may not at all be assured that they are right. The Lord's

destruction of Anti-Moshiach might be much closer to us than any

Beis Hamikdash rebuilding project in Jerusalem might lead us to

believe. "He takes his seat in the Beis Hamikdash of G-d,

proclaiming himself to be G-d" (2:4) could be Apocalyptic

language evoking poetic passages like Ezekiel 28:2 and could be

an allusion to Caligula and Antiochus Epiphenes and the

presumptuous evil with which the Anti-Moshiach will try to seize

and steal G-d's worship and central authority. With a handful

of words, Shliach Sha'ul communicates all this and more.

Dispensationalists may have an over-literal way of misreading

apocalyptic imagery and liberals have an over-symbolic way, one

that faithlessly dispenses with all literal fulfillment. The

Anti-Moshiach will definitely come and will definitely attempt to

"steal G-d's seat" but whether that involves the literal

construction of the Beis Hamikdash in Jerusalem is speculative

and may not be at issue doctrinally.

When the Anti-Moshiach appears and the fiery Word of G-d fills

the sky from horizon to horizon to destroy him, that will be the

end. It hasn't happened yet, though it is at hand, and could

happen imminently. What or who is holding the Anti-Moshiach back

from appearing before his appointed time? What or who must first

be removed before the Anti-Moshiach appears openly? This is the

interpretive problem of 2:5-7 and many answers have been offered

to solve it: the Brit Chadasha kehillah, the Ruach Hakodesh, etc.

The mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but someone or

something (the Greek uses both a neuter phrase and a masculine

form to refer to it/him) is holding back the man of lawlessness.

When whatever this is finally is removed, the man of lawlessness

will appear, the "son of perdition" will come on the scene and be

destroyed.

Whatever we say that "restrainer" is, we must do so with humility

and the desire to be no more dogmatic than the Bible. In the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19 we have a typological picture or historical parable about the Brit Chadasha kehillah (the called-out family of Abraham) in a G-dless Anti-Moshiach world doomed to destruction, experiencing "terrible times" (II Tim. 3:1). The people are so wicked they are murderous perverts and homosexuals who would rape angels, if possible, and Abraham's family is caught in the lethal cross-fire between the sons of Satan and the angels of G-d. But G-d himself is using his angels to hold back or restrain the wicked until the message has gone forth and the elect are delivered. Until the truth is received by those who love it,

those who hate the truth are not destroyed. The Anti-Moshiach will be held back from appearing and being destroyed to end the world until this Besuras Hageulah has been preached to the whole world, to all the Sodom and Gomorrahs of the earth, and then the end will come (Matthew 24:14). Similarly G-d will restrain that fallen and wicked angel until the end of the Millennium (Rev. 20:1-3) and then his wrath will come and the Millennium will end to usher in the Judgment and the New Heavens and the New Earth.

Another possible interpretation (and one that better fits Rav Sha'ul's cryptic way of speaking about these matters) is that the reference is to the Emperor and the same Roman government of the

Empire.

So what does this mean to us? It means that, while the

restraining hand of G-d and his angels is on this wicked age,

while it is still "day," we must preach the Besuras Hageulah.

Night is coming when no man can work. Let us redeem the time

because the days are evil and getting increasingly so. (See

Yochanan 9:4; Eph. 5:16). Let us be busy and do something useful

so we can pay our own way and not be a burden while we preach the

Besuras Hageulah and watch in prayer, ready at any time to meet

our L-rd or to take our stand against Satan or his "son" the

Anti-Moshiach.

Diogmos (persecution) caused two problems for the Thessalonian

believers: some apparently believed the persecution they experienced meant that the "Day of the L-rd is present has come already (II Thes. 2:2); secondly, the persecution they experienced was causing some to despair and lose hope for brethren who had departed in the L-rd before the parousian tou Kupiou (I Thes. 4:15).

In these two letters to the Thessalonians, Shliach Sha'ul, in order to encourage this persecuted Brit Chadasha kehillah in the upomonen tou Xristou (the perseverance of Moshiach--II Thes.3:5, see upomone steadfast endurance I Thes. 1:3; II Thes. 1:4), straightens out their sequential understanding of an event which

he calls variously parousia tou kurio (I Thes. 4:15) and emera

tou kuriou (I Thes. 5:2). The two terms are also used

interchangeably in II Thes.2:1-2 for the same event! This

event will be a time of wrath, anger for persecutors and others

who do not obey the Besuras Hageulah of our L-rd Moshiach

Yehoshua (II Thes. 1:8) and they will not escape either wrath or

destruction (I Thes. 5:3). Because these unbelievers refused to

love the truth and took pleasure in unrighteousness and were

wickedly deluded by an anti-Moshiach lie (II Thes.2:10-12), they

will pay the penalty of eternal destruction away from the

presence of the L-rd and glory of His might (II Thes. 1:9)

because they by their unbelief in the truth (II Thes.2:12)

participated in the general anti-Moshiach apostasia or rebellion of the world at the end of the age (II Thes. 2:3). Like those who persecuted the Messianic Jews in Jerusalem, those who are persecuting the Messianic Greeks in Thessalonica (I Thes. 2:14-16) are liable to the wrath that is coming, the wrath from which Yehoshua will rescue us believers at His Coming (see I Thes. 1:10).

Although the Day of the L-rd itself comes unexpectedly like a thief in the night, a certain rough sequence is knowable by believers: The apostasia or rebellion of the world comes proton (first -- II Thes. 2:3) and at the same time there is an

apokalupsis (revelation) and a parousia (coming) of (the Lawless one, the anti-Moshiach) who usurps G-d's earthly throne (see II Thes. 2:3-12) and lures unbelievers to participate in not only his worship but also his annihilation and the wrath that is coming on him and them at the time of the epifaneia (appearance) of the parousia tou Kuriou (II Thes .2:8). At that time the sequence will be like this: the dead in Moshiach will rise proton (first), then we who are alive and remain until the parousia tou Kuriou will see these who have departed in Moshiach being caught up from their graves to a meeting with the L-rd and we will see the ones having fallen asleep in Moshiach Yehoshua coming with Moshiach Yehoshua and with his angels in flaming fire (I Thes.

4:14; 5:10; II Thes. 1:7-8); then we ourselves will be caught up

to be with the L-rd. This is called our episunagoge (our

assembling, our gathering together II Thes. 2:1; Matt. 24:31) at

the parousia tou Kuriou (II Thes. 2:1; Matt. 24:30-31; Mark

13:26-27). This event is imminently expected. It could happen at

any time.

When Shliach Sha'ul wrote this it had been only 20 years since

Moshiach Yehoshua had arisen from the grave, only 10 years since

Caligula had been narrowly restrained from becoming an Antiochus

Epiphanes redivivus figure attempting to have his image

worshipped in the Jerusalem Beis Hamikdash, and less than 1 year

since Claudius had begun persecuting the Jews in Rome by expelling them from the city. When Claudius himself or his sane, lawful, world-wide Government itself was removed or taken out of the way, then the lawless world could rebel, then the world's G-d, the "lawless one," the end-time son of Satan "Nero" of the last days could reveal himself, and the time for fleeing great persecution would begin (Matt.24:15-17). So the End could come at any time, Shliach Sha'ul is saying. In fact in less than 17 years Shliach Sha'ul himself would see a partial fulfillment of these prophecies as the Roman Brit Chadasha kehillah became suddenly engulfed in the persecution to which it was appointed (I Thes. 3:3) and Rav Sha'ul himself was lawlessly martyred there by the

man who was only a teenager when I Thessalonians was written,

that is, Caesar Nero whose name (NUN, RESH, AYIN, FINAL NUN AND

KOF, SAMECH, RESH) in Jewish gematria spells 666. The above

Hebrew letters in Caesar Nero (nun = 50, resh = 200, vav = 6,

nun = 50, kof = 100, samech = 60, resh = 200 = (50 + 200 + 6 + 50

+ 100 + 60 + 200) = 666, which is Nero Caesar transliterated into

Hebrew script and then added up as Jewish gematria from the

Hebrew equivalent of Neron Kaisar. Rev. 17:10-11, that is, that

"there are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is,

the other has not yet come, and when he comes he must remain only

a little while. As for the beast that was and is not, it is an

eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to perdition."

1. Nero (C.E. 54-68)
2. Galba (C.E. 68)
3. Otho (C.E. 69)
4. Vitellius
5. Vespasian (C.E. 69-70)
6. Titus (C.E. 79-81)
7. Domitian (C.E. 81-96)
8. Nero Redivivus Anti-Moshiach

The five that have fallen are Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian

and Titus. Domitian, the emperor at the time of the writing of

Rev., now "is." The "beast that was and is not" is Nero, beast

#1. As Nero redivivus, this beast has "not yet come, and when he

comes he must remain only a little while." He becomes #8 but he

is really one of the seven, because he is #1 redivivus, the

"head" of Rev. 12:3, whose "mortal wound was healed." All

of this is possibly alluded to in the simple phrase in Rev.

13:11, "And I saw a beast...with seven heads..."

Notice that everything is imminent (about to happen), both agony

and ecstasy, rapture and tribulation, threat and deliverance. The

worst and the best that can happen are both at hand! Notice there

is no time allowance before the coming of the L-rd for a literal

Beis Hamikdash to be constructed in Jerusalem or a literal seat

be built on which the Anti-Moshiach can literally sit.

Everything can happen imminently! Be ready! Be strong if there

is trouble! Be prepared if there is judgment! And notice that

through everything there is the hope of heavenly, rapturous,

deliverance with Satanic trials mercifully cut short to

manageable proportions!

Our digression into the book of Revelation is necessary to deal

with this business of wrath, which does not fall on the elect in

Moshiach but on those in Anti-Moshiach. What ensues after Rev. 4

is an unfolding picture of suffering that is humanly, demonically

generated. G-d the judge sends plagues like he did on Pharaoh

as the world heads inexorably toward Armageddon, the Millennium,

the Final Judgment, and the creation of the New Heavens and the

New Earth. But in the midst of the suffering there is also

various divinely provided protection on earth and ultimately rapturous deliverance in heaven. The seven seals (6:1-17; 8:1), the seven trumpets (8:2-9:21; 11:14-19), and the seven bowls (16:1-21) give us this unfolding picture of ever increasing retribution and catastrophe leading to climactic ruin as a prophetic picture of the birthpangs (chevlei Moshiach the pre-Messianic era birthpangs) leading to the Messianic Kingdom realized on earth followed by the New Creation. Rev. 15:1 says of the final seven plagues, "with them the wrath (thumos) of G-d is ended." We have not been appointed to wrath (orge --I Thes. 5:9).

The Brit Chadasha kehillah will be raptured before those who destroy the earth are themselves destroyed (Rev. 11:12,18).

We handle persecution by standing fast in the perseverance of

Moshiach" (II Thes. 3:5), remembering Mark 13:13 "he who endures

to the End will be saved." Also we remember 1) to receive the

Lord's peace which he gives at all times and in all ways (II

Thes. 3:6). 2) that persecution is the very racetrack whereby

the Besuras Hageulah is relayed by persecuted runners whose very

example encourages one another in the rapid spread of the Besuras

Hageulah (I Thes. 1:7-8; II Thes. 3:1). 3) So stand firm in the

L-rd (I Thes. 3:8) in order to counter Satan's temptation for you

to fallaway (I Thes.3:5). 4) Pray according to II Thes. 3:1-5,

remembering that the prayer of I Thes. 3:11 counters Satan's

hindrance of our witness in I Thes. 2:18. 5) Above all, hold

fast to your Bible. 6) Use persecution as a pointer to

sincerity, certitude, and credibility, not only in your case,

but, more importantly, in the case of the Shluchim and in

certifying their credibility since they did not profit materially

in their office nor please evil men nor seek human vainglory (I

Thes. 2:4-9) but boldly preached the Besuras Hageulah of G-d "in

spite of great (persecution) conflict/agonny" (I Thes. 2:2),

proving their message was not the word of man but the Word of G-d

(I Thes. 2:13).

Here in II Thes. 2 we see Shliach Sha'ul standing in the true

prophetic tradition of the nevi'im of the Tanakh, who gained

credibility in predicting an ultimate Day of the L-rd (or end of the world) because they accurately predicted an imminent Day of the L-rd (destruction of Jerusalem/time of great distress and world-wide persecution). We believe Ezekiel's and Jeremiah's ultimate prophecies because of their reliable, fulfilled, imminent prophecies. Similarly with Shliach Sha'ul, when this shliach wrote I-II Thessalonians, the Emperor Claudius and the Roman Empire were in fact restraining the Anti-Moshiach persecution of Nero, which, when Claudius (Roman Emperor C.E. 41-54) was later removed or taken out of the way (see II Thes. 2:2-12), the rebellion of Rome and the revelation of Nero's

Satanic persecution engulfed the Brit Chadasha kehillah in great tribulation. Since Rav Sha'ul correctly predicted these events leading to his own martyrdom in Rome, we can rely on Rav Sha'ul's words as divinely inspired and as pointers to the shape of world events at the End of Days, even our own day.

Compare episunagoges gathering together in II Thes. 2:1 and similar Greek words in Luke 3:17 and Matt. 24:31 and you will see that, according to these Greek texts, the wheat (believers) and the chaff (unbelievers) have to be separated and gathered by the L-rd's angels when He comes and that II Thes. 2:1 makes it clear that His coming and this gathering are all of a piece, all one

and the same event, not two separate events, as in Dispensational teaching.

MOSHIACH'S LETTER THROUGH THE SHLIACH SHA'UL TO TIMOTIYOS (I)

One of the worst heresies of all time is called clericalism, the lie that only paid clergy behind professional pulpits can preach.

The Biblical prophet Yoel (Joel) said that in the end-times your ordinary sons and daughters would preach and prophecy (Yoel (Joel) 2:28). However, another (and wholly opposite) heresy is anticlericalism, the opposition to clerical authority, the total revolt of the laity or the secular spokespeople that says, in

effect, there is no valid authority invested in ordained ministers. The Epistles (I and II Timothy and Titus) are a canonical handbook to guard against various expressions of anticlericalism and other heresies. Shliach Sha'ul wrote these letters to strengthen the authority of those who must preserve the purity of the teaching of the Shluchim as it is committed to "faithful men who can teach others also" (II Tim. 2:2). There must be an ordained ministry and the I-II Tim-Tit Epistles lets us make no mistake about that.

However, liberal scholars have used a circular argument to try to prove that these letters aren't genuine and that Shliach Sha'ul

didn't write them. Their argument goes in this circle: the real

Shliach Sha'ul wrote Romans and Galatians and a few other

letters; the I-II Tim-Tit Epistles don't sound like Romans and

Galatians; the author of the I-II Tim-Tit Epistles can't be the

real Shliach Sha'ul.

There is close agreement of wording between Acts 20:17-38 and II

Timothy 4:6-8 and 3:11. So Shliach Sha'ul, as Luke records him,

can in fact sound like he sounds in the I-II Tim-Tit Epistles.

The notes on Acts already have made the points for dating the

book of Acts extremely close to the time II Timothy was written,

if not the same time. Shliach Sha'ul might have said in II Tim.

4:11, "Only Luke is with me (writing the book of Acts)." The notes on Acts show that Acts is an expansion of Rav Sha'ul's legal brief built around the legal precedents of Rav Sha'ul's encounters with Roman officials throughout the Empire. Acts attempts to make the case (while it fleshes out the story of the acts of the Ruach Hakodesh in fulfilling the Great Commission) that Rav Sha'ul's faith was not a calculated attempt to undermine or threaten the government of Rome. Rather, what Shliach Sha'ul taught from Jerusalem to Rome is the true, legal (according to Roman law) religion of the Jews embracing the whole world, and unbelieving Jews should not be listened to by the Romans judging Shliach Sha'ul. So there is ample proof in Acts and the epistles

themselves to prove that Shliach Sha'ul is the author of the I-II

Tim-Tit Epistles.

The difference in Rav Sha'ul's vocabulary in the I-II Tim-Tit

Epistles is due to the fact the Shliach Sha'ul is now an old man.

He is not babying carnal new believers with a mother's gentleness

but rather, with time running out on his ministry, Shliach Sha'ul

is giving blunt orders to those who will have to continue

preaching "the Besuras Hageulah that was entrusted" to this man

marked for martyrdom, Shliach Sha'ul (1:11). The year is probably

about 63 C.E. Shliach Sha'ul has just been released from his

first Roman imprisonment. Timothy is a man in his middle thirties

and Shliach Sha'ul is in his sixties. In the letter to the
Philippians (Phil. 1:26), a letter Shliach Sha'ul wrote during
his first Roman imprisonment, Shliach Sha'ul indicated he would
visit the Philippian congregation again if he were released. This
is apparently the vicinity where he is now, in Macedonia (modern
northern Greece), and has sent this letter called I Timothy to
Timothy in Ephesus. Timothy is to be Rav Sha'ul's senior emissary
of Moshiach's shlichut on the field of Asia Minor (what is today
modern Turkey) and Shliach Sha'ul has delegated to him the
responsibility of overseeing the planting of new congregations
and the appointing of new congregational leaders in the area.

