



The Paradigm of Hebrews / November 2005

It is time for me to lay my cards on the table for all to see. In this article I will be presenting issues and evidence about the paradigm churchmen have adopted through the ages to understand and explain the book of Hebrews. This will probably make some brethren uncomfortable. I apologize for the discomfort in advance. Some may applaud and try to exploit what I will share. My argument is measured and not an open assault on the Bible. I am praying that the Holy Spirit will lead us all in the path of truth and understanding. That path is guarded by love and wisdom.

Pondering Paradigms

The Webster's Dictionary defines the word "paradigm" as "a) a pattern, example, or model b) an overall concept accepted by most people in an intellectual community, as those in one of the natural sciences, because of its effectiveness in explaining a complex process, idea, or set of data."

A paradigm can be very useful in advancing understanding of any complex process. The pattern, example or model of a complex process can enable many others to participate in analysis and discussion and contribute to a fuller understanding and possible enhancement to the process. A parable or word picture is a mild form of a paradigm. But a paradigm generally contains multiple sections to form an arrayed example or model. And there may be paradigms within a overarching paradigm each of which is intended to enhance the understanding of the whole.

The problem with using paradigms to understand something complex is that they come with another edge to them. A paradigm may become so strong and widely accepted that it actually blocks one who holds to that paradigm from seeing or hearing something different, even if it is the truth and even if it would enhance their understanding. History has many examples of where religious and scientific leaders rejected new facts and evidence because to do so would challenge the conclusions of their original thinking. This is the double-edged nature of a paradigm.

A paradigm in theological thought explains how people believe something. It is a set of trusted concepts leading to an inevitable conclusion. However, when evidence is presented that requires an adjustment in the paradigm, there is often a period of utter disbelief, and complete rejection of both the evidence and the one who offers it. Those who hold to the paradigm may feel threatened and betrayed. They may abandon their otherwise good judgment in an effort to be tenacious defenders of and advocates for the paradigm rather than seekers for better understanding and truth.

Many people who hold to a paradigm and use it as a means of understanding may not even realize they are using a paradigm and holding to it rather than to the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. The paradigm itself is not deceptive; how it is used may be; and usually tenacity for the paradigm rather than the truth is the problem.

A paradigm has the power to force your mind to disregard what your eyes are seeing, convinced that you are seeing just fine. This can be very dangerous. In the scientific world it can cause people to lose their lives because they believed something would work safely. In the theological world, it can cause certain elementary truths to become distorted, and brethren will actually say and do things in opposition to their own faith. It can cause good brethren to be separated from one another in disagreement over the paradigm rather than over the truth the paradigm is being used to understand and explain.

An Illustration of a Paradigm

Before we go further, I need to graphically illustrate how a paradigm works. Please take a moment to carefully examine the cover of this issue of Yavoh and the title page to this article. Follow along with me. Up at the top is the mast head for Yavoh. In the center is a Bible opened to the beginning of the book of Hebrews. The title of the book of Hebrews has been modified to become the title of this article – The Paradigm of Hebrews. Playing cards are scattered around the Bible. The introductory paragraph explaining the book of Hebrews is visible. What is wrong with the picture?

While useful, a paradigm may block and hinder your ability to see what your eyes are actually seeing. In these illustrations, do you see the paradigm at work? Do you see something that is the opposite of what it should be? Do you see that something has been switched on you?

Nine out of ten people can not see it. It is a well known example of a paradigm at work to block your perception of the truth. It is not the mast head of the Yavoh. It is not the open Bible. It is the playing cards. Can you now see what has been switched?

At this point, five out of the original ten people will still not be able to see it. If you still can't see it, relax.

Here is the answer. The red and black colors of the playing cards have been switched. In a true deck of cards, spades and clubs are the black-colored cards, diamonds and hearts are red in color. But this illustration has the colors switched.

If you are like most people, your eyes first saw the difference, but your brain refused to process this information. The reason is simple. You have a paradigm about playing cards. You have been taught by experience that playing cards have four suits of spades, diamonds, hearts and clubs. Two of the suits are red and two are black. Each suit has thirteen cards ranking from the Ace to the King. There are fifty-two cards in the deck. You knew that spades and clubs were black and diamonds and hearts were red, but why couldn't you process the error in the illustration?

It is because you have a paradigm for playing cards. You have a trusted model, a concept, and a belief system in place because of your experience and previous teaching about playing cards. It's okay. We need those trusted models and concepts to be able to play cards.