I Tim. 1:3 warns Timothy, as Rav Sha'ul's associate, to stay in Ephesus and insist that the Brit Chadasha kehillah leaders not teach any strange or different doctrine. Today there are those who teach all manner of novel doctrines virtually unknown in the history of Brit Chadasha kehillah dogma or in sound exegesis (partial-rapture theory, secret coming of Moshiach theory, etc) and demand that everyone agree with them (despite I Thes 4:16-17 etc.) or be branded as heterodox or liberal. Shliach Sha'ul warned Timothy not to tolerate this kind of thing. All teaching must be exegetically controlled by the inerrant Bible. Sound teachers are to scrupulously avoid empty speculations and theories (1:4,6) of this kind and to stick to the sober Word of

G-d and not go beyond what is written (I Cor. 4:6). The Besuras

Hageulah must be preserved in its Biblical purity and without the

accumulated oral tradition (Mark 7:9) that denominations tend to

generate more profusely the older they get.

The law was never intended for those who are led by the Ruach

Hakodesh in the age of the Ruach Hakodesh at the time of the

Moshiach's inauguration of the Brit Chadasha (Gal. 5:18; Titus

1:15; Heb. 8:13). The law was intended for those who live

according to the old sinful nature, and need to be convicted of

sin and brought to the Moshiach to receive a new nature and the

gift of the Ruach Hakodesh. But the ignorant, who presume to be

doctors of the law but don't know what they are talking about,

don't understand this and put people under all kinds of legalisms

instead of teaching them about the new birth (see I Tim. 1:6-11

and Galatians 4 and Romans 7 and 8).

Shliach Sha'ul knows that his life as a Brit Chadasha

kehillah-murdering blasphemer (made into a world-famous Shliach

and prophet) shows the grace of G-d in Moshiach Yehoshua the

Moshiach "exceedingly" (1:14). Yet Shliach Sha'ul also knows that

he did these things in ignorance (see I Tim. 1:13 and Luke

23:34), and not as a knowing Esau (who knew what he was denying

but thought incorrectly that he could get it back in easier times

--Hebrews 12:16-17) or a knowing Judas (who actually shared the

L-rd's ministry--Acts 1:17). The Scripture warns that if anyone tastes of the knowledge of heaven and yet knowingly becomes an apostate, for such a person it is impossible to lead him or her to be renewed a second time (Hebrews 6:4-8). Let this be a warning to any in the faith who think they can do what Judas did in bringing the police against the brethren and yet be forgiven like Shliach Sha'ul, who also brought the police against the brethren. There very definitely is something called apostasy. This doctrine of apostasy must be taught to all who claim to be believers. The cowardly apostates who try to gain their lives instead of enduring to the end will lose their lives and not

inherit the Kingdom of G-d (Rev. 21:8; Mark 8:35; Mat. 24:13).

Shliach Kefa was tempted in this area but repented. Apostasy is a

dangerous possibility not to be dismissed by any antinomian

doctrine of eternal security, though warnings about apostasy (see

Heb. 6:4-12) should not exclude the doctrine of assurance (see

I Yochanan 5:13). Note: the doctrine of assurance should not be

contaminated with any Pelagian notion that man, by his own sheer

will power and without the help of G-d, can save himself from

apostasy or Gehinnom or anything else.

Chapter 2 (see also 4:13) tells Timothy how to conduct public

services. Shliach Sha'ul of course intends the missions

congregational leaders to study this and not just Timothy. Notice

public prayer meeting, proper attire, and proper order between

the sexes with the husband being respected by his wife are all

emphasized. Shliach Sha'ul knew that prayerlessness, scorn,

disrespect, and Edenic revolt were always shimmering just below

the surface, ready to erupt in human hearts.

Ch. 2:5 is very important. Only the Word of G-d mediates

salvation, and the Word of G-d incarnated himself only once and

only in one man, Moshiach Yehoshua. There is absolutely no other

man or no other name or no other way to G-d but by him.

I Tim. 4:1 speaks of the apostasy Shliach Sha'ul earlier alluded

to in II Thes. 2:3. This is the great repudiation of the inerrant

Bible both inside and outside the Brit Chadasha kehillah at the

end of the age to set the stage for the appearing of the

Anti-Moshiach.

Shliach Sha'ul tells Timothy to watch both what he preaches and

how he practices it (4:16).

Ch. 5:19 should be taken (along with Matthew 18:15-18) as an

important guide for Brit Chadasha kehillah discipline. If someone

aspires to have authority over believers to build them up in the

faith, that person should be accountable for his teaching and be

subject to Scripturally defined discipline for waywardness in

the faith (5:19). The gift of prophecy is needed in the Brit

Chadasha kehillah. This entails recognizing G-d's appointment

(s'micha) to ordained ministry of certain persons (see 4:14).

The warnings (3:6 and 5:22) about giving too much authority too

quickly to novices are well taken in Brit Chadasha kehillah

planting. Because novices are so inexperienced and spiritually

immature, it is unwise for them to allow themselves to be thrust

forward so much. There are plenty of warnings in the Scripture

about laying hands too suddenly on youthful and ambitious men who

are prone to be pushy, double-tongued, and clique-creating

politicians. The more mature men must walk a line between

discouraging them and keeping them in check. However, many

plodding emissaries of Moshiach's shlichut err in the opposite

direction, taking far too long to end their paternalism.

If this letter is read again carefully, it is very obvious that

the strident and unspiritual kind of irreverent "intellectualism"

in many religious colleges and seminaries is forbidden and sinful

in ministry formation and causes people to err concerning the

faith (6:21). This is also true of those empty babblers who pride

themselves in their "gnosis" (knowledge) about law and oral

tradition and various merely human teachings and speculations.

G-d wills that all men should be saved (I Tim. 1:16, 2:4; II Tim.

2:25-26; 4:17). Having said all this about the ordained ministry,

something more needs to be said about the ministry of all believers. Exodus 19:6; Isaiah 61:6; I Shliach Kefa 2:5; Rev. 1:6; 20:6 proclaim that we are all ministers and II Cor.5:10 says we will all be quickly called to account for our ministries. Col. 4:17 says. "See to it that you fulfill your ministry." There is a functional distinction in the Bible between laity and ordained leadership, but nothing like the elitist Protestant and sacerdotal Roman Catholic views. The overseer is "G-d's inspector" and such a person is himself subject to inspection, which means Brit Chadasha kehillah-recognized appointment (s'micha). However, it should be remembered that the ministry of Moshiach Yehoshua began at his tevilah. So, in the kehunah of all

believers, at least some pre-tevilah Bible instruction before

Moshiach's tevilah is as essential for the believer as some sort

of Bible training is for overseers.

Concerning the place of women in the L-rd's house, let the

following apply to men and women equally. Beware of mixing any

male-female sensuality in your service to the Holy One, for such

indulgence is in reality a syncretistic Baalish cult inveighed

against in II Shliach Kefa and Yehuda in the Brit Chadasha

Scriptures and in Hosea and elsewhere in the Tanakh. This means

you can't serve G-d and the sex g-d Baal. You may be able to

excuse yourself with an easy conscience but G-d won't.

Therefore, never "minister" to a person of the opposite sex alone, unless you want a sterile ministry with no one coming to salvation, the reproach of the brethren and outsiders, and the pangs of inevitable divine retribution (if you want to think up evil to do, G-d can and will out-think you and bring it back on your head--see Micah 2:2-3). Yehoshua sent people out 2 by 2, and Shliach Sha'ul wanted spiritually mature women to minister to women--see Titus 2:3-4. He would not permit a female individual to teach or have authority over a male individual (I Tim. 2:12), or a single man to teach a single woman alone, and in the name of the L-rd he demanded that a man and a woman avoid the appearance of evil (I Thes. 5:22), which means not being alone together, and

men treating women like sisters in absolute purity (I Tim. 5:2).

We are to watch our life and doctrine closely (I Tim. 4:16) if we

desire to save ourselves and others. We are to walk carefully

with our G-d (Micah 6:8).

One reason why single men and women are not sent alone to the

foreign mission field by many foreign mission boards is precisely

this problem, for loneliness in a strange land and romantic

temptations with the nationals can destroy ministry and invite

scandal. Single foreign emissaries of Moshiach's shlichut need

the gift of celibacy which includes the emotional strength to

cope with loneliness and the wisdom to minister to people in

appropriate settings (that is, with the help of additional

disciples and married couples, etc).

One thing we are seeing a lot of in this wicked world is engaged

couples taking many appearance liberties because they are almost

married. This also is very dangerous and can throw a stain on a

marriage even before it begins. Flee (run for your life) from the

lusts of youth (II Tim. 2:22)! Expressing physical affection for

the opposite sex (even your spouse) in the house of G-d is not

appropriate.

ON THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN

Read II Chron. 34:22. Shliach Sha'ul would not contradict the

Tanakh and must not be interpreted in such a way that makes him

do so. I Tim. 2:12 can not be interpreted in such a way as to

contradict II Chr. 34:22. Neither should be the case with I Tim.

3 and Titus 1. A piece of paper is worthless if the person, male

or female, doesn't have the gift that Huldah was given by G-d;

and there must be some way to authorize and de-authorize or

defrock those who prove unworthy of messianic ministry.

Satan has more than half (there are more women than men and women

live longer) of the L-rd's work force lolling on Brit Chadasha

kehillah pews because of the twin lies that only professionals

(clericalism) and men (male chauvinism) can preach and all

preaching must supposedly be done (by men) in the sacred shrine

called the Brit Chadasha kehillah building. The Brit Chadasha

Scriptures knows nothing about any such thing as a Brit Chadasha

kehillah building and women are some of the most effective

workers in the Brit Chadasha Scriptures.

Why are not the Huldahs, the prophetesses (look at Yoel 2:28

"your sons and daughters will prophesy"), the lady preachers

preaching everywhere? Everywhere there are people waiting to hear

a preacher: the hospital rooms where the dying are going to

Gehinnom without a witness, the nursing homes, the school yards

(with young girls and others loitering with the devil), the

business world. Lady, why are you not preaching? Why are you

yourself loitering when you could be prophesying? Do you think

Moshiach Yehoshua will accept your excuse that you listened to

men and not to G-d when he tells you to preach and they tell you

not to?

Why are you not preaching to the conscience with one goal for all

the people that you preach to: a permanent g-dly turn-around in

their lives!

ON THE DUTIES OF A MASHGIACH RUCHANI

In summary, leading a congregation is done by many types of

mesharetim (messianic ministers). Some are more

administrator-teachers, some are more outreach

minister-counsellors, etc. G-d can use any combination of

gift-mix in the congregational leader he calls.

A local congregational leader must never see calling on first-time visitors as so much busy work to be farmed out to somebody else. He may have others help him but if the visitor cards are a drag on his time, then we can expect paper shuffling and pulpiteering from such a man, but not a growing Brit Chadasha kehillah. This is true in the same way that the following example is true. A preacher who brings in people to help him serve the preaching needs of the Brit Chadasha kehillah is one thing; someone who thinks preaching is a drag on his time and hires out the pulpit speakers because he would rather be doing something else than preaching is no congregational leader. Likewise a man

who doesn't go after sheep and potential sheep is no congregational leader. This sheep-searching heart-occupation of a congregational leader cannot be hired out. Also the one who does it is the one who receives a congregational leader's salary, though laymen may assist him.

Shliach Sha'ul told congregational leader Timothy, "Do the work of an kiruv outreach minister." Moshiach Yehoshua told congregational leader Shliach Kefa to go and seek his sheep and feed them. Congregational leading is not standing on a stage and giving a homily and shuffling paper in one's office. The work of going after the sheep is the thing the congregational leader must lead the flock in and this means taking them and doing it, not

merely exhorting them. Laymen know when the congregational

leader's heart is not in something, and you cannot get anyone to

do what you do not want to do as a congregational leader.

G-d calls congregational leaders and they feed his sheep and go

and find the lost sheep and the L-rd provides their salaries

through the sheep. Their work cannot be hired out or farmed out

for hire.

MOSHIACH'S LETTER THROUGH THE SHLIACH SHA'UL TO

TIMOTIYOS (II)

This is Rav Sha'ul's last will and testament, written shortly before his martyrdom during his second imprisonment in Rome. It is written to Timothy in Ephesus, with greetings to Aquila and Priscilla (4:19) who are still there apparently as they have been since Acts 18:19 many years before (the time is now around 65-68 C.E.).

Candidates for messianic ministry should be trained and tested (see 1:13-14) and should have regular times devoted to their strengthening and revival and personal renewal (1:6).

A messianic minister is someone who is willing to bear the hardships of a sacrificial life style or whatever may be

necessary for the sake of the Besuras Hageulah (1:8; 4:5). Notice

why we suffer-- see 2:10,12. A messianic minister is commanded

to make sure that the work of a kiruv outreach minister gets done

(4:5), which means pioneer outreach among unreached peoples as

well as Brit Chadasha kehillah growth and new Brit Chadasha

kehillah planting.

What is our long-range goal? See 2:15.

Look at 2:19. Since we are delivered, we must act delivered.

All Scripture is inspired by G-d. Therefore, all Scripture is

inerrant. See 3:16. If you don't see that, it's because you are

in error, not G-d.

Ch. 4:1 says that, welcome or unwelcome, we insist on the truth of G-d's Word, and we don't give up and stop communicating it because it seems to be unpopular or unreceived.

See *The Rabbi From Tarsus*, which is a dramatization of this epistle (VHS Home Video, Word, Inc, 1986). Also see the play itself in the next section.

Read I Tim 4:13-16; II Tim. 1:6-15. Timothy is reminded that he is a preacher, a herald (the king's messenger and representative announcing his coming), a kiruv outreach minister who must face hostile crowds and dangerous public preaching opportunities, and

this will require a certain amount of suffering. But he has received a special endowment of the Ruach Hakodesh to fulfill his ministry, and therefore he must overcome cowardice, resume preaching, and he must rely on the power of G-d. If he does this, he will save not only many who hear him, but also himself (I Tim. 4:16). This is not the same doctrine as is believed by many, who view street ministry as either a negligible option or an esoteric capacity given only to a few with the calling. For them, a school which mobilizes people into this function and actually puts them on the street is either unheard of or nothing to take seriously. Someday this sin will either be repented of or answered for.

The work of a kiruv outreach minister requires suffering (II Tim. 4:5).

Shliach Sha'ul reminds Timothy in II Tim. 2:3-7 of the special berucha G-d will bestow on the ministry of a suffering (see II Tim. 2:9), street-jostled, hard-working, faithful outreach minister, especially one who trains others to do what he is doing (i.e. Titus 1:9) and to do it with powerful prophetic preaching and sound, deep teaching (II Tim. 2:2), which should be the goal of any Bible School.

Are you doing the work? (See II Tim. 2:6.) There are some people only you can preach to. You can't hire it done. You can't farm them out to others. You must get over the shame of the Besuras

Hageulah and get their blood off your hands or you will be responsible. Look at II Tim. 2:4. The proclamation is a sacred trust (Titus 1:3) because the Besuras Hageulah can be distorted or garbled or lost in transmission (II Tim. 1:12)

I and II Timothy can be read as a charge or commission to a kiruv outreach minister if you see II Tim. 4:5 as the key (see I Tim 4:10; II Tim. 1:12; 2:9,12; 3:12 on suffering as a kiruv outreach minister plus all the verses on being ashamed of the Besuras Hageulah or of Rav Sha'ul).

When we preach on the street, we need to keep in mind Titus 3:1-7,9; also Titus 2:5-8; also II Tim. 2:24-26; and beware of

pride--II Tim. 2:26; I Tim 2:6).

Those who preach on the street have to be rescued from the lion's

mouth (II Tim 4:17).

Street preachers need systematic and historical theology because

of Titus 1:9; II Tim. 2:2; I Tim. 5:22; 4:6,16; 6:3-4; II

Tim.2:15,23; Titus 2:1.

Although Shliach Sha'ul knows that the time of his death is

imminent ("the time of my departure has come" 4:6), he is

comforted as he thinks about the the promise of life in Moshiach

Yehoshua (1:1) and the the crown of righteousness (4:8), which

the L-rd will give to him on the Day of His Appearing. II Tim.

1:12 implies that Shliach Sha'ul has entrusted himself, his body, soul, and spirit, to the safe-keeping of G-d for the day of the parousia (see also I Thes. 5:23). He has entrusted his work at Ephesus to G-d and to Timothy, whom Shliach Sha'ul has solemnly dedicated to G-d's work by the laying on of hands in the sign and seal of ordination or s'micha (see II Tim. 1:6). This was not something Shliach Sha'ul had done impetuously or thoughtlessly (I Tim. 5:22) but rather something that came after Timothy had been trained (II Tim. 2:15) and properly tested (test them first I Tim. 3:10) out on the mission field itself, where Timothy did his apprenticeship (Phil. 2:20-22).

Study the Greek text of II Tim. 2:15. Diligent effort to properly

interpret the inspired Scriptures, "cutting a straight path" and

fitting inerrant texts into proper doctrine (both ideas reside in

orthotomeo) are tasks that require persistent, studious zeal

(spoudazo) and dokimos (approval after examination and testing).

Anyone who does not want to be zealous in study or to bother

getting approval after study and examination should not presume

that they have "s'micha." The maaser is for the properly

consecrated ministers of the mitzbe'ach. We have today people who

want the tithes but don't want the work of getting properly

consecrated. They are too intelligent and spiritually gifted to

study. They don't have time (their very very gifted personages do not have time for studying Greek grammar) to prepare for an exam, or they don't know of anyone brilliant enough to examine such a specimen of giftedness as themselves. Shliach Sha'ul was not willing to entrust the ministry to such prima donnas. Shliach Sha'ul himself had studied and been trained to the teeth! He told Timothy to look for trustworthy believers, not just believers, who could be entrusted to take what Shliach Sha'ul give Timothy and hand it on to others also (II Tim. 2:2). Someone who thinks he or she is too gifted to study and get approval is not trustworthy. (A medical worker who is too gifted in healing to graduate from medical school is not a licensed doctor but a witch

doctor. Do we consult witch doctors? Do we pay them?).

On the other hand, anyone who thinks he is studied, approved,

matriculated, graduated, and has s'micha and thinks he is ikanos

(possessing qualification II Tim. 2:2) had better examine himself

to see what kind of spirit he has received and what kinds of

pursuits or distractions he may have succumbed to. Study II Tim.

2:1-7 very carefully and prayerfully (Ps. 119:18), reading this

text in a mood of supplication, asking G-d for illumination by

the Ruach Hakodesh (I Cor. 2:12-16) and cleansing (1 Yochanan

1:9). Some have all credentials but none of the Ruach Hakodesh.

Some have the credentials but are more interested in making and

spending money than in doing the work.

The work of properly interpreting the Bible entails entering into

the mind of the author, the historical context of the author's

writing, the context of the passage, and the grammar and

vocabulary of his language, an ancient foreign tongue. Proper

intrepretaiion of the Scriptures takes work. To preach correct

doctrine in the right spirit takes prayer, and without

understanding the spirit of the text, one indulges in mere

wrangling about words (II Tim. 2:14). Then to proclaim the word

"in season" takes a prophetic touch. To proclaim the word

fearlessly in situations that bring suffering or danger requires

boldness and courage. To go or remain where G-d commands requires

a sacrificial lifestyle, and that means covetousness disqualifies

any aspiring minister, especially one who is a lover of self

(II Tim. 3:2). The gift of G-d that makes all this possible must

be constantly, repeatedly kindled afresh (anazopureo is a present

infinitive--II Tim. 1:6). This is all part of the messianic

ministry, which is based on anupokritou pisteos, sincere, genuine

faith, which many liberal, lazy, neo-orthodox, double-talking

pharisees do not have, for all their ministerial credentials. One

must be called with a holy calling (II Tim. 1:9). One must be a

clean vessel (II Tim. 2:21), fleeing from youthful lusts (2:22).

MOSHIACH'S LETTER THROUGH THE SHLIACH

SHA'UL TO TITOS

This letter was probably written very close to the same time I

Timothy was written (though C.E. 63 may be too early).

Apparently Shliach Sha'ul has visited Crete and left Titus there

just as he left Timothy in Ephesus. Shortly before Shliach Sha'ul

was arrested again for the final time, and while he was still on

the mission field (some scholars believe Corinth, others Ephesus,

others Philippi in northern Greece, that is, Macedonia), he wrote

this letter to Titus, his long-time associate, an uncircumcised

Greek so helpful in Rav Sha'ul's dealings with the Corinthians

and as a test case against the circumcising party in the early

days in Jerusalem. In this letter we learn that Zenas and Apollos

are coming to Titus and that Shliach Sha'ul hopes to meet Titus

in Nicopolis in Epirus on the western shore of Greece.

Notice that appointing zekenim is something that an emissary of

Moshiach's shlichut does when planting new Brit Chadasha kehillot

in an area (1:5). This is not always left to a local Brit

Chadasha kehillah's pulpit selection committee or membership vote

as in congregationalism. G-d wants to plant new Brit Chadasha

kehillot and appoint new messianic ministers much faster than

that. On the other hand, there is nothing in Scripture to warrant a leader coming in and domineering over a congregation and dictating all the internal decisions for the believers. A certain Spirit-led tension between congregationalism and episcopalianism exists, as far as polity is concerned, since both congregational and episcopal forms of polity each have dangers and weaknesses but also strengths and advantages.

Notice we are to take no notice of certain religious myths that people adhere to who are not regenerated and therefore have no taste for the authority and sufficiency of the inerrant Word of G-d (1:11). The Bible is not composed of myths or etiological

folktales, but sober salvation history predicted and fulfilled through inerrant prophets, and there is no other book under the sun suitable for faith and practice. Here we see Shliach Sha'ul pointing to the embryonic but growing stronghold of rabbinic authority and the intoxicating influence of Jewish legalism and mythologizing similar to what is later found in the Talmud and the Midrashim (see 1:10-16; 3:8-11). Apparently the movement of believers in Crete was tainted by the influence of certain morally perverse Judaizers and this weak corrupt mission field needed a reforming outreach messianic minister and preacher like Titus.

By their fruit you will know the true knowers of G-d (1:16;

Matthew 7:20).

Watch vulgarisms in your speech, from the pulpit or in public

anywhere. Why should such be there privately either? (see 2:3).

Ch. 2:10 demands no petty thieving but complete and utter honesty

at all times. Ch. 2:12 means that G-d wants you to give up

everything that does not lead to him.

We are not to have a tendency to go picking quarrels or to

slander others or to walk in touchy bitterness, but we are to be

polite and courteous to people, remembering that if they do not

treat us the same way we treat them, we too were once in their

darkness See 3:2-3. Titus 3:3 says some of the things found in

Eph. 2:11-13 and II Tim. 2:24-26.

There are those who only want to waste our time, however. We must

not allow them. See 3:9-11. See 3:10 on what to do with a

divisive person.

Although salvation cannot be earned by good works (3:5), 3:14

shows that we are to live productive lives, meaning not just that

we are to learn how to pay our bills and not be in debt, but that

we are to avoid being unproductive or lax in good deeds for those

in need, good works accomplished for the glory of our Savior.

Notice that good works are emphasized in Titus 1:16; 2:7,14;

3:1,8,14. The problem is that such are not often enough

emphasized in our lives as believers.

This book gives a balance between the need to refute false

teachers (1:10-16) and at the same time not to allow them to

waste one's time.

Look at the formulated creeds (or something very close to such)

in 2:11-14 and 3:4-7. This could be placed on a membership

application.

MOSHIACH'S LETTER THROUGH THE SHLIACH

SHA'UL TO PHILEMON

This letter was probably written fairly early in Rav Sha'ul's

first Roman imprisonment) probably C.E. 60-61, from the little

Roman house Brit Chadasha kehillah whose members he names in

23-24, some of whom shared his incarceration for a time. It was

delivered by Paul's co-worker Tychicus and Onesimus to Philemon

in Colossae in what is today modern Turkey. It concerns a slave

boy Onesimus, whose name means "useful" or "beneficial." See the

play on words in 10-11 below between onesimos (Onesimus,

"useful") and axrestos ("useless" here with the idea of

unreliable or unfaithful) and euxrestos ("useful") and in v. 20

onaimen ("benefit"). It is no accident that Shliach Sha'ul
commends the slave master Philemon for the love and faithfulness
(pistis) he has for the L-rd and for all his saints, since the
thieving, run-away slave Onesimus is now born-again and has
therefore just become one of the saints. This new turn of events
means that Philemon is now going to have to be put to the test to
see if he will be loving and faithful to this apprehended slave
who has wronged him but has now become his brother in the L-rd.

Every believer is undergoing a similar test of faithfulness to
the brethren. Heb. 10:25 says, "not neglecting to meet together,
as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the

more as you see the Day approaching." The question is, will you

and I be useful and beneficial and loving and faithful to one

another in our local assembly? Or will we neglect meeting

together? Or, worst of all, will we desert one another in time of

need (II Tim. 4:10) as, on the night of his betrayal, the

Shluchim all "neglected to meet together" and deserted our L-rd,

all of them committing the sin of Demus in II Tim. 4:10? It is

ironic that, although the slave Onesimus once deserted the

slavemaster Philemon, Philemon is now in danger of deserting his

duty to Onesimus as a brother in the L-rd, for the L-rd is

requiring something of Philemon--love and faithfulness to a

brother. Shliach Sha'ul models this for Philemon in v. 10-11. And

Philemon must pass the test. There is also irony in the list

given in vs. 23-24 of Rav Sha'ul's fellow-workers: Epaphras,

Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, since Demas will not pass the

test of faithfulness, but prove to be a devil as far as Rav

Sha'ul's tiny Roman house Brit Chadasha kehillah is concerned

(see II Tim. 4:10).

What the L-rd is requiring is that Philemon have the attitude of

Shliach Sha'ul toward Onesimus and not the attitude of an angry,

vengeance-seeking slave master. Philemon must understand that as

brothers in the L-rd we are bound to one another? and there is a

chain of love and commitment more unbreakable between us than the

bands of the institution of slavery. In this letter Shliach

Sha'ul points to the chains of love in Moshiach that hold

Onesimus, Philemon, and himself bound to one another (see v.

12). Onesimus may be a slave in the flesh but he is a brother in

the L-rd, and Shliach Sha'ul is appealing that Philemon not

punish the boy. Indeed, v. 21 ("knowing that you will do even

more than I ask") seems to be a veiled plea for Onesimus' release

from slavery and, by implication, even for the abolition of

slavery as a sub-Biblical institution. See also v.16, "receive

him back no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved

brother."

Shliach Sha'ul has, of course, already finished dealing with

Onesimus by the time Shliach Sha'ul pens this letter. Shliach

Sha'ul has led the boy to the L-rd (v.10)and has persuaded him to

stop living the life of a run-away slave and return to his master

Philemon. Now Shliach Sha'ul must deal with Philemon, from whose

household and house Brit Chadasha kehillah in Colossae (a city in

modern Turkey 110 miles east of Ephesus) Onesimus has run away.

The penalty for this (Onesimus also stole from Philemon) was

severe. The slave's forehead could be branded with a hot iron. If

he is returned, Philemon will have the power of life or death

over the boy. Therefore, Shliach Sha'ul has to remind Philemon

that Philemon owes Shliach Sha'ul his very life, since Shliach

Sha'ul was also responsible as the Shliach to the Gentiles for

not only bringing the Besuras Hageulah to the slave Onesimus (v.

10), but also for the reaching out to that general part of the

world, where the slave master Philemon himself lived and was

saved (see v.19).

When the path of the run-away slave crossed Rav Sha'ul's in Rome,

Rav Sha'ul not only led the boy to the L-rd, but also wrote this

letter to Philemon and sent back to Philemon both the boy and

Tychicus. Tychicus was an Ephesian who joined Shliach Sha'ul on

his final trip to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4-5) and was an associate

like Timothy and Titus. Tychicus was also the one who carried Rav

Sha'ul's letters to the Ephesians (Eph. 6:21-22), Colossians

(Col. 4:7-9), Philemon and possibly II Timothy (II Tim. 4:12) to

their destinations.

Rav Sha'ul's letter to Philemon is a perfect example of how G-d

rewards faith and unselfishness. How often in the ministry we

need to read it! How often a messianic minister is tempted to

operate without faith and according "to the natural" and keep a

staff person, who really belongs in the ministry of someone else.

Shliach Sha'ul could have done this. He could have said, "I won

this boy Onesimus to the L-rd; Philemon didn't win him to the

L-rd. Therefore, he belongs to my ministry, not Philemon's. And I

need him here in Rome more than Philemon needs him in his house

Brit Chadasha kehillah. I'll just insist on having things my way.

But Shliach Sha'ul knew that this was not the will of G-d. So he

did the right thing, though it was against his own best

interests. And look how G-d rewarded Shliach Sha'ul: the letter

has become part of the Holy Scriptures!

Notice how Shliach Sha'ul uses his authority with Philemon, not

like a religious overlord or slave master commanding obedience to

G-d, but gently, appealing for freely decided, totally voluntary

commitment to Moshiach Yehoshua, recognizing the equality of

brothers in the L-rd, even though Shliach Sha'ul does have

authority in his office which he could use (v.8). Shliach Sha'ul

is making his appeal with Philemon's wife (Apphia?) and Archippus

(exhorted as an emissary of Moshiach's shlichut) soldier" in Col

4:17 to fulfill the ministry calling G-d has given him and the

work unfinished he must complete) as witnesses. Rav Sha'ul's

appeal is to Philemon's noble duty as a believer and as a "slave"

of Moshiach Yehoshua Moshiach (see v. 13 where Rav Sha'ul says of

Onesimus, "I wanted to keep him with me so that he might be of

service to me in your place during my imprisonment for the

Besuras Hageulah").

Onesimus learned a valuable lesson too: once one becomes a

believer, and begins the walk of faith, there is no turning back.

One must make restitution and do the right thing, even if it is

risky. Apparently Onesimus was rewarded by G-d, too, because

reliable tradition seems to place him in the ministry and over

the Brit Chadasha kehillot in Ephesus at a later date.

Philemon had to learn a lesson, too. It is a hard lesson for many

believers to learn--how to be graciously charitable to others who

have sinned against you. Because this slave owner and his slave

learned through Moshiach Yehoshua how to be brothers, slavery was

doomed and could not carry on with its former strength. On this

matter of slavery and true brotherhood, there is no other

religious book in the world to compare with the Brit Chadasha.

MOSHIACH'S LETTER TO THE MA'AMINIM MESHICHI FROM

AMONG THE YEHUDIM

The author cannot be Shliach Sha'ul because of 2:3-4. However,

the letter probably has Rav Sha'ul's personal endorsement, and

that's why, since Shliach Sha'ul was martyred 65-68 C.E., the

best date for its composition is around 52-54 C.E. in Ephesus,

when Apollos may have written it to the Brit Chadasha kehillah

there and then sent a copy to Corinth (see Hugh Montefiore, The

Epistle to the Hebrews, Harper and Row, 1964).

Although assumptions are always risky, there are a number of

reasons for assuming that Apollos is the author of this

sermon-letter. Hebrews is a sermon, probably preached in Ephesus

initially to an Ephesian congregation, and then sent (with a

postscript sort of letter added as an appendix) probably to

Corinth (Heb. 13:19; cf. I Cor. 16:12) with greetings from Aquila

and Priscilla (Acts 18:2; Heb. 13:24; I Cor. 16:19). Compare Heb.

5:12 to I Cor. 3:2. Alexander the coppersmith was a Jewish man

who persecuted Shliach Sha'ul and caused him a great deal of

trouble in Ephesus (II Tim. 4:14-15), possibly causing Rav

Sha'ul's imprisonment there, referred to metaphorically in I Cor.

15:32 and also in II Cor. 1:8-10. It is possible that this same

Alexander is referred to in Acts 19:33f and that he is later (58

C.E.) also one of the "Jews from Asia" in Acts 21:27, in which

case he may have been one of the riotous ringleaders whose

trouble-making helped to convince the Ephesian idol-making

Gentiles and later the Jerusalem Jews that Jewish followers of

this "Moshiach" were no longer Jews and not to be afforded the

Roman protection of religious freedom (religiocita--see notes

on the book of Acts) reserved for Jews since the time of Julius

Caesar (c. 100-44 B.C.E.).

If all this was fermenting in Ephesus in the early C.E. 50's,

many of the Jews in the Ephesian congregation would be afraid of

both Alexander the Jew and the Ephesian lynch mob that had a

vested interest in the idol-making business (see Acts 19:23-41).

These Messianic Jews would need for Apollos to preach a message

to them like the one we find in Hebrews. If Apollos didn't write

Hebrews, it is hard to understand why he is given so much

attention in I Corinthians and especially in the book of Acts.

Luke deals mainly with major figures. Mark would certainly not

have been a major figure if he had not written one of the

versions of the Besuras Hageulah, nor does it seem that Apollos

would have been so important to mention in Acts if he hadn't

written Hebrews, especially since he does not figure that closely

as an of Rav Sha'ul in the Acts narrative. The fact that the

strong influence of Shliach Sha'ul is evident on Luke's writing

of the book of Acts makes Apollos' mention in the Acts narrative

an endorsement of him by Shluchim. See also I Cor.16:12,19; 1:12;

3:5,21-23 and remember that I Cor. is written from Ephesus where

Apollos is ministering with Shliach Sha'ul in the home of

Priscilla and Aquila (I Cor. 16:12,19). Keep in mind that at this

point Rav Sha'ul's past writings include only I and II

Thessalonians and possibly Galatians, so the author of the book

of Hebrews would certainly be exalted if his writing were

compared with Rav Sha'ul's, and that seems to be what is

happening with Apollos, who is put on the same level with Shliach

Kefa in the Corinthian congregation (I Cor. 1:12). All this makes

for weighty, even if circumstantial, evidence for the authorship

of Apollos.

If the Beis Hamikdash had already been destroyed by the Romans,

Hebrews 10:18 would have been the perfect place to infer it. The

present tense force of the verbs in 8:4 and 10:11 (the verb in

10:11 is in the perfect tense but has a present meaning) strongly

indicate that we are in a time period before 70 C.E. and the Beis

Hamikdash sacrifices are still in progress. The author seems to

use the verb tense to make a contemporary reference to Herod's

Beis Hamikdash, though his idealistic and Mosaic reference is to the Tabernacle of the wilderness.