But what do you think about me switching those colors on the playing cards? If I were to print new playing cards and then sell them as standard playing cards, what would you think of that? Wouldn't you challenge me on that switch? Wouldn't you come back and say something like, "Hey, I want my money back. You said these were standard cards, consistent with others, and it turns out you switched the colors." By the way, you can still play any card game you want with those switched cards, if you are aware of the switch. But, don't put a real deck of cards with it – the confusion will be mind numbing.

The Paradigm of the Book of Hebrews

Now consider the paradigm that has been used through the centuries to understand and explain the book of Hebrews. Yes, there is a paradigm that has been used and taught as the means through which believers are to view this book. The paradigm that has been embraced is that the book of Hebrews is inspired and without error. It's in the Holy Bible! It must be right. It has to be right. Or so the paradigm goes that has been taught by churchmen. But is the paradigm the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

The book of Hebrews is primarily theological and instructive. It primarily presents an argument for why Yeshua the

Messiah is superior to a variety of things ranging from angels, past patriarchs, to the priesthood. (I completely agree with the writer's objective and purpose.) However, it is not like the Gospels, recounting the days of Yeshua. It is written in a letter form (to the Hebrews), but the author does not identify himself. In fact, the author is unknown despite the speculation of some Bible teachers. There is uncertainty as to exactly when it was written.

The book of Hebrews is recognized to be part of the New Testament canon. I have no dispute with that, despite what might have been said by my critics. The canon was determined originally by the early Church Fathers many centuries ago, perhaps many years after the epistle to the Hebrews was written.

Therefore, the book of Hebrews is considered to be part of the authoritative Word of God and this is a key part of the paradigm about the book of Hebrews.

The paradigm, the model created for better understanding, does not change the fact that the book of Hebrews apparently says things differing from other Scriptures. These apparent differences are not limited to translation issues of Hebrew to Greek to English. More specifically, the description of important historical events seem to be retold differently and quotations from the previous writings are misquoted leading to specific theological concepts that are very different. Within the paradigm, most Christians believe that everything written in Hebrews, particularly about the Law, is fully accurate and correct. They accept the conclusions and pronouncements of the writer about the Messiah based on the writer's representations of the Law, despite these misrepresentations. Because most Christians agree with the ultimate conclusions that the writer makes about Yeshua as the Messiah, they tend to overlook the differences and the faulty premises. Therefore the door is open for both those in the faith to advance an errant teaching and, worse yet, for those outside the faith to discredit Yeshua and our brethren in the faith using the paradigm of the letter to the Hebrews as the basis for their challenge.

Before we go any further, you may want to stop reading this material right now. Just like the playing cards on the cover of this article, I potentially may show you some things that you have seen before. I am going to try to show you the paradigm of Hebrews that has affected our ability to fully recognize and understand the truth. I will be careful to be as clear and specific as I can in my presentation.

Hebrew versus Greek Thinking

Most brethren in the Messianic/Hebrew Roots movement have been introduced to the concept of Hebrew versus Greek thinking, sometimes described as Eastern logic versus Western logic. This concept can provide an explanation of how believers can read the same words of the Bible and have two different conclusions. The Bible for the most part is written from a Hebrew mind set but the book of Hebrews appears to be presented in a Greek (western) mind set.

It has been my experience in the Christian Church that most Christians have been taught to put on Messianic lenses to see Moses. They read the Bible backwards, starting with Jesus and the Church and looking back to understand Moses. I believe the book of Hebrews initiated this pattern. It starts with the proposition of the Messiah and then looks back to build its case for superiority. As a modern Messianic believer, I teach brethren to put on Mosaic lenses to see the Messiah, starting with Torah and building the case for Messiah Yeshua. Regardless of the difference in approach, the Messiah is the goal, the author and finisher of our Faith.

The book is really an epistle (a letter) entitled to the Hebrews, but as you will soon see, the writing and logic is Greek. It was written in Greek, quoting from Greek copies of the Scriptures, and using Greek definitions to explain and teach Hebraic things. It is my judgment that the writer was Greek but very familiar with the teaching of the Apostles Paul and John. I did not begin with that opinion. Like most everyone else; I began believing it was someone like Paul or Luke. I was pushed into my current opinion, verse by verse, item by item as found in the book of Hebrews. Given that the early Greek-speaking believers in Alexandria and Asia Minor endorsed the book first, despite the author stating, "Those from Italy greet you." (Heb 13:24), their acceptance culturally supports my conclusion. The Latin Church (Italy) endorsed it later.