Timothy has been in prison (13:23), and since Timothy is associated with the Brit Chadasha kehillah at Ephesus, and since the Beis Hamikdash seems to be still standing in Jerusalem (8:4), the date could be in the C.E. 50's, when Shliach Sha'ul and Timothy were apparently both in and out of prison in Ephesus (II Cor. 1:1-9) and certainly before 70 C.E., when the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed in Jerusalem. Because Acts could have been written as early as 63 C.E., and because Apollos gets such attention in Acts (more than most of the Shluchim), it is

probable that Hebrews was written before that time and amounts to

his "claim to fame" if we can use that expression in an

impersonal sense, for Hebrews is anonymous and the humble author

draws absolutely no attention to himself. Also, the fact that

even Shliach Sha'ul gives Apollos almost a shliach's dignity of

reference when he mentions his name in I Corinthians, written

about C.E. 55, may be an indication of the early date of this

letter.

Hebrews is a book that G-d seems to have made sure was included

in the Brit Chadasha for the sake of all those who have already

been in one faith, though they have been exposed to the true

Messianic Jewish faith in Yehoshua, are nevertheless tempted,

because of persecution or other pressure, to devalue and give up

their Messianic faith and go back to the easier and older

religious beliefs they once held. Don't do it! Don't do it! This

is the message of Hebrews.

The Ephesian hearers of Hebrews, if they are the sermon's initial

audience (before the sermon is sent as a letter to Corinth), are

in danger of "drifting away" (2:1). They are becoming

encumbered with a too high view of Moses and angels and the Kohen

Gadol in Jerusalem and the Beis Hamikdash levitical kohanim and

the blood of bulls and goats. The levitical kehunah was not

perfect (5:11)! The law made nothing perfect (7:19; 10:1)! Its

sacrifices could not perfect the conscience of the worshiper

(9:9)! The law is only a shadow of the good things to come and

not the true form of these realities (10:1; 11:39-40). But these

messianic Jews Apollos is preaching to are becoming entangled in

a too high view of the covenant made with Moses, forgetting that

a better covenant and a better kohen were promised, and that

"when the kohenhood is changed, of necessity there takes place a

change of law also" (7:13), meaning that the covenant with Moses

(together with its kohenhood and sacrifices) is obsolete as far

as Messianic personal salvation is concerned (8:13).

The people being exhorted have taken their eyes off of the

Moshiach cohen Yehoshua (12:2), and they have forgotten about

"the true tabernacle which the L-rd pitched in the heavens"

(8:1-2), where Yehoshua's kohenhood is greater than Aaron's

(7:1-28). They have grown sluggish, and their lack of diligence

in the things of G-d has hurt their assurance (6:11-12) and has

tempted them to throw away their confidence (10:35). They are

backslidden and "wavering in faith" (10:23) and have become

"dull of hearing" (4:11) and are unable to absorb the meat of the

Word and need to go back to the ABC's of the Besuras Hageulah and

relearn the fundamentals. One old lesson they need to relearn is

that looking with dead Jewish works of Torah toward a merely

earthly sanctuary will not make one alive in the living

G-d--6:1; 9:14. Their eyes are tempted to look to the earthly

Kohen Gadol as their authority and the earthly Jerusalem as their

lasting city (13:14). They are neglecting things like attendance

at the Messianic assemblies (10:25), giving (13:16), and

submission to their elders, whom their conduct is grieving

(13:17). They are standing between perfection (6:1) and apostasy

("falling away"--6:6) and are drifting back (2:1) toward the

brink of destruction. The author exhorts them, "let us go on

toward perfection" and points them toward the heavenly sanctuary

(9:11) and toward the Messiah Kohen Yehoshua, made perfect by

what he suffered in perfect obedience, made perfect as a kohen by

an indestructible life, and having made perfect by a single

sacrifice and for all time those who are sanctified. Only through

Him can we go with full assurance before the throne of grace

(4:16).

All this drifting back has made the back-sliders discouraged

(3:13). They are starting to lose confidence and assurance (3:14)

and hope (3:6) and are in danger of succumbing to an evil,

unbelieving, disobedient heart which would lead them to fall away

(3:12; 4:11) not only from the true Messianic movement but from

the living G-d who is a consuming fire (12:29; 10:31; 3:12). They

are in danger of "shrinking back" from the suffering of loss,

from the suffering of persecution, and from the suffering of

bearing the reproach of their confession of faith. They have

forgotten the lessons of perfecting that come as we learn

obedience not in the Torah's school of dead works (6:2; 7:19;

9:9; 10:1) but in the Moshiach's better tabernacle (9:11) and his

discipleship school of hard knocks (2:10; 5:8-9; 12:4-14). On

"dead works" in Heb. 6:1, see Mat. 15:3, 9 and Mat. 6:22-23. Even

G-d rested from His labors (4:10), the author is saying;

therefore, why don't these people "rest" from depending on "dead

works" and resolutely turn away from the old "works-righteous

Judaism" that had been their old faith and stay with Brit

Chadasha Messianic Judaism, which is the true faith. (Messianic

Faith is a post-Biblical term for transcultural Judaism.)

These people are not crying out to G-d in prayer (5:7) in the

midst of their testing nor are they reverently submissive (5:7).

They don't seem to understand that the Kohen Gadol "in charge"

(5:1) is not the current holder of Kohen Gadol Caiaphas' office

but Moshiach Yehoshua. And these people are on the verge of

rebellious against Moshiach Yehoshua just as Korah rebelled

against Aaron and Moses (see Num. 16). There is something truly

perilous about their spiritual condition: they have "become dull

in understanding" (5:11) and spiritually "sluggish" (6:12).

Notice how Deut. 4:9,25 is very much in view, where the people

are in danger of becoming complacent and letting the Word slip

from their mind. They are immature babes who are unskilled in the

word (5:12-14) and unskilled in distinguishing good from evil.

They have been in the teaching long enough to be teachers but

they are drifting toward evil, toward an obsolete covenant

(8:13). The author feels he must rehearse for them the lessons

found in Numbers and Deuteronomy, lest they also "not continue in

my covenant" (Jer. 8:9). Not only do they need to know about true

perfection (2:10; 5:9; 6:1; 7:11,19; 9:9,11; 10:1,14; 11:40;

12:23; 13:21) but they need to understand the nature of their

covenant faith lest they too perish in a wilderness of rebellion

(3:15), unbelief (3:19; 4:3), and disobedience (4:6,11). To

preach to them, the author sweeps through the entire Law and the prophets, summarizing covenant faith and the terms of salvation, lest anyone fail to attain it. His key Tanakh texts are passages such as Ps. 110, Ps. 95:7-11; Jer. 31:31-34; Ex. 25:40; and Messianic prophecies like Ps. 2. His primary thesis is that these people are in danger of neglecting the great salvation they have been offered (2:3) by giving up what is superior for what is inferior (1:4; 3:3) and by evoking G-d's covenant anger and curse. They need to wake up to the "wilderness test" they are currently undergoing, and (to use an idea found in the book of Numbers) they need to "step away from Korah" and make that

commitment without which there is no salvation, only the "fury of fire that will consume the adversaries" (10:27).

These backsliders, who are flirting with going back into

Caiaphas' Second Beis Hamikdash Judaism under the authority of

the current ruling High Kohen in Jerusalem (Ananias son of

Nebedeus C.E. 48-58), need to be reminded that if they keep

backsliding in that direction, they may reach a point of no

return (6:6) like the unbelieving apostates who hardened their

hearts against Moses and died in the wilderness (3:5-19) or like

immoral, G-dless Esau who forfeited salvation's privileges

(12:16-17). The author of Hebrews uses Exodus 25:40 and Ps. 110

and Jer. 31:31-34 to point to a "heavenly Jerusalem" (12:22) and

to a heavenly sanctuary and heavenly sprinkled blood "which

speaks better than the blood of Abel" (12:24). If these

backsliders revile and apostatize and spit the Lord's Supper out

of their mouths and go back into Caiaphas' Second Beis Hamikdash

Judiasm via their local Besuras Hageulah-rejecting synagogues

(that hold Yehoshua up to contempt--6:6), they will find there

that they have not joined the exclusive community of G-d but are

in fact excluded from such, forfeiting all rights and privileges

appertaining to salvation (13:10). Because they too have become

ashamed of Moshiach Yehoshua, He will become ashamed of them.

Caiaphas, of course, has been out of office since A.D. 36/37, but

his successors did not change his policies toward Messianic

believers, policies which rejected Yehoshua as Moshiach and as

the true way of Judaism's salvation.

These backsliders don't really know who Yehoshua is. He is far

superior to any angel or to Moses or anything or anyone in the

world. In fact, he is the Wisdom of G-d. Yehoshua is actually the

Wisdom G-d used when He created the world. Scientists who believe

in the Big Bang Theory of the origin of the universe believe that

the universe is expanding. Some believe the universe could

eventually stop expanding, turn on itself and collapse. Heb. 1:3

says that the Word of G-d (the Moshiach our Lord) is what is

preventing precisely that from happening for he upholds or

sustains (feron) the universe from collapsing.

Here the author seems to be combining Prov. 30:4 and Prov. 8:30

which together assert that the Wisdom of G-d is G-d's Son, and to

these (Heb. 1:2) the author quotes in Heb. 1:5 that the Moshiach

is the Son of G-d, using Ps. 2:7 as a prooftext. Therefore the

Moshiach is the creative Wisdom of the Father, the builder of

the house (Heb. 3:3). The substance is in Him, everything else is

a foreshadow, and nothing can compare with the Eternal One, the

Moshiach (Heb. 1:12). Moshiach Yehoshua is the Word G-d has

spoken to us, the last Word, the creative Word of G-d, who is His

light and His exact representation. His perfect copy and the one who holds the universe together (1:1-3). He is the Word who is G-d (1:1,2,5-14) not a mere angel or a merely human creature.

If the law brought swift punishment when it was rejected, do you think it a light thing for you if you backsliding drifters reject obedience to the Besuras Hageulah? (2:2-3). You had better stay in fellowship (10:25) under constant exhortation and preaching (3:13 says daily!) and not harden your heart in evil unbelief but rather build up your faith in the Word and in fellowship, because you will not be saved unless you keep your grasp on saving faith right to the end (3:14).

No secret sin is possible with the Word whose burning eyes see

everywhere, that is, the eyes of the One with whom we have to do.

Read 4:12-13.

What is better in this world than fellowship with Moshiach

Yehoshua in the Lord's body of believers? He experienced

everything that we have, yet without sin (4:15). So He is both

compassionate and able to make

intercession for you based on His better sacrifice and life

(7:24-25). Don't you understand that what you have in Him is

better than anything else that any man or woman can offer you?

Who else is the enfleshed sinless Word and eternal priest?

What other man did David ever call L-rd? See Psalm 110 and

Hebrews 5:1-10 and Genesis 14:17-20. The Moshiach's eternal

mediatorial role was known to Abraham and to King David-- why

don't you know it?

In

ch. 6 the author explains his purpose. Those who apostatize after

knowing the truth cannot be renewed a second time. See also

Hebrews 10:26-31 and 3:12. It seems the would-be apostates who

are tempted to join Alexander the coppersmith (II Tim. 4:14; Acts

19:33-34) are being warned. It seems that those who are tempted

to drift back with the persecutors of the Ephesian congregation,

that is, the persecutors from the local Gentile idol-making

industry as well as some from the local synagogue (see Acts 19:9,

23-41)--it seems the book of Hebrews is a solemn warning to these

drifters: do so and burn in hell forever with them!

Then in Hebrews 10:32 the author reminds them of what it has cost

them already to believe. Will they throw all that away and betray

themselves now? Apollos has been in touch with believers both in

Corinth and Ephesus for some time. Those in Ephesus have seen

Shliach Sha'ul and even Timothy (II Cor. 1:11-10) go to prison.

(Heb. 13:23 could refer to this).

In ch. 11 the author is saying with illustrations that build one

on top of the other: "You people flirting with apostasy and with

going back to old religious beliefs, have faith (which is the

assurance of not something yet seen but something hoped for) 'Get

tough and don't draw back--be like the real heroes unequivocally

referred to in the Bible and not like the heroes of men and mere

human tradition! Without the faith of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham,

Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Yosef, Moses, and Rahab it is impossible to

please G-d.

In ch. 12 he says, in effect: "Count the cost!" Suffering is part

of your training! Share the rejection and degradation of Moshiach

Yehoshua (13:13)!

In ch. 13 he says, in effect: "Don't let yourself be led astray

with all kinds of doctrines about food laws, etc." We have a

better way to salvation that none of those people trusting in an

obsolete covenant and rejecting Moshiach Yehoshua have a right to

share in."

Don't you understand that Yehoshua is the perfect mediatorial

Word who is at the same time the perfect sacrifice offering?

Don't you realize that no other man or mediator has an

indestructible life able to destroy death and bring immortality

to light? Can you not see the higher life of Yehoshua that

Melchizedek's life was a type of? Read ch. 7. Yehoshua is the

perfect Word who was made perfect through suffering, even as, in

fellowship with his sufferings, we are made perfect in him.

Don't you understand that there is no other assurance of salvation, no better covenant assurance anywhere than in Yehoshua? He mediates a greater covenant to us than any other covenant before him. Any worship, any pilgrimage to a house of G-d or a sanctuary, any covenant outside of him or any other revelation mediated except through him is passing away. Only what is true to him will last, for he is G-d's Word. Only he destroyed the death that tried to annihilate him, the death that does in fact destroy everything outside of him.

Look at ch. 6:1; 9:14. This verse shows that mere religion and ritual and legalistic good works are dead in themselves and cannot bring spiritually dead religionists to life. Such mere

memorized prayers and washings and bowings cannot purify the

defiled soul that is religious but still without life in the

Spirit of G-d, without regeneration in the living knowledge of

G-d.

In chapter 9, the author seems to be saying, "Don't you realize

what the death of the Word of G-d means? Everyone knows that a

will cannot go into effect without the death of the one who made

it. Therefore the Word had to die to put His promises into effect

for us who inherit them." (See 1:14; 6:12,17; 9:15; 11:8-9;

12:16-17.) The people can remain faithful and keep moving toward

their heavenly inheritance like Abraham or they can fall back and

lose their inheritance like that apostate Esau; it is their

choice.

Through Moses and the prophets, the Word of G-d pointed out man's

separation from the life of G-d and man's sin not just in what

man does but in what he is, a rebellious G-d-alienated and

Satanically blinded being headed for death (2:14). But, then,

this same Word of G-d, who left His imprint on the Scriptures,

appeared once for all in a real body like ours to offer a perfect

sacrifice to take man out of the bondage of human alienation and

death. How did the Word of G-d accomplish this? By paying an

infinite price with his infinite life poured out for our guilty

offenses against G-d and by rising from death to live in our

hearts and make us alive by faith. Any Word that lacks testimony

to his blood is no true gospel. Read ch. 10.

A disciple is a learner with a teacher. He should be a member of

a congregation faithful in G-d's house and Biblically submitted

to G-d by means of tevilah and accountability to the body and its

elders (13:17). Whoever is not faithfully planted in a kehillah

where G-d has placed him is backslidden, and some in this

condition may even be apostate or lost (10:25-29).

MOSHIACH'S LETTER THROUGH THE SHLIACH YA'AKOV TO

THE BRIT CHADASHA KEHILLAH

Like Shliach Sha'ul, Ya'akov did not believe that Yehoshua was the Moshiach until Yehoshua rose from the dead and appeared to him personally, calling him to be a Shliach (I Cor. 15:7; Mark 6:3; Yochanan 7:5). Ya'akov "the Just," as he was called, was one of the children born naturally to Miryam through Yosef after the virgin gave birth to Moshiach Yehoshua. Reliable tradition says that Ya'akov was stoned to death in Jerusalem when Ananias, the newly appointed Jewish Kohen Gadol, apparently was so envious and

felt so threatened by the vast authority of Ya'akov (whose high

position as a leader of the Israel of G-d rivalled that of

Ananias in the eyes of those Jewish people coming to faith in the

Moshiach) that the Kohen Gadol convened the Sanhedrin or Jewish

Supreme Court and brought Ya'akov before it on charges that led

to his death in C.E. 62 (near the time Shliach Sha'ul was writing

his prison epistles). This means that by the time Acts is

written, Ya'akov is already a martyr.

It is possible that Ya'akov is the first Brit Chadasha book

published. C.E. 45 is a possible date for the writing of Ya'akov

(the letter doesn't seem aware of the reception of the Gentiles

by act of the Jerusalem Council, a burning issue after C.E. 50).

Two prominent leaders have already been martyred, Stephen and the

brother of Yochanan the Shliach, whose name was also Ya'akov (see

Acts 7:59-60 and 12:1-2). The Jewish believers in Jerusalem are

greatly impoverished by persecution and tribulation caused by

ostracism from employment and harassment by the wealthy Jewish

religious establishment, who had apparently tried to make it

impossible for them to live in Jerusalem. In the early days of

this Messianic Jewish community, many of the believers had given

away everything they owned for the cause of the L-rd's work (Acts

4:32-37). However, a famine had recently struck them (see Acts

11:27-29) and added greatly to their suffering for the sake of

the Besuras Hageulah. These early believers, then, were the

"tribulation poor;" that is, those made poor by economic

sanctions under an Anti-Moshiach type of government as opposed to

the "slipshod poor" Shliach Sha'ul chastises in his epistles to

the Brit Chadasha kehillah at Thessalonica.

A law-abiding loyal Jew of the synagogue, whose teaching is

grounded in the authority of his L-rd and Moshiach Yehoshu,

Ya'akov saw that the self-imposed poverty of the Moshiach had

made all the more pernicious the exclusivistic snobbery of the

rich (Ya'akov 2:1-9)

The new communities of believers springing up in Syrian Antioch

and elsewhere would give Ya'akov a reason to send his sermon on to them in written form.

One of the items that affects the dating of Ya'akov is the interpretation of Ya'akov 2:14-26. Is Ya'akov polemicizing against a garbled and misunderstood Rav Sha'ulinism (some such garbled Rav Sha'ulinism as is in Romans 3:8)? That is, is he not attacking Rav Sha'ul but a false teaching preached by others who slanderously attribute their doctrine to Shliach Sha'ul? Or is there a real doctrinal disagreement between Shliach Sha'ul and Ya'akov, with Galatians something of a reaction to the epistle of Ya'akov, both letters being published before the Jerusalem

Council of C.E. 49/50? The former rather than the latter option

seems to be true, as will become clear.

There are at least two crucial passages to interpret in the book

of Ya'akov. What does Ya'akov mean by "the perfect law of

freedom" (1:25; 2:13)? The other crux interpretum (difficult

passage in a text) is Ya'akov 2:24 and whether this is a

contradiction of Rom. 3:28-29; Gal. 2:16; Titus 3:5.

To answer the first question, we must ask whether Ya'akov means

by "the perfect law of freedom" what Shliach Sha'ul means by "the

torah of Moshiach" in Gal. 6:2 and I Cor. 9:21. In the royal

(Messianic) law of love (Ya'akov 2:8; Mark 12:29-31; Deut. 6:4-5;

Lev. 19:18), the "old commandment" of the Law of Moses, esp. the

Ten Commandments, is divinely confirmed by Moshiach Yehoshua

(Mark 10:17-22). It becomes a "new commandment" which, Yochanan

says (I Yochanan 5:7-8), "is true in Him and in you. "With the

life and teaching of the Moshiach as not only the Torah's

fulfillment but also as its interpretative key, the Law of Moses

becomes in Moshiach Yehoshua "the perfect, complete, fully

developed (teleios) law of freedom," the Law of Moshiach (1:25).

The Messianic Jews preached to by Ya'akov have more than the Ten

Commandments; they have the Sermon on the Mount interpretation of

these commandments, making the Torah the law of freedom (see

Matt. 5:21-22, 27 etc). That is, these laws are taught in light of the Moshiach's new humanity and the Father's true intention toward humanity from the beginning, revealed in the Brit Chadasha by the Ruach Hakodesh.

Now to return to the question of a contradiction between Ya'akov and Shliach Sha'ul. First of all, Ya'akov wrote his letter before Rav Sha'ul's letters, in fact before C.E. 49. Secondly, Ya'akov is not dealing with the issue of Gentiles entering the Messianic Jewish community; neither is Ya'akov dealing with the issue of Gentiles keeping works of the law in order to enter the Messianic Jewish faith. Rather, Ya'akov is talking about works of faith (see Ya'akov 2:21-26; I Thes. 1:3). Furthermore, Ya'akov is

dealing with Jews (1:1; 2:2,19) who claim to follow the Moshiach

but think they can do so by mere verbal, intellectual assent.

These Jewish people want to define the Messianic faith in such a

way that they need not feed the hungry or visit the oppressed or

actualize their faith by any good deeds whatsoever. They believe

in passive quietism and dead orthodoxy and empty confessionism.

Ya'akov says this is no more true saving faith than that which is

possessed by demons (2:19). Just as there is a demonic wisdom

(3:15), so there is a demonic faith, mere quietistic

head-nodding, a loveless parody of true faith, an impotent

pseudo-trust that refuses to come truly alive and get active and

go to work (2:20). This is not an outstanding problem that

Shliach Sha'ul focuses on in his letters and therefore there is

no disagreement in the writings of Shliach Sha'ul and Ya'akov.

Ya'akov does not advocate salvation by works of the law. On the

contrary, he says that the law exposes men as transgressors.

There is agreement between Gal. 5:3 and Ya'akov 2:10 in the

"all-or-nothing" demand of the law as the law acts as G-d's

prosecutor of mankind, indicting Man as a transgressor. Only in

Moshiach Yehoshua can it be said of the Law that mercy triumphs

over judgment (2:12-13).

There can be no doubt that Ya'akov preaches the same Besuras

Hageulah as Shliach Sha'ul, for in Ya'akov 1:21, Ya'akov speaks

of the implanted word that is able to save your soul, a reference

to the Brit Chadasha Torah implant of Jeremiah 31:33. Ya'akov's

allusion to the law of Lev. 19:18 as the "kingly law" must

include a reference to the King Moshiach, which for Ya'akov is

Yehoshua (Jas. 1:1).

Like Shliach Sha'ul, Ya'akov knows that saving faith is not empty

lip service or dead orthodoxy or confessionalism or quietism

devoid of concrete acts of obedience but is active in love (see

Ya'akov 2:14 and Gal. 5:6). Both Ya'akov and Shliach Sha'ul gain

a hearing from unbelievers by displaying the fruit of the Spirit

(see Ya'akov 3:17-18 and Gal. 5:22-25), though Ya'akov and

Shliach Sha'ul used different cultural strategies, Shliach Sha'ul putting himself outside the law though not outside the law of the Moshiach to win Gentiles, Ya'akov putting himself as if he were under the law to win law-observant Jews (I Cor. 9:19-23; Acts 21:20)!, though in fact he is under the kingly law of love (Ya'akov 2:8). Shliach Sha'ul would not dispute Ya'akov that we are set right with G-d and forgiven and considered just and righteous by works and not by faith alone (see Rom. 2:13 and Ya'akov 2:21) unless it can be shown that Ya'akov means by "works" not "faith active in love" (Gal 5:6) but meritorious works of the law--that is, works meritorious and salvific in

themselves, apart from the death of Moshiach. For the latter to be true, Acts 15:19 would have to be judged a Lucan fiction since here Ya'akov is represented as acceding to Gentile liberation from the full yoke of the Torah, which obviously then is not necessary for salvation. Both Shliach Sha'ul and Ya'akov refer to the "work of faith," however. Compare (I Thes. 1:3) and (Ya'akov 2:18).

Neither Shliach Sha'ul nor Ya'akov minimize the saving death of Moshiach by offering the law in itself as a means to salvation (Ya'akov 2:10; Gal. 3:10). Both men speak of the "torah of freedom" (Ya'akov 1:25; 2:12; I Cor. 9:21) in a way that implies

the Moshiach (Ya'akov 2:1; Rom. 8:2), and Ya'akov, no less than Rav Sha'ul, emphasizes the need for faith (Ya'akov 1:3.6; 5:15), for love toward G-d (Ya'akov 1:12), and being born again (Ya'akov 1:21).

Ya'akov begins his letter by exhorting the messianic Jewish brethren in the various "synagogues" (Ya'akov2:2) scattered abroad to remain joyful in their sufferings. Why? Because a mere intellectual faith (one that is not active in works of love) will not save them, nor will it endure (Ya'akov 2:14-26; 5:7-11). It is untested and based on an evil-minded self-confidence such as that shared by the rich (4:13-17), whose worldly, double-minded greed is dragging them down to hell (5:1-6). Mere intellectual

faith is nothing more than evil-tongued lip service (2:26;

3:1-12) based on mere worldly wisdom (3:13-18) and indicates

worldly class values imported into the Messianic community

(2:1-13) which violate the commands of the Torah (and therefore

the whole Torah --2:10-13). For the commands of the Torah favor

the widow, the orphan, the foreigner, the Levite, and the

righteous-but-oppressed (by the rich) poor. Will this kind of

faith save you? No!

True emunah (faith) must be tested by the fruit of its loving

works and by endurance in the midst of suffering as it is

nourished through prayer by divine wisdom and through submission

to G-d and His Word, and through the strengthening and healing of

fellowship accountable to the body and its elders (see 1:5-8;
3:13-18; 5:13-20). This means resisting the Devil (4:7) and the
evil impulse (1:14) yetzer ha-rah, that worldly desire within us
which, if not put to death, can lead to bitterness toward G-d
(1:13) and death (1:15).

There is no wavering in G-d! The wavering is in us, in our
succumbing to wrong desires, and in our tendency in religion
toward empty confessionalism and prideful class discrimination.

True faith serves the needy (1:27) instead of one's own greed for
a better life (soon gone, anyway, like a mist), since the Lord's
coming (as Judge!) is so close, he is at the very door.

Biblical criticism (although textual criticism is indispensable)

is largely condemned by Ya'akov 4:11, since in Biblical criticism

scholars make it their business to judge the Word rather than be

judged by it. In these introductory notes, we will not be

stressing novel theories of authorship, editorial hands,

proposed errors, etc. The Word judges us, and not vice versa.

Ya'akov 5:17 gives us the length of Elijah's tribulation which is

a paradigm or model in Revelation for the length of the Great

Tribulation. Since Elijah is raptured after this period, we

should hesitate when people dogmatically assert that the rapture

will precede the three and a half year period of the Great

Tribulation.

The more you read this epistle or letter, the more you get the

picture of the poverty and persecution of early Messianic

Judaism, which was Jewish through and through and, with a fervent

love for the Torah, lacked the antinomian libertinism so

prevalent in Gentile circles outside of Jerusalem. The close

association with the themes of Matthew leads us to see both

Matthew and Ya'akov as early and Jewish writings radiating from

Jerusalem, though it is also possible Matthew wrote his Besuras

Hageulah from Syrian Antioch.

Ya'akov attacks the evil delusion of trusting in or boasting in

riches (1:10-11) and irreligiously not bridling the tongue (1:26; 3:2-6), but instead being too quick to speak (1:19) and too quick also to try to seize the status of teacher (Jam. 3:1; Matt. 23:8). Ya'akov also exposes unsanctified believers (4:8) and others who are double-mindedly faithless and untrustworthily double-tongued. Only the new birth (1:18) issuing in real sanctification (1:27) can tame the wildly evil tongue of the old nature (3:7-12). G-d is looking for a meekness from us (1:21; 3:13) which, leading to regeneration/spiritual conversion, is the only antidote against the poisonous tongue (3:8) of bitter jealousy and selfishness (3:14) and boasting and lying. Proud believers with unbridled tongues who are worldly and carnal get

jealous of each other and fight each other with murderous hatred

(4:1-6).

Do not speak against one another, brothers (4:11). Do not murmur

against one another (5:9) lest you be judged. Do not judge your

neighbor (4:12) or take G-d's prerogative (4:12). Do not be so

presumptuous (4:12-17).

True faith must be tested in trials and temptations to sin

(1:2-3), but G-d tempts no one to sin; rather each person is

tempted to sin by his own lusts (1:13-15). True faith must "work"

and produce endurance under trial (1:3-4; see also 2:14-18). True

faith must work through acts of love (2:14-18; Gal. 5:6). The

anger of man is not faith and does not "work" or produce the righteousness of G-d. One cannot really "do" the Word unless one has received the "implanted word" of the gospel (1:21-22) in the new birth--1:18. True faith works by showing real love to all.

That is, true faith must abhor showing partiality (2:9) and favoritism toward the rich and against the poor, remembering the persecutions and blasphemies of the wicked rich (2:6-7) and their ironic poverty (1:10-11) as well as their ultimate eternally impoverished destiny (5:1-6). True faith works by going after the wandering sheep drifting off toward sin (5:19-20). True faith must be the basis of all prayer petitions for wisdom (1:6).

True faith must be in the immutability of G-d (His

changelessness) who gives all good gifts (1:16-17), including the

gift of true wisdom (3:15-18) and the gift of the new birth

(1:18,21; see also Eph. 1:5; Rom.12:2; I Cor. 4:15; Tit.3:5; I

Shimon Kefa 1:3,23; Yochanan 1:13; 3:3-8; I Yochanan 3:9; 4:10).

True faith must "work" in visitation ministry and "rescue work"

for the poor and helpless. Religion and religious faith is

worthless (2:14) if it does not issue in sanctification (see

1:27). The prayer of true faith will deliver the sick person

(5:15).

What is the source of joy in Ya'akov? See 1:1,2,12 in the Greek,

remembering chairein means not just "greetings" but "be glad!"

Ya'akov exhorts to be patient until the coming of the L-rd

(5:7-8), remembering the out come of the patient endurance of Job

and the prophets (5:10-11).

Ya'akov, an explemplary Jew, nevertheless found it necessary to

"come out from among" (II Cor.6:17) the rich, corrupt Jewish

religious establishment of his day. Today, many modern Greeks,

even though they are exemplary Greeks, may find it necessary to

"come out from among" the Greek Orthodox Church. Many Greek

Orthodox adherents ask departed saints to pray for them and they

in turn pray for the departed saints. They actually pray for the

dead. Miryam is venerated and preached and prayed to as Theotokos

(Mother of G-d), Aeiparthenos (Ever-Virgin), and Panayia

(All-Holy) and the Roman Catholic unbiblical dogma of her bodily

assumption to heaven is also believed by the Greek Orthodox. The

saints are venerated through icons. Infants are baptized and

baptism is seen as some sort of regeneration, giving the

impression to many adults who were baptized as infants that they

are reborn when in fact many are not. One cannot be in good

standing with this community unless it has blessed one's

marriage, so right here is its powerful hold over the whole

modern Greek society. Women cannot be ordained. The Bible is

said to be a record of the truth but not truth itself, and the

Greek Orthodox stand against Pentecostals and puts its own

traditions and its own "apostolic succession" and "authoritative"

interpretations and clerical offices above historical-grammatical

exegesis and adherence to sola Scriptura.

Notice that the trials Ya'akov refers to may be those caused by

Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12). In any event these trials require

patience (5:7-11) and meditation on the divine purpose of trials

(1:1-4,12). Ironically, it is the rich who are engaged in this

persecution of the brethren and blaspheming of the Lord's Name

(see 2:6-7). No wonder the brethren are rebuked by Ya'akov for

their sychophantic attitude toward the rich and their love of

filthy lucre (see 4:13-5:6; 2:1-13). Ya'akov will not tolerate

either their partiality or their argumentative nature or their

hypocritical workless faith (3:1-18; 1:22-27; 2:14-26).

MOSHIACH'S LETTER THROUGH THE SHLIACH SHIMON KEFA

TO THE BRIT CHADASHA KEHILLAH(I)

I Shliach Kefa was probably written around C.E. 64 in Rome

(referred to by the "underground" euphemism of "Babylon" in

5:13), near the time when Shliach Kefa was probably martyred in

Nero's pogrom.

According to the generally accepted reconstruction of events, Shliach Sha'ul would not have been in Rome at this time, not arriving back for his second imprisonment probably until the next year or so, when he too, according to reliable tradition, would be martyred. Mark, the author of Shliach Kefa's Besuras Hageulah (which bears Mark's name) and Silas, Rav Sha'ul's one-time fellow emissary of Moshiach's shlichut, are now with Shliach Kefa.

The occasion which prompts the writing of the letter is the widespread persecution presaged by the author (see 4:12). Shliach Kefa is writing, with the capable help of Silas his secretary, to the believers in the four Roman provinces which occupy the land

known today as modern Turkey. It seems the believers everywhere were being libelled because they refused to join the pagans in heathen debauchery(4:4). Shliach Kefa warns those in attendance in the various Messianic congregations to make sure these pagan libels are groundless and therefore that their suffering will prove they have broken with the domination of sin (4:1), and having fought that good fight, are worthy of the good pleasure of G-d.

One of the obscure teachings in this letter is found in 3:19.

Since there is no second chance to repent after death but only judgment to face, 3:19 should be correctly interpreted so that it

does not contradict Heb. 9:27. It is likely that the "spirits in
prison" are all those to whom the Word (once dead but now alive)
was preached even at the time of Noah and are now in death's
prison. The water of Noah's flood is a type of Moshiach's tevilah
and salvation coming by means of the Techiyas HaMesim of Yehoshua
the Moshiach and the victory of his ascension to manifest
authority over all spirits everywhere. Ch. 4:6, on the other
hand, probably refers to those who heard the word and afterwards
died in the L-rd, so that, even though they have been judged in
the flesh (they did die), they are alive in the spirit in the
L-rd. Ch. 3:19 is a passage referred to in the Apostle's Creed,
which states that Moshiach Yehoshua descended into hell, so that

the Besuras Hageulah has already been preached among the dead as

well as the living. There is, however, no idea of a second chance

after death involved in this teaching about the Besuras Hageulah;

only the teaching of its sovereign ubiquity.

Notice, the text says that for those who are truly raised in

their spirits by faith in the Techiyas HaMesim of Moshiach

Yehoshua, their tevilah is their "answer" of teshuva to G-d's

Besuras Hageulah and it brings with it a good conscience. In I

Timothy Shliach Sha'ul spends a great deal of time emphasizing

the need to keep a good conscience (1:5,19; 3:9; 4:2). This

entails a transparent life before G-d and the brethren. However,

here in 3:19 Shliach Kefa also says that a good conscience is

given as a pledge to those who in faith obey the L-rd in

Moshiach's tevilah.

Believers need to read I Shliach Kefa often enough to remind

themselves of who they are: "elect strangers" and "aliens" in the

world (1:1; 2:11) as well as a "chosen race" (2:9), a "royal

kohenhood" (which infers the ministry to which all believers are

called, laity and clergy alike), a "consecrated nation or people"

set apart for G-d. Does this mean that only professional

outreach ministers are to look for opportunities to proclaim the

excellencies of our L-rd the Moshiach and that witness is not the

duty of all believers? See 2:9-10.