The Paradigm of Greek Thinking

As pointed out above, an overarching paradigm used to understand and explain a complex topic may contain paradigms, each of which is intended to enhance the understanding of the whole. In the epistle to the Hebrews, the author has used what we may identify as several paradigms that we will review separately. Overall, they blend together to build an overarching paradigm specifically about the Messiah.

The first paradigm about the book of Hebrews that needs to be explored is its Greek influence in thought. The paradigm most have of Hebrews is that it was written by a Hebrew (probably the Apostle Paul) to other Hebrews. So it is natural to think that it is solidly Hebrew in thought, because it quotes extensively from the "Old Testament." However, as you are about to discover, the definitions and teachings lifted from the Old Testament are Greek in thought. These definitions and descriptions have been switched by the writer, just like the playing card colors were switched in my paradigm example.

The writer of Hebrews makes a number of profound statements about Moses while drawing comparisons to the Messiah. He rightfully describes the superior role of the Messiah. He continues this comparison including the examples of His priesthood, His sacrifice, and the Messiah's station in heaven. The teaching of this book about the superiority of Yeshua our Messiah has shaped all of us and directed all believers (not just Hebrews) throughout history to this day. The writer's approach and methodology, however, are disturbing to me as a Messianic believer.

In particular, the unknown writer seems to conclude that there must have been changes in the Laws of God when Yeshua died. He lumps all of the previous covenants together as one covenant that is replaced while not addressing the qualities of "forever" or "everlasting" that describe those covenants. He presented only two covenants, the lump-sum of the prior ones called "Old" and the other "New." Even more troubling to Messianic believers, he encouraged his readers to leave the "forever" and "everlasting" "Old Covenant" along with the essential teaching, the principles and practices established by God for all time.

Is The Author Pro-Torah?

Is the author of the book of Hebrews "pro-Torah?" The overwhelming consensus of Christian commentators says "No" and is summarized by the commentary excerpt on the cover of this article. "It is a masterful defense for the superiority of Jesus Christ over Judaism." Judaism is defined by such commentators as everything in the Old Covenant.

Maybe the consensus of Christian thought is flawed. Let's conduct our own examination of the book of Hebrews to see if the author was "pro-Torah" using just a few clips of the writer's presentation. He wrote that the "Oracles of God" (the Torah) are elementary principles (Heb 5:12). Three verses later (Heb 6:1), he urged his readers to leave that "elementary teaching," and press on to maturity (which he defines later). He wrote that there must be changes to the Law of Moses (Heb 7:12) because the priesthood has changed from Levite to Melchizedek. He pressed his point by saying that an oath from God (Psa 110:4) about the priesthood of Melchizedek has "set aside a former commandment [about the priesthood] because of its [Levitical] weakness and uselessness" (Heb 7:18). He stated that this oath came "after the Law" (Heb 7:12). He wrote that the Messiah is the mediator of a "better covenant" with "better promises" (Heb 8:6). He stressed that this is his "main point" (Heb 8:1). All of these statements were put forth by the writer to support his conclusion that the Old Covenant was "obsolete," "becoming obsolete," "growing old," and "ready to disappear" (Heb 8:13). He expounded on his main point extensively in chapters 9 and 10. He concluded his epistle this way.

But I urge you, brethren, bear with this word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly.

Hebrews 13:22

Before we examine the most powerful arguments (chapters 9 and 10) in the book of Hebrews, let's ask some fundamental questions at this point. These are the questions that should cause you to pause and question whether this book is consistent with the rest of the Scriptures.

1. Do you believe that we should leave the "elementary principles" that come from the "Oracles of God," specifically the Torah, the Law of Moses?

As Messianic believers, are we not trying to return to the "elementary principles" that the church left?

2. Do we believe that some of the commandments given in the Torah should be changed? Do we think they should be "set aside?" Do we really believe that the Word of God given by Moses and the Prophets is "weakness and useless?"

As Messianic believers, are we not saying that the commandments have not gone away. Don't we teach the brethren the same as the Psalmist.

The law [Torah] of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise

the simple.

Psalms 19:7

Is it possible that a switch is taking place? Is a paradigm taking shape that changes the truth of the Lord's eternal word?

The Paradigm about "New"

The following verse is the punch line for the writer's "main point."