By applying Tanakh names generally reserved for Israel to Brit

Chadasha Scriptures believers, Shliach Kefa imparts a sense of

identity in continuity with the covenanted people of G-d of old,

and, more than that, a sense of destiny which every child and

every adult needs in order to have courage and perseverance in a

dangerous world, a world where ridicule and slander can lead to

the loss of everything and even martyrdom without warning. The

parent who spends time imparting to the child this sense of

identity and destiny in the L-rd will be repaid later on, and,

negatively, so may the parent who neglects this duty.

Notice the personal decision of those predestined to destruction

is involved and not a mere secret decision of G-d before time

began. Ch. 2:8 describes this personal decision: "they stumble

because they are disobedient to the word."

On the other hand, 2:11-25 describes a submissive quality of

purity without rancor as characteristic of those who are born

again (1:3). Citizens to government, servants to masters, spouses

to their mates--all manifest this G-dly submissiveness. On the

other hand, G-d alone is to be feared (2:17), Satan is to be

resisted (5:8-9), and Acts 5:29 is an important commentary on I

Shimon Kefa 2:11-3:7.

Though evil men did put Moshiach Yehoshua to death, G-d brought

him to life in the spirit. Those who truly believe that about

Moshiach Yehoshua can believe that about themselves and not fear

their persecution, who are in infinitely more danger than those

they persecute. Shliach Kefa calls all believers to realize that

suffering may befall them (3:17), that it is through suffering

that their faith is tested and found to be real (1:7), and that,

though many false teachers today teach otherwise, suffering to

get the Besuras Hageulah out to a dangerous Besuras

Hageulah-rejecting world is no small part of their vocation as

believers (see 4:12-13), for such tribulation is to be expected

as the lot of a believer (4:12). The Lord's people are not immune

from tribulation and suffering and distress; in fact, it begins with them (4:17). To face this suffering, our hope is placed in one thing: read 1:13 to see what it is.

A holy abstinence from former lusts (1:13-16), a fear of G-d permeating all conduct (1:17-21), and a pure and fervent love of the brethren from the heart (1:22) are all part of the next world's counterforce with which the reborn face this world's sufferings. Notice, in all this that befalls you, both good and bad, you are protected (1:5). If you really are a believer and in fact doing the work of witness believers are called to do, you really will suffer in an increasingly wicked society that will hate ever more bitterly the Name you stand for (4:14,16,19).

However, the promise of 5:10 should be enough for us.

Shliach Kefa concludes with a word to elders and leaders in the

Lord's house. Money-mindedness is not to characterize the

servant of G-d. We are not climbing some kind of economic ladder

in the Lord's vocation (5:2) and we are not to be overlords of

the flock, pressuring them to obey our dictates (5:3). This last

verse says we are to set examples for them, but the flock must

follow freely. Mutual humility among brethren will shield us all

from the L-rd's opposition (5:5). Look at the wonderful promise

to those who take the harder humble road (5:6). Ch. 5:7 tells you

what the real focus of your prayer life needs to be.

The word zao (to live) is very important in I Shliach Kefa

(1:3,33; 2:4,5,24; 4:5). Shliach Kefa writes like an awe-struck

zoologist observing a wonderful new-born colony of living beings

multiplying all over the world, regenerated to a living hope

(1:3) from the living Word of G-d (1:23), who is the living Stone

(2:4) and who makes us living stones of a spiritual Beis

Hamikdash (2:5) so that we might live to righteousness (2:24)

before the One who will judge the living and the dead (4:5).

Here is a phrase we can preach: (1:3). This idea of being

regenerated by G-d or reborn is repeated in 1:23 and 2:2. This

teaching is also found in Yochanan 3:3. Shliach Sha'ul refers to

the new birth as being saved (Titus 3:5). Ya'akov 1:13 also

refers to this idea. This is a Jewish idea, as it says in the

Babylonian Talmud, Yebamoth 22a, One who has become a proselyte

is like a child newly born.

A key idea for reborn people in I Shliach Kefa is upakoe,

obedience. 1:2 says that G-d's foreknowledge of us results in our

upakoen, obedience (1:2). We are to be tekna upakoes children of

obedience (1:14) not conforming ourselves to the passions of our

former ignorance but instead living holy lives with holy conduct

Anastrofe (1:15,18; 2:12; 3:1) like the Holy One who called us

(1:15). This means we must live in reverent fear (1:17) of our

impartial Judge, purifying our souls by the obedience to the

truth resulting in unhypocritical brotherly love (1:22). This

means that wherever there is lovelessness in the Lord's Body

there is disobedience and hearts that are impure (1:22)!

According to 2:1-2, this obedience is very specific: new-born

babes are obedient children who put away all dolos (deceit,

cunning, treachery, guile), all hupokrisis (hypocrisy, pretense,

outward show), all fthonos (envy, jealousy), and all katalalia

(evil speech, slander, defamation). These things are part of the

darkness out of which we have been called (2:9). To put these

things to death is part of our "acceptable sacrifices" as

obedient kohanim or ministers of G-d (2:5). Disobedient

unbelievers (2:7-8,20; 3:1,20) do not enter the spiritual Beis

Hamikdash we are building but instead stumble over the

Cornerstone we must obey (2:7-8). This obedience is

comprehensive: because of the L-rd, we must submit to

government (2:13). In this we are not slaves of men but free

because we are Theos doulos, G-d's slaves (2:16). However,

submission in the L-rd to employers (2:18) is commendable (2:20),

even if they are harsh, and even if submission to them entails

unjust suffering for us (2:18-19). This is the upogrammos (model,

pattern) the Moshiach gave us to follow. In I Cor. 9:19, Shliach

Sha'ul says, "Though I am free with respect to all men, I made

myself as slave to all men so that I may win more of them." In Phil. 2:5-13, Shliach Sha'ul exhorts believers to have this same kind of free and willing "slave" mentality that Moshiach Yehoshua had. Nietzsche (German philosopher 1844-1900) would misunderstand this slave morality as herd morality (Herren-Moral), whereas he glorified Herren-Moral (the morality of slavemasters). According to I Shimon Kefa 2:25, obedience to G-d is part of the radical turn-around of repentance. Wives must be obedient to their husbands (3:1-6) to win over such men who are disobedient to the Word. Obedience is involved in the clothes we put on and the way we dress and groom ourselves (3:3) and in our attitudes (3:4). A by-product of this obedience is lack of

fear of intimidation, which comes from the L-rd (3:6), and having

G-d's "ears open to our prayers (3:7,12). Obedience means

"seeking peace (3:11). Messianic ministry itself is willing

obedience, not under compulsion (5:2) and not by lording it over"

those to whom we minister (5:3).

Submission in G-d's house to spiritual "elders" is commanded also

(5:5). Compare presbuteros in 5:1 and 5:5. Even anxiety and worry

must be submitted to the L-rd (5:7). Satan is the one we cannot

submit to, the devil is the one we must oppose (5:8).

The Second Coming is never far from Shliach Kefa's view. It is

called the emera episkopus the Day of Visitation (2:12). It is

called the apokaluyei Iesou Xristou (1:7) the Revelation of

Moshiach Yehoshua.

MOSHIACH'S LETTER THROUGH THE SHLIACH SHIMON
KEFA TO THE BRIT CHADASHA KEHILLAH (II)

Since Shliach Kefa was martyred under Nero, and Nero died in C.E.

68, this letter was probably written between A.D. 65-68, for it

mentions I Shliach Kefa which must have been written C.E. 64-68.

The notes on Yehuda should be read prior to reading these notes.

Those who flatly deny that Shliach Kefa could have written this

letter of fervarious spurious objections. For example, it is

asserted that Shliach Kefa would never quote a lesser figure like

Yehuda, as some argue II Shliach Kefa 2 does in its supposed

dependence on almost the whole letter of Yehuda. This kind of

argument is that of a modern scholar reading his own scholarly

conventions and attitudes back into the first century. If Shliach

Kefa were convinced that the Spirit of the Risen Moshiach

Yehoshua were speaking in Yehuda, why should the humble fisherman

refuse to quote the Spirit of the Risen Moshiach Yehoshua?

Certainly Shliach Kefa knew that, though it was his own sermons

and testimony that comprised the Besuras Hageulah of Mark (which

Matthew and Luke quote extensively in their Besuras Hageulahs),

no one was quoting him per se but the Ruach Hakodesh who authored

this material through him. Therefore, if the Shliach Matthew

quoted the non-apostle Mark, why could not the Shliach Shliach

Kefa quote Yehuda? If

Shliach Kefa used a secretary (Silas) to make sure his Greek were

polished in I Shliach Kefa but did not have the same

secretary when he wrote II Shliach Kefa, this would account for

any stylistic differences between the two letters. It does not

take any creativity to envision a situation around C.E. 64, when

Shliach Kefa's life was nearly over in Nero's pogrom, and,

possibly with Yehuda's circular letter before him (yet Yehuda and

II Shliach Kefa ch. 2 may not be as dependent on each other as

many believe, and both may be quoting from a common source) and

the horror of this antinomian heresy weighing on his thoughts,

that Shliach Kefa decided to add the weight of his own authority

against the immoral plague that Yehuda is attacking. (On the

other hand, it is also possible that Yehuda is quoting Shliach

Kefa.) Furthermore, it would seem strange if Shliach Kefa had not

read and collected at least a few of Rav Sha'ul's major epistles

by this date, so 3:15 poses no threat to Petrine authorship.

Michael Greene adequately documents the early attestation that II

Shliach Kefa is a genuine letter of the Shliach.

Shliach Kefa condemns the antinomian false teachers for enticing

new and immature believers "who are just escaping from those who live in error" (2:18). Ch. 1:4 describes this escape as from the slavery of the domination of the evil desires of this depraved world. The one who is in union with G-d and has received the new birth from His Ruach Hakodesh has a new nature, one with glory and immortality like the divine life of G-d (see 1:4). These false teachers who promise "freedom" from the constraints of the moral law are in fact slaves of the corruption of this decaying and condemned creation (2:19) which will be ignited by fire and destroyed in the end (3:10). These corrupt religious people, lacking the holiness that grows with a genuine new birth, are doomed to the same destructive fire (2:9-10) as the rest of the

depraved world.

Notice that mere profession of the new life of holiness in the

Moshiach is not enough for salvation (2:20). The new life of

Moshiach Yehoshua must actually reside in the person and

disentangle him from his former defilements and give him the

victory that overcomes the world, holiness-generating, true,

saving faith (See I Yochanan 5:4). This is a true Biblical

teshuva and a change of heart and many have not experienced it.

To only make profession of faith but lack the power to live a new

life makes the person worse off than if he had never heard the

Besuras Hageulah because his greater love of depravity is now

common knowledge, like a dog that loves to return to its vomit

(2:31-23). Shliach Sha'ul says these kinds of men will not get

very far because their folly will be clear to everyone (II Tim.

3:9). Ultimately, only those who are as depraved as they are will

be fooled by them.

In counselling new believers who have just escaped the

corruptions of the world and are still very much tempted by

Satan, it is of utmost importance for messianic ministers to be

wise enough to know when to minister "at arm's length, "snatching

them from the fire by showing mercy toward them mixed with the

fear of G-d (see Yehuda 23). In this way the ministers themselves

can flee temptation and keep their own testimony.

The Day of the Lord (3:10) can come at any time, like a thief,
catching all but the Godly unprepared. This Day is looked at in
its destructive effect on the present wicked and depraved human
empire and is seen at a single glance, without pausing to
describe the Millennium (but see 3:8). Those who say that nothing
has changed and that the Lord is not coming back but that life
will go on unchanged are blind to the changes that have already
occurred: the flood of death on all corrupt flesh, the fulfilled
(586 B.C.E. and C.E. 70) prophecies of the fiery flood of
destruction overtaking Jerusalem in both her predicted exiles,

the millions and millions who have been changed by the new birth,

and the imminent prospect of change with the coming cosmic

conflagration and world destruction by nuclear fire. Read chapter

3.

A final note on "prophecy" teachers with speculative and strange

teachings. Ch. 1:20 says that Scripture cannot be

individualistically exploited to support novel doctrines which

are in error because they are a matter of one's own

interpretation (as though one could interpret a verse any way he

wanted). Each text must be interpreted in line with its immediate

context as well as the greater context of Scripture, which has

one author, the Ruach Hakodesh, who doesn't contradict himself.

This means that all Scripture must be interpreted with the help of the same Ruach Hakodesh, who alone can remove the scales from our eyes so that we can understand what we read in the Bible. To the person without hitkhadeshut the Bible is unfathomable and foolish (I Cor. 1:18).

Aristotle (384-322 B.C.E. student of Plato and tutor of Alexander

the Great) said, "Of things constituted by nature, some are

ungenerated, imperishable, and stung.." (On the Parts of Animals,

644b). So Aristotle said that the universe is eternal. But the

Second Law of Thermodynamics states that a closed system (such as

the universe) declines toward a state of maximum entropy or

degeneration. So modern science proves Aristotle wrong. The universe is not eternal but is winding down to an end. This is also a powerful scientific argument against evolution, since, according to the Second Law of Thermodynamics, we would expect species to tend to decline downward toward extinction (which they in fact do) rather than evolve upward.

But like Aristotle, the libertine, skeptical Greek false teachers being refuted in II Shliach Kefa are also wrong when they say, *af es gar oi pateras* (see Heb.1:1 on *pateras*) *Ekoimethesan panta outos diamenei ap arxes kriseos* (II Shimon Kefa 3:4). On this kind of scoffing in the Jewish Bible, see Amos 9:10; Mal. 2:17; Ezek. 12:22; Zeph. 1:12; Isa. 5:18-24; Jer. 17:15. As surely as

the Day of the Lord came near in the 586 B.C.E. and C.E. 70

destructions of the Beis Hamikdash, vindicating the predictions

of the prophets and destroying the scoffers, so, just as surely

the e paggelia tes parousias autou (II Shimon Kefa 3:4) will be

kept and fulfilled by G-d. "A star shall rise out of Jacob" LXX

anatelei astron eks Iakob--Num. 24:17, interpreted of the

Moshiach's coming, Jerusalem Talmud Ta'amit 68d). The morning

star (Venus) will rise and the new Day of Eternity will dawn at

the parousia of the Second Coming (II Shimon Kefa 1:19).

The second century Irenaeus, who through Polycarp had a knowledge

of the early Brit Chadasha kehillah going back to the Shliach

Yochanan, seems to allude to II Shimon Kefa 1:15 (Against Heresies 3.1.1). An even stronger attestation of the authenticity of II Shliach Kefa is the fact that Yehuda may in fact be quoting from II Shliach Kefa and Yehuda's whole letter seems to be a reference to II Shimon Kefa 3:3 (see Yehuda 17-18) as well as a series of references to II Shimon Kefa 1:12-3:18. Those scoffers who say that Shliach Kefa did not write II Shliach Kefa stand under the judgment of G-d's Word.

A key word continually repeated in II Shliach is epignosis (1:2,3,8; 2:20). It is more than gnosis which has to do with spiritual discernment. It means the knowledge or recognition one

has of Moshiach Yehoshua when one comes to repentance and conversion.

Compare II Shimon Kefa 3:3 and Yehuda 18

As you can see, II Shimon Kefa 3:3 appears to be Yehuda's proof text in Yehuda 18 and Yehuda's whole letter may in fact to be written with the aid of II Shliach Kefa. Compare below:

II Shimon Kefa 1:5 and Yehuda 3

II Shimon Kefa 1:12 and Yehuda 5

II Shimon Kefa 2:1 and Yehuda 4

II Shimon Kefa 2:4 and Yehuda 6

II Peter 2:6 and Yehuda 7

II Shimon Kefa 2:10 and Yehuda 8

II Shimon Kefa 2:10 and Yehuda 8

II Shimon Kefa 2:11 and Yehuda 9

II Shimon Kefa 2:12 and Yehuda 10

II Shimon Kefa 2:12 and Yehuda 10

II Shimon Kefa 2:13 and Yehuda 12

II Shimon Kefa 2:14-15 and Yehuda 11

II Shimon Kefa 2:17 and Yehuda 8,10,12,16,19

II Shimon Kefa 2:17 and Yehuda 12

II Shimon Kefa 2:17 and Yehuda 13

II Shimon Kefa 2:18 and Yehuda 16

II Shimon Kefa 2:21 and Yehuda 3

II Shimon Kefa 3:14 and Yehuda 24

II Shimon Kefa 3:18 and Yehuda 25

MOSHIACH'S LETTER THROUGH THE SHLIACH YOCHANAN TO

THE BRIT CHADASHA KEHILLAH (I)

It is possible to date the Besuras Hageulah of Yochanan as early

as C.E. 65-66 (another possible date is around C.E. 85 or a

little later). Scholars have dated I, II, and III Yochanan at

roughly the same time as the final publication of Yochanan's

Besuras Hageulah.

If one assumes that Yochanan's Besuras Hageulah and Epistles were

written toward the end of the first century (when Yochanan would

have been advanced in age), I Yochanan may have as one of its

targets a heretic named Cerinthus, who was then active in the

western part of what is today modern Turkey. In any case, many

scholars believe that the target of Yochanan's pen in this

general letter is the "pseudo-believer" who is actually a

gnostic.