When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

Hebrews 8:13

In actuality the word "covenant" is not in the Greek manuscript. Translators and Bible printers put it in our English text to make the writer's argument appear more complete. They are mistaken. The writer of Hebrews just before this verse quoted the prophecy of Jeremiah 31:31-34, about the New Covenant given to the House of Israel and the House of Judah. There is a specific reason why he did write the word "covenant" in the manuscript. He was focused exclusively on one word in the passage. His only stated purpose was to capture the word "new" and expound the Greek concept for "new." He did not address to whom the New Covenant was given to (the two houses of Israel) nor how the covenant was to be implemented (commandments written on the heart). Instead, he explained what he thought "new" meant.

The Greek concept of "new" means something is in linear transition – in Greek thinking things are constantly changing from one state to the next. One thing leads to the next. The new replaces the old. Greek philosophy dates back to 600 BCE. It is the product of men such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. The Greeks pride themselves on the discovery of "new" wisdom and "new" understandings. The writer's singular interest in the word "new" from Jeremiah's passage appears to be vintage Greek thought. He was teaching the "new" wisdom of the "new" covenant.

For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom;

I Corinthians 1:22

What is the Hebrew concept of "new?" It is like the "new" Moon. Does a new Moon mean that one celestial body left Earth's orbit and another has come into Earth's orbit? No, it means that the light reflected by the moon has been "renewed" as it reappears from the darkness. "New" is referring to a new cycle, a repeat of the past, but in a refreshed or renewed way. Instead of linear progression, Hebrew logic is considered cyclic, like the cycles of the Sun and Moon. The example of the Sun is like the "new" mercies from God each day. God does not alter His character or change His laws each day the Sun rises; instead, His mercies are refreshed and made "new" for us each day.

Even Yeshua, speaking to His disciples used the same Hebrew definition for "new" when He said, "A new commandment I give unto to you." Yeshua was not adding the 614th commandment to the original 613 in the Torah, nor was He giving a "new" commandment to replace the other 613. It is obvious that He was referring to a very powerful commandment already given, which was not being kept by the disciples (it was like a new commandment to them).

Even the "beloved disciple" John refers to this specific teaching as being old, from the beginning and yet "new."

Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.

I John 2:7-8

Yeshua wasn't replacing the Law or the commandments; He was actually teaching them in a fresh, new way. Paul taught the same thing about the Law to the Galatians.

For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Galatians 5:14

This is the same Hebrew concept used by Jeremiah in chapter 31:31-34 when he prophecies of the "New Covenant." It is the same commandments, but they are now written on the tablets of the heart instead of tablets of stone. This was the prophecy of the Messiah – to teach Torah to the world.

The writer of Hebrews has substituted the Greek definition of "new" for the Hebrew definition and thus opened the door to a whole "new" theology based on that definition. As a result, we have what churchmen describe as the Old and New Covenants. And that is a major part of their paradigm of Hebrews.

The Paradigm about the Temple Sanctuary

The writer of Hebrews began Chapter nine with additional arguments trying to show how the Old Covenant set the stage for this "New" thinking.

Now even the first covenant had regulations of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the sacred bread; this is called the holy place. And behind the second veil, there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies, having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden jar holding the manna, and Aaron's rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant. And above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat; but of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

Hebrews 9:1-5

There is a problem with this passage. Some say it is a translation problem.

And behind the second veil, there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies, having a golden altar of incense...

This part is not correct as written. The altar of incense is in the first sanctuary with the lampstand and table, not in the Holy of Holies with the Ark of the Covenant. Some commentators on Hebrews argue that the Greek word for "altar" here should be translated as "censor." They say that the writer was really referring to the High Priest's censor (a device carried by the priest with coals and incense) that was carried into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. To their support, the writer of Hebrews does reference later, several times, the elements of the Day of Atonement. However, if he was really referring to the censor then he made another equally grave mistake. He forgot to describe the altar of incense in the holy place. In either case, his explanation of the earthly sanctuary is not correct.

But the passage in Revelation 8:3-5 sheds more light on the matter. That passage contains both the words "altar" and "censor" together. The Greek word for "altar" (thusiasterion #2379) is the same word used in Hebrews 9:3. The Greek word used for censor (such as a portable censor for incense) is entirely different; it is libanotos #3031. This evidence suggests that the writer of Hebrews was referring to the altar of incense, not the censor used by the high priest. Therefore, we are back to the original error. He has placed the altar of incense in the wrong chamber.

Let's examine the actual description that Moses gave for the earthly sanctuary. It may shed some light on why the unknown Greek writer thought the altar of incense went with the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies.

On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. And you shall place the ark of the testimony there, and you shall screen the ark with the veil. And you shall bring in the table and arrange what belongs on it; and you shall bring in the lampstand and mount its lamps. Moreover, you shall set the gold altar of incense before the ark of the testimony, and set up the veil for the doorway to the tabernacle.