Cerinthus was an early heretic who taught that Moshiach Yehoshua

was not G-d the Word incarnate but a mere created being. In

Gnosticism G-d is good and matter is evil, so G-d has a series

of "aeons" who radiate out from himself, each containing less

deity than the one before, until at last G-d can in this way

dirty his hands with evil matter by creating the world. Cerinthus

seems to have taught the demonic doctrine that the Moshiach as

such, since he was a quasi-divine spiritual being called an aeon,

was incapable of becoming truly incarnate in matter or of

suffering and dying on an Aitz. Cerinthus taught that the

Moshiach did not die. Docetic Gnostics (the word "docetic" coming

from a Greek word dokeo meaning "seem") taught that it only

seemed that he died, but that he did not in fact shed his blood.

These heresies were of the greatest seriousness and had to be

answered. Heretical teachers were stressing that they

transmitted a "knowledge" that went beyond the Messianic faith or

Judaism (see I Yochanan 2:20-21; II Yochanan 9), and that the

initiates who entered their system would receive more knowledge

the higher they rose in the understanding of their special

"gnostic" philosophy and mysteries.

How did Cerinthus acquire this saving "knowledge," since he was

not a Shliach and did not witness the death of Moshiach or the

Techiyas HaMesim and therefore had not the slightest idea of what he was talking about? It seems he considered himself a prophet, a Shliach from G-d, and he was more impressed with his own mystical "knowledge" than with the testimony of Yochanan the Shliach and other eye-witnesses of the historical facts of the Brit Chadasha Besuras Hageulah. Consequently, Cerinthus led many astray from the truth, like that later Iranian heretic Mani (C.E. 216-277) who had the audacity to contend that he was the "apostle of Moshiach Yehoshua."

Ch. 5:13 tells us Yochanan's purpose. The crisis that may have evoked the writing of I Yochanan is found in ch. 2:19. Those who

refused to love the truth were believing a lie and being deceived
by a powerful spiritual delusion. Many false teachers had gone
out from the Brit Chadasha kehillot and were teaching a different
Besuras Hageulah because they had received a different spirit,
had believed in a different Moshiach Yehoshua, and had proclaimed
a different message. The same anti-Moshiach spirit that energized
Cerinthus and brought him success in winning disciples was
energizing many other false teachers and their converts. They
denied G-d's filial Word Moshiach Yehoshua, and thus revealed
that they lacked the eternal Spirit of G-d and His testimony
within themselves (5:10). Because these false teachers denied the
true Moshiach Yehoshua (4:3), it was impossible to teach them

(2:18-27). They also denied the sacrificial blood of G-d's filial

Word Moshiach Yehoshua (5:6), they denied that the divine and

eternal Word came in human form (4:2-3). They seemed to believe

that the Moshiach descended on the man Moshiach Yehoshua at his

tevilah but departed from him before Golgotha's blood (6:6-12).

Therefore, they proved that they had not the Chayyei Olam

(Eternal Life) of Moshiach Yehoshua the Word of G-d within

themselves, for they had called G-d Himself a liar (5:9-12).

Look at 1:6; 2:4,16. Because of certain pre-Gnostic antinomian

and ascetic tendencies Shliach Sha'ul is already combatting in

his I Corinthians correspondence (C.E. 55) from Ephesus (I Cor.

1:20; 2:6-7; 4:8-16; 15:12; 10:1-10; 13:1-3; 5:1-2; 6:13-7:1), it

is possible that the Shliach Yochanan could be writing I Yochanan

from the area of Ephesus also and much earlier than the end of

the first century, when Cerinthus was influential.

One highly respected scholar, even among liberals who do not

believe in the claims of Moshiach Yehoshua, J.A.T. Robinson in

his book, Redating The Brit Chadasha Scriptures, (Westminster,

1976) dates I Yochanan roughly C.E. 60-65. Robinson points to the

heresy I Yochanan is refuting, that these false teachers claimed

to give esoteric knowledge and initiation to their gullible

devotees, but that the true knowledge was in the Moshiach alone

through the Ruach Hakodesh and in the teach of the Shluchim (see

I Yochanan 4:6; 5:7-10; 2:20-23,26-27; 5:20).

Apparently some of these gnostic heretics claimed that they were

above sin, that since they were prophets of a higher "knowledge"

they were sinless. G-d speaks through Yochanan to condemn their

heresy: "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and

the truth is not in us" (1:8). Apparently some of these

"prophets" engage in multiple sexual relationships, take as many

lovers as their lust requires, and indulge themselves in many

forms of wickedness and yet claim that they were walking in their

prophetic "light." G-d again speaks: "G-d is light; in him there

is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him

yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth"

(1:5-6). These false teachers were of the devil and loved the

world (2:15-17), the source of their "wisdom" (Ya'akov 3:15). "Do

not let anyone lead you astray...he who does what is sinful is of

the devil" (3:7-8).

No mere prophet is sinless. Only the Word who was with G-d and

was G-d is sinless. He took on human form as a prophet and his

glory was seen among men (Yochanan 1:1,14). He alone is sinless

(Heb. 4:15), in him there is no darkness at all. Who but G-d's

perfect Word can supply flawless mediation between G-d and man?

See 1:1 and 2:1-2. Whoever says they know G-d but does not keep

the Biblical commandments of his Word Moshiach Yehoshua is a liar

(2:3-4). No one who is born of G-d and lives in Him has the habit

of sinning (2:29; see 3:6 where the verb for sin is in the

customary present tense).

Teaching is either from G-d or from the Devil. There is a way to

know the spirit behind the doctrine, a way to test the spirit to

see if it is from G-d. Read 4:1-6. False teachers lack the right

spirit, and there is no witness of the Ruach Hakodesh in them or

in their teaching. They also lack the love of G-d from the Ruach

Hakodesh (see 4:7-21) and the faith that only comes from the Holy

Spirit (5:1-12) as well as the assurance of eternal

life (5:13-21).

Yochanan refers to the unpardonable sin in 5:16. Some Pharisees

had so persisted in their false teaching that they had seared

their consciences and knowingly insulted the Ruach Hakodesh,

calling the Ruach Hakodesh a demon spirit. There was no longer

any forgiveness possible for such a reprobate mind, their sin was

unto death. Yochanan is warning these gnostic false teachers that

they are toying with sealing their fate forever, tempting G-d too

far, committing the unpardonable sin, persisting in their

opposition to the truth until there is no hope for them, until

intercession for their salvation is a waste of time. If anyone

worries that he has committed this sin, his very concern is

evidence that he has not, since those who have committed it are

beyond caring even for their own souls.

How can we have assurance of anything? of salvation? How can we

have certainty? Life is so uncertain; is not our future salvation

also uncertain? How can we know we have the Ruach Hakodesh within

us? How can we know we have the Savior with us? How can we not

only possess deliverance from G-d's righteous fury and possess

salvation from the coming judgment, but also know that we are

saved here and now? I'm talking about having a heart with

pleroforia pisteos (full assurance of faith), as it says in

Hebrews 10:22.

Thomas Aquinas said, "...of himself...no one can know that he has grace." (Article 5, "Whether Man Can Know That He Has Grace" I

IIae, cxii. 5. Aquinas (1225-74), a Dominican theologian, in his

Summa Theologica defends such false Roman Catholic dogmas as

purgatory, prayer to the saints, and the veneration of Miryam.

Shortly before he died, however, he said of this work, "I can do

no more; such things have been revealed to me that all I have

written seems as straw, and I now await the end of my life."

Generally the so-called Schoolmen (the masters of the

universities of the Middle Ages) knew only a conjectural

knowledge of assurance based on good works, which is true of many

Muslims and Jews today.

But the Bible says of the One, the Moshiach, who is the Word of

G-d, that "in Him was life" (Yochanan 1:4). He is "the

resurrection and the life" (Yochanan 11:25), having the power to

give eternal life and to raise up the dead on the last day

(Yochanan 6:40). I Yochanan 5:12-13 says that he who has the

Moshiach "has life." And he who does not have Him "does not have

life." Then Yochanan says that he is writing so that believers

might not only believe but have assurance. He is writing "so that

you may know that you have Chayyei Olam (Eternal Life)."

So the Bible teaches that saving faith is faith with full assurance, even as Abraham in his faith was plerophoreo having been fully assured (Rom. 4:21). Saving faith is sure of what it hopes for (Heb.11:1). Our salvation is secured (phroureo) in heaven (I Shimon Kefa 1:5). And about this Yochanan keeps insisting, we know (ginosko), we know, we can know we are saved (see I Yochanan 2:3, 5, 29; 3:14, 16, 19, 24; 4:13, 16; 5:15, 18-20).

Those who have received the spirit of error (I Yochanan 4:6) by imbibing the doctrines of demons (I Tim. 4:1) of false religions have the spirit of the world (I Cor. 2:12) and the

spirit of Anti-Moshiach (I Yochanan 4:3) and not the Spirit of

G-d. That spirit is often confronted when people in various cults

and false religions hear the Besuras Hageualah.

But I Cor. 2:12 says, "We have received not the spirit of this

world, but the Spirit that is from G-d." And we know we are born

of G-d because we are led by the Spirit of G-d (Rom. 8:14). In

fact, "The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are

children of G-d" (Rom. 8:16). So the Ruach Hakodesh provides an

internal, subjective witness to our salvation corresponding to

the external, objective witness of the Scripture, which also

itself assures us. But this is the point: we can sense the Spirit

in us because He dwells in us (Rom. 8:11) and helps us and intercedes for us with groanings, as it says (Rom. 8:26). So the person who has the new birth because he has received the Spirit of G-d knows that this has happened to him. Yochanan 14:17 says, "The Spirit of Truth, which the world is not able to receive, because it does not perceive Him nor know Him, you know Him, because He remains with you and in you."

Without the Spirit of G-d, the natural man is incapable of faith.

"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of G-d:

for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them,

because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14). The

"things of the Spirit of G-d" referred to are the words of

Scripture, which "the Ruach Hakodesh teaches interpreting

spiritual things with spiritual words (1 Cor. 2:13)." The

natural man scoffs and mocks because, not having the Ruach

Hakodesh, the things of the Ruach Hakodesh are foolishness to

him. Believers have the Moshiach Himself abiding or dwelling in

them (I Yochanan 3:24). This is utter nonsense to the natural

man.

So there is no assurance of salvation in Scripture to the natural

man, whatever his boast. A specific faith and confession is

necessary for this assurance (I Yochanan 5:13; 4:15; 5:1,5). If

we reject His commandments we also reject assurance (see I

Yochanan 2:3-5; 3:24; 5:2; Yochanan 8:31,51; 14:21-24; 15:9-14;

Heb. 5:9). We reject assurance if we love the evil, G-d-rejecting

world (I Yochanan 2:15; 4:4-6; 5:4). We reject assurance if we

habitually practice wickedness (I Yochanan 2:29; 3:7-10). We

reject assurance if we have hardened hearts that are loveless as

far as believers are concerned (I Yochanan 3:14,19; 2:9-11; 3:23;

4:8,11-12,16,20; 5:1; Yochanan 13:34-35). We reject assurance if

we refuse to live as the Holy Moshiach lived in this evil world

(I Yochanan 2:6; Yochanan 8:12; 13:15). We reject assurance if

we reject the original message of salvation given to the Jewish

prophets and Shluchim (I Yochanan 2:24; 1:1-5; 4:6). We reject

assurance if we reject the Biblical hope of the return of the

Moshiach (I Yochanan 3:2-3; Yochanan 14:1-3).

But, most important, I Yochanan 3:24 says, "by this we know that

He dwells in us, by the Spirit whom to us He gave". Moreover, I

Yochanan 4:13 says, "In this we know that in Him we dwell and He

in us, because of His Spirit He has given to us." This is an

extension of Yochanan 14:17 which says, "the Spirit of Truth,

whom the world is not able to receive, because it does not see

nor know Him. You know Him, because He dwells with you and in

you").

I Yochanan 2:26, "these things I wrote you concerning the ones

deceiving you" (these are the Anti-Moshiach unanointed liars and

children of the devil, who walk in darkness and are part of the
passing-away world, offer you their sectarian fellowship and
require you to accept their worldly teaching, but are unrighteous
and worldly sinners who say they have no sin and who, rejecting
the witness and fellowship of the Shluchim, teach such lies as
that the Moshiach did not come in the flesh, was not Moshiach
Yehoshua, was not the Son of G-d, did not come "in the blood,"
and is not G-d).

MOSHIACH'S LETTER THROUGH THE SHLIACH YOCHANAN TO

THE BRIT CHADASHA KEHILLAH(II)

The term "elect Lady" is probably a euphemism for the bride of

Moshiach in an "underground Brit Chadasha kehillah" context

during persecution such as was experienced under Nero or

Domitian. It is similar to "she who is in Babylon" at the end of

I Shliach Kefa, used in that letter as a guarded euphemism for

the elect lady or sister congregation in Rome.

Who says studying doctrine isn't important? Read II Yochanan

9-10 and compare I Tim. 4:16.

The planois ("deceivers") in verse 7 are Gnostics,

pseudo-believers who denied that the Son of G-d had actually

taken on human flesh.

Both students and faculty in a Bible school or people in a congregation should be denied membership unless they sign a doctrinal statement and are examined by the leadership to see if they really are believers and are really walking in the holy faith.

II Yochanan 9; everyone going ahead and not remaining in the teaching of Moshiach G-d does not have the one remaining in the teaching, this one both the Father and the Son has. If anyone comes to you and this teaching does not bring, do not receive him into house (meaning house Brit Chadasha kehillah), and greetings to him do not speak.

MOSHIACH'S LETTER THROUGH THE SHLIACH YOCHANAN TO

THE BRIT CHADASHA KEHILLAH (III)

This letter is written to Gaius with the prayer that as he

prosper spiritually he will prosper in every other way with

health and a balanced life pleasing to G-d (see verse 2).

Yochanan had in some way helped to lead him to the L-rd (see

verses 3-4) and Gaius in turn had shown kindness and hospitality

to travelling emissaries of Moshiach's shlichut (verse 5) who had

reported Gaius' generosity (verse 6) before the Brit Chadasha

kehillah where Yochanan is presently, probably the same Brit

Chadasha kehillah as in I and II Yochanan, in Asia Minor.

The purpose of the letter is to commend an itinerant emissary of

Moshiach's shlichut named Demetrius (verse 12). When planting a

new congregation or doing any form of outreach, the nonbelievers

are not to be asked for money (verse 7). Therefore, the

congregations and their elders are to offer hospitality and

material help to travelling messianic ministers and

servants of the L-rd such as Demetrius (see vs. 5-8). Gaius is

warned to beware of the example of Diotrephes, who enjoys too

much being the person in charge. This man is a malicious gossip,

a person who thinks nothing of excluding people from his

ministry, or putting a ban on ministers by lording it over others

and telling them who they can or cannot have fellowship with.

This kind of behavior almost throws the salvation of this man in

question (see vs. 9-11).

III Yochanan 9 I wrote something to the Brit Chadasha kehillah;

but the one loving to be first (among) them, Diotrephes, does not

receive us.

MOSHIACH'S LETTER THROUGH YEHUDA, THE BROTHER OF

THE SHLIACH YA'AKOV, TO THE BRIT CHADASH AKEHILLAH

Antinomianism (the false doctrine that lawless "Followers of our Moshiach" may indulge in immorality because they are set free from moral law by virtue of their "faith") was already present in the early Brit Chadasha kehillah by the C.E. mid-50's when Shliach Sha'ul wrote I Cor. Also read Phil 3:18-19 where Shliach Sha'ul talks about libertines who refuse to nail to death their old lustful natures (and were thus living as enemies of the Moshiach's Aitz). Shliach Sha'ul warned about the destruction coming to them and all who follow them. They were false brethren, they were idolaters (their G-d was their appetite), and they gloried in the shame of their "freedom" (in reality they were slaves of corruption and possessed by seducing spirits and

doctrines of demons--I Tim. 4:1). Sometimes the so-called "knowledge" (I Tim. 6:20-21) of gnostic heresy, which presented an unscripturally negative view of the human body in favor of the human spirit, took an ascetic view of sex and forbade marriage (I Tim. 4:3), or it took an indifferent view of the body, and allowed debauchery of every kind. In any case, it was a demonic plague attacking the Brit Chadasha kehillah, not a mere human aberration.

Therefore, this letter by Yehuda, the brother of Ya'akov and younger half-brother of Moshiach Yehoshua, could have been very early. There is no reason to date it after C.E. 70, when the Beis

Hamikdash was destroyed. Therefore, it is naive to suppose that

the small circle of intimately acquainted writers of the Brit

Chadasha Scriptures (Mark, Shliach Kefa, Luke, Mattityahu,

Shliach Sha'ul, Yochanan, Yehuda, Ya'akov and probably Apollos)

did not really know what was "the faith once for all delivered to

the saints" (Yehuda 3). Most of these write neither ministered

together in the same few Brit Chadasha kehillot or met in

Jerusalem or shared the same associates.

Therefore, Yehuda could have written Yehuda 3 in the early 60's,

before the death of Shliach Kefa. And, even by that early time,

the canonical faith could have been nearly all written, even as

it was set in oral tradition from the beginning. It is not

hazardous to assume that the following were all written by the

time Yehuda writes his letter: Mark, Ya'akov, Mattityahu, Luke,

Acts, most if not all of Rav Sha'ul's letters, the letter to the

Hebrews, and I Shliach Kefa.

Yehuda is an emissary of Moshiach's shlichut. His labors as an

emissary of Moshiach's shlichut are referred to in I Cor. 9:5. We

do not know where he is or exactly to whom he is writing. Some

assume he is writing from Israel, since Yehuda is a Messianic

Jew. If Yehuda's brother Ya'akov (the half brother of Moshiach

Yehoshua and the leader of the Jerusalem community) had been

martyred in C.E. 62 in Jerusalem, Yehuda might have immediately

become a very important successor of Ya'akov in the early Jerusalem Messianic community, and may have written this letter when he took office. Therefore, we should not consider it strange that Yehuda writes this sermon-like tract intended for believers everywhere. Nor should we consider it strange that Shliach Kefa might see the divine inspiration of the letter and allude to it himself in adding the weight of his own correspondence (II Shliach Kefa) to the same problem of antinomianism. (On the other hand, Yehuda may be quoting II Shliach Kefa.

Yehuda is alarmed about an emergency situation that has occurred on the mission field. Gross immorality is invading some of the Brit Chadasha kehillot! Sexually permissive and exploitative

religious leaders are cropping up like choking weeds in the Lord's garden. They are like that rebellious murderer Cain, or that money-hungry preacher Balaam who was killed for causing the Israelites to lapse into sexual immorality and idolatry (see Num. chs 25 and 31). Or they are like Korah (Num. 16), who led a rebellion against Moses and his holy law and perished as a result (see Yehuda 11).

Anyone who has ever witnessed the mesmerizing power that a handsome religious speaker or spiritual leader can have over a congregation can see the danger of mixing sensuality and spirituality. II Tim. 3:6 (written C.E. 65-68) speaks about men

who "creep" into households and exploit weak-willed women both sexually and financially in their unscrupulous religious vocation as charismatic Casanovas.

Lest anyone be deceived into thinking that sexual immorality of any kind is permitted in the household of G-d, Yehuda offers three examples to the contrary, each pointing offenders toward destruction and hell. Yehuda does this in order to clarify what the Biblical faith is that we are to struggle to maintain undefiled.

MOSHIACH'S GILLUY SHECHINAH

That the authorship of Revelation is attributed to the Shliach

Yochanan has attestation as early as C.E. 150 by Justin Martyr

and C.E. 200 by Irenaeus, who had lived at one time in Asia Minor

(Modern Turkey) and there sat under the ministry of Polycarp of

Smyrna. Polycarp was a disciple of the Shliach Yochanan himself.

Some scholars point to the polished Greek of the Besuras Hageulah

of Yochanan and the rough Hebraic Greek of the book of Revelation

and doubt that one man wrote both books. But the use of a

secretary for the Besuras Hageulah (unavailable on the rocky

island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea) would explain this

difference, as could also be the case in explaining the different

styles in I and II Shliach Kefa.

This book is not just an epistole (letter, 1:4). It is that, of

course, with ch. 1 giving us a picture of its divine author and

the heavenly nature of the communique. The letter, however,

claims to be an apokalupsis (apocalypse, 1:1). This is a word

that has to do with G-d's disclosure of what He is doing in the

last days, which otherwise would have remained hidden, but now,

via various visions, He is Himself unveiling (notice that

Moshiach Yehoshua the Word of G-d is the author, the chain of

transmission being G-d --- Moshiach Yehoshua the Word of G-d ---

angel --- Yochanan --- seven Brit Chadasha kehillot --- all

believers for all time, 1:1, 19:13).

The infinitive deiksai (1:1) expresses purpose, which is to show

the servants of Moshiach Yehoshua what must soon take place (see

22:6-7) including especially the Coming of the L-rd. The word

deinumi ("show, point out") is a favorite word of both

Yochanan's Besuras Hageulah and Revelation, suggesting common

authorship.

But the book of Revelation is also called a profeteia (prophecy,

1:3 19; 4:1; 22:7). So we are cued in from the beginning of the

book that it is going to contain warnings and also exhortations

to be strong and to hold on to the L-rd Yehoshua in faith even in

the misery and despair of persecution and even amidst

earth-shaking cataclysms. However, because the work is an
apocalypse and therefore comes to us wrapped in some of the
conventions of a particular genre of literature, we can expect
its prophetic truth served up to us in complex imagery and
strange symbols and visions about supernatural beings, and about
powers (angelic and demonic), as well as eschatological figures
and events whose imminent appearance are part of the divinely
predetermined, yet catastrophic, end of history. Blessed are
those who obey what is written in this book (1:3: 12:17).

It is the Revelation of Moshiach Yehoshua Moshiach (1:1), whom
deity is suggested in many ways. Among other things, He is called

L-rd (22:20), "the first and last" (1:17; 2:8; 22:13), "the Holy One"(3:7) and is worshipped (5:8). The Apocalypse of Yochanan is also the revelation of G-d the creator (Rev. 4:11; 10:6), as well as the revelation of Moshiach the Saviour and Redeemer (notice Moshiach Yehoshua is referred to as the redemptive, sacrificial "Lamb" throughout 5:7-10 etc), and the revelation of G-d the Judge (note the various seals, trumpets and plagues are all the various judgments coming upon the earth and the sea and the Anti-Moshiach world as a preparation for the coming of the Kingdom of G-d--see 8:7; 16:3; 18:8 etc).

Many people want to read Revelation looking for clues as to whether the rapture will be 3 1/2 years before or after this or

that eschatological event. The warning is spelled out at the beginning of the book, however: "I will come like a thief and you will not know at what time I will come for you" (3:3). Apparently G-d would prefer, perhaps for our own good, that we be held in enough suspense not to presume on His patience. It would be easy for us, if we had too much knowledge of the exact timetable of G-d's end-time scenario, not to walk in the dependent fear of the L-rd and in the daily vigil of faith.

The visions of the Apocalypse (Greek for "unveiling" of what is hidden or previously unknown) of the Shliach Yochanan are written in the poetically pictorial, enigmatically obscure language of

"tracts for hard times." Like the parables Moshiach Yehoshua

publically uttered in the hearing of dangerous persecutors,

Revelation is prophecy put in code language designed to go "over

the heads" of the wrong readers, but be understood nonetheless

because of the indwelling Ruach Hakodesh by every ensuing

generation of believers in their vocation as Yoel (Joel) 2:28

prophets.

However, understanding the language of Revelation with its rich

density of Biblical allusions, symbolic pictures, and portentous

numbers and code language requires readers willing to ponder and

pray before they attempt to preach its message. That message is

spelled out first in a more prosaic and straightforward way in

the first three chapters in the form of letters to seven

representative Brit Chadasha kehillot. Then the message is

rendered in a more pictorial way in the visions that follow.

Therefore, we must make sure that when we finish reading chs.

4-22, we have not lost or blunted the message of chs. 1-3.

What is the message of chs. 1-3? In two words, it is "Get ready!"

Get ready to be raptured into the presence of the Judge of all

men, the Moshiach who is the Word of G-d (1:9-20; 19:11-16). Get

ready to test the spirits of false Shluchim and anti-moshiachs

(see Rev. 2:2 and I Yochanan 2:18-19)! Get ready in love to do

the things you did at first! Get ready to suffer, possibly even

to the point of death! Get ready to be martyred like Antipas! Get ready to resist temptations to sexual immorality imported by the heathen into the Lord's Body! (See also 18:4.) It is those who have not thrown away holiness who will be found written in the book of life (3:4-5). Get ready to discipline those who say they are believers but refuse to repent of wickedness! Get ready to expel false teachers who mistake license for liberty! Get ready to come alive in new power to conquer through the indwelling Moshiach (3:20)! Get ready to go through open doors! Get ready to hold on to what you have so that no one will take your crown! Get ready for the Lord's soon coming! Get ready to renounce

self-righteous and self-dependent lukewarmness and to receive the

L-rd afresh and to know the fellowship of His overcoming victory

amidst persecution and suffering.

With each exhortation there is a prophetic appraisal of the

situation of the believers, a command which sometimes entails a

warning, then a promise and a final appeal. Notice that

everything is imminent (about to happen), both agony and ecstasy,

rapture and tribulation, threat and deliverance. The worst and

the best that can happen are both at hand! Notice there is no

time allowance before the coming of the L-rd for a literal Beis

Hamikdash to be constructed in Jerusalem or a literal seat be

built on which the Anti-Moshiach can literally sit. Everything

can happen imminently! Be ready! Be strong if there is trouble!

Be prepared if there is judgment! And notice that through

everything there is the hope of heavenly, rapturous, deliverance

with Satanic trials mercifully cut short to manageable

proportions!

Chs. 5-6 make it clear that the Lamb of G-d (the Moshiach

Yehoshua) has all of history in his hands, including (as we will

see) all the plagues of judgment that will be divinely unleashed

on the anti-Moshiach world. Only Moshiach Yehoshua through his

angel can unveil the prophetic significance of what is destined

to occur in history and the Lamb who is the L-rd is the only one

who is worthy to open the scroll of destiny. He alone is appointed to unseal the judgments of G-d and unleash covenant reprisals on those who have wickedly refused redemption. These wicked have persecuted the saints, who are themselves not appointed to wrath (I Thes. 5:9) but "sealed" for safety from the wrath of the Lamb (Rev. 7). All exousia authority and power are in Moshiach's hands (see Matthew 28:18), but the authority to eat of the tree of life and to enter the redeemed New Jerusalem is given by him to the Moshiach's true disciples (Rev. 22:14).

What ensues after ch. 4 is an unfolding picture of suffering that is humanly, but also demonically generated. G-d the Judge sends

plagues like He did on Pharaoh. As we read we see the world

heeding inexorably toward Armageddon, the Millennium, the Final

Judgment, and the creation of the New Heavens and the New Earth.

But in the midst of the suffering there is also various divinely

provided protection on earth and ultimately rapturous deliverance

in heaven. The seven seals (6:1-17; 8:1), the seven trumpets

(8:2-9:21; 11:14-19), and the seven bowls (16:1-21) give us this

unfolding picture of ever increasing retribution and catastrophe

leading to climactic ruin as a prophetic picture of the birth

pangs (chevlei Moshiach the pre-Messianic era birthpangs) leading

to the Messianic Kingdom realized on earth followed by the New

Creation. Rev. 15:1 says of the final seven plagues, "with them

the wrath of G-d is ended."

In the drama that continues we see two cities in conflict, the

latter day "Babylon," the "Rome" of the last days with its false

religion celebrating the false deity of an end-time "Nero" by the

"drinking the blood" (killing) of the economically and

politically persecuted saints, and the other city, the New

Jerusalem, whose citizens are the true heirs of the promises of

G-d. Nero, then, comes to symbolize all the Hitlers to come,

including the final one. The mark charagma (Rev. 13:16) was the

seal of the Emperor, bearing his image and showing loyal devotion

to him in commercial transactions, which were stamped with his

name. The Jews wore the tephillin on the forehead and the forearm to show devotion to the true G-d rather than any latter day Antiochus Ephiphanes. The final Hitler, will recover from a mortal wound (remember Hitler's near assassination escape from death?), will have a false prophet "Kohen Gadol," and he will lead the world to marvel at his miraculous idol, causing those who do not worship to be put to death, thus causing the great apostasy (Rev. 13:12-18; II Thes. 2:3; 14:9-12).

Nero committed suicide with his own sword in June C.E. 68. Yet a rumor persisted that he was still alive and would return to ravage the world again. A similar phenomenon occurred for a time

after Adolf Hitler's death. Rumors circulated that he was alive

in South America and would be back to terrorize the earth again.

The Shliach Yochanan speaks of the Anti-Moshiach in this way in

ch. 17 and infers that this latter-day man of lawlessness will be

a new "Nero" or (Nero redivivus, pronounced "RED-uh-VY-vus" and

meaning "revived, living again") when he reappears in his final

historical manifestation, a new "Antiochus Epiphanes" with a

"prostitute" religion riding a world government "beast" city, a

new "Rome" that will extend in Satanic world empire so that the

ancient "Dragon" the devil can once again battle against the

"seed" of the Elect Woman (Gen. 3:15; Rev. 12), the Ideal Israel

of G-d. Rev. 17 and 18 show the judgment that is coming on this

"Babylon," this "Rome" of the last days, this cruel and blasphemous world government (chs. 17-19). Its religious, commercial, and materialistic pride will be brought low. Those who study these passages to try to find datable or chronological signs of when the Brit Chadasha kehillah will be raptured will be frustrated by the fact that such is not the message the author intended to convey. The numbers that are continually reappearing have symbolic meaning, but those who press them too literally will have the same trouble with consistency if they try to see in 1:4 the Ruach Hakodesh as seven spirits instead of a perfect Spirit (the number seven means

perfect, and is the number of G-d; 6 as in 666 means the number of man).

The number 1000 is also a number symbolizing the completeness of

the Moshiach's earthly triumph as He reigns with His people in

the world a thousand years before the final judgment comes

(20:4-6), the wicked are raised to life and condemned, Satan is

finally hurled with the wicked in the lake of eternal fire, and

the New Heavens and the New Earth replace the existing cosmos.

The structure of the Book contains an overlapping spiralling

movement of recapitulation where similar themes are returned to

again and again and are viewed from a different angle each time.

The redeemed citizens of the Kingdom of G-d are symbolized

variously: 1) by the twenty-four elders seated on twenty-four

thrones (4:24); by the part of the Beis Hamikdash measured for

preservation in ch 11; by the two witnesses of ch. 11; by the

144,000 in chs. 7 and 14. The theme of the Rapture and the Second

Coming is likewise recapitulated several times (see 1:7; 2:25;

14:14-20; 22:12, 20). Likewise, notice the theme of the Beis

Hamikdash and communion with G-d (11:19; 15:5 see skenoo "dwell"

~tabernacle" in 21:3 and no Beis Hamikdash but the L-rd and his

Lamb in 21:22.)

Ch.6: It seems to show the universal Besuras Hageulah and various

scourges of war, scarcity or famine accompanied by inequities

between rich and poor, scourges of death and demonic mental

illness and torment worse than death and cataclysmic plagues

(6:8 says one fourth of mankind will thus perish) all racing like

horses to the ends of the earth to show the fulfillment of divine

decrees of judgement. Next comes martyrdom and the Second Coming

(6:12-17), which is recapitulated again later in 11:12-18 and

19:11-21. The theme of the Great Tribulation is repeated in

7:13-17; 11:7-12 and 17:6.

Ch.7:3 shows the servants of the L-rd being sealed for safety to

make it clear that they do not share with the impenitent in the

divine wrath even while they do share in the Satanically incited

tribulation of Anti-Moshiach. See 3:10; 14:1; 21:12 on this

theme of safety for kedoshim (saints) who are freed from wrath.

Ch. 8 begins the "woe to the earth and the sea" theme of 13:12

and 16:3, with the incremental ruin being emphasized by

contrasting verses like 8:9 and 16:3, as Yochanan predicts

ecological and cataclymic destruction of the environment (earth,

trees, seas, rivers, streams). Ch.

11:4,7 shows that we battle not flesh and blood but demonic

spiritual powers (12:17) and the 3 1/2 year period of tribulation

(11:2-3; 12:6,14; 13:5-7) is also a period of G-d's keeping

protection (12:6,16).

We do not want to confuse the "elect" and the nation of Israel in

any way that would imply that G-d's covenant promises for

Israel's salvation are cancelled. However, that is Rav Sha'ul's

teaching in Rom. 9-11, and we need to let this book speak on its

own terms. Yochanan sees all the elect pouring into the New

Jerusalem that comes down to earth from heaven. And it is highly

unlikely, inspite of dispensational teaching to the contrary,

that chs. 7 and 14 are only referring to national Israel. Look at

21:12-13 where the twelve tribes of the nation and the twelve

Shluchim of the Brit Chadasha kehillah have their names

decorating the very same city. And it is one city! It is not two,

not earthly Jerusalem for the nation of Israel and the New

Jerusalem for the Brit Chadasha kehillah.

By chapter 16 it is clear that men who oppose the preaching of the Jewish Bible are going to be left with a sun that gives skin cancer (16:8 on ozone depletion and ultraviolet light), polluted seas full of death (16:3), and rivers like Chernobyl. Yochanan is saying that there is a new Exodus in progress as G-d brings our Jewish people to himself. At the same time G-d smites the anti-Semitic world with plagues of Pharaoh (not only ecological disasters but war-mongering demons leading to the final world war called Armageddon--16:16). Many, including many who claim to be Jews and are not, will be like Pharaoh and refuse to repent (16:10-11). Yochanan is saying that the Nazi civilization of this

world is going to drink the wrath of G-d (16:19-18:10), and her "Nero" himself will burn her (17:16; 18:18). Moreover, it will be G-d's judgment (18:20) and his vengeance on her for her vile cruelty against the believers (18:20; 19:2), for she was drunk with the blood of the saints and the martyrs (17:6). This harlot Babylon, this Nazi world civilization, is contrasted with the Bride, the New Jerusalem (19:1-7; 21:1-2, 9-10, 18).

REVELATION 20:6

Blessed and holy (is) the one having part in the resurrection, the first; on these ones the second death does not have authority, but they will be kohanim of G-d and of Moshiach and

they will reign with Him a thousand years.