Exodus 40:2-5

Do you think it is possible that the writer of Hebrews was thinking of this particular Scripture as a quick summary of the earthly sanctuary and didn't specifically detail how the altar of incense is really in the Holy Place? To the writer's defense, he stated he was not speaking in detail (he was summarizing).

... but of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

Heb 9:5b

It is not difficult for me to see the possibility of this summarization misplacing the altar of incense in the Holy of

Holies based on the expression you shall set the gold altar of incense before the ark of the testimony. The Torah itself says that every matter must have at least two or three evidences to prove something as true. Other Scriptures reveal in more detail the actual placement of the altar of incense. This may be a simple mistake, easily made by a person not that familiar with the temple or the other Scriptures. And this supports the opinion I share with some commentators that the writer was not a Hebrew.

Let's continue with what else the Greek writer offers to support his "new" understanding.

The Paradigm about Reformation

Now when these things have been thus prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle, performing the divine worship, but into the second only the high priest enters, once a year, not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed, while the outer tabernacle is still standing, which is a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience, since they relate only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation.

Hebrews 9:6-10

The writer continued his description of the divine worship and emphasized that the Holy of Holies was closed off except for the annual Day of Atonement service completed by the High Priest. The logic here is that this prophetically pictured what the Messiah (our Great High Priest) would do. No problem here, but then the author added something, going even further to state -

...until a time of reformation.

I have a confession to make. In all my years of studying the Torah, the prophets and the prophecies of the Messiah, I do not recall ever hearing about a prophesied time of reformation when the Messiah comes. I am aware of the prophecies for His work of redemption in fulfillment of the Lamb of God. I am aware of His future work of restoration at His return. But I am unfamiliar with any prophecies calling for the Messiah to reform the Law or the temple service especially after the tabernacle is no longer standing. This little piece of logic is consistent with the idea of the book being written well after 70 A.D., when the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. While I am not familiar with the prophecies of reformation for the Law, the writer of Hebrews did offer two Scriptural arguments in support of this point. The first Scripture offered is Psalm 110.

The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, "Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

Psalms 110:4

In Hebrews 7:28 the writer insisted that this oath (The Lord has sworn) was proclaiming that the Messiah was a priest in the order of Melchizedek. Agreed. But then he stated this oath came after the Law. He has already argued that a change of priesthood requires a change of Law – of necessity there takes place a change in the law also (Heb 7:12). I agree that Psalm 110 was written after the Law, but I disagree that the oath came after the Law. The entire plan for the Messiah to come as our Redemption, to be our High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, and to sit at the right hand of the Almighty was established before the foundations of the world.

Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;

I Corinthians 2:6-8

How could the writer say that this oath was given after the Law? He previously argued how the Messiah is superior, before ordained. He previously argued that Melchizedek was before the Law (Heb 7:1-10). Is it not more consistent and supportive of the Messiah's superiority to say that His oath was before the foundations of the world? Doesn't the writer of Hebrews later say that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb 13:8)? The dimension of time is not a relative argument; the Messiah was before time, and will be after time. Making an after the Law

argument is Greek in thought.

The Hebrew argument for the priesthood of Aaron and his sons from the tribe of Levi is based on the previous model of Abraham bringing tithes to Melchizedek. Melchizedek is the precedent. This is what the Torah teaches. I understand that the writer of Hebrews was presenting that Yeshua and His priesthood were superior to Aaron and the Levites. I agree. That is proved by Melchizedek and the instruction of Torah. But, why was he switching the sequence to say that Yeshua (and the oath) came after the Law? It appears that he was attempting to diminish the Law while promoting the concept of a time of reformation. While I agree with the superiority of Messiah's priesthood, this argument does not seem consistent with other Scriptures. Finally, the writer's argument is not self evident in Psalm 110:4 alone.

The author made a second argument for a time of reformation using Psalms 40. This time he attempted to define the coming of the Messiah into the world as this supposed time of reformation.

Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, "Sacrifice and offering Thou hast not desired, but a body Thou hast prepared for Me; in whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come (In the roll of the book it is written of Me) To do Thy will, O God.'" After saying above, "Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast not desired, nor hast Thou taken pleasure in them" (which are offered according to the Law), then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Thy will." He takes away the first in order to establish the second. By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.
Hebrews 10:5-10

Let's go back to Psalms 40, because the writer failed to include the last phrase of verse 8 in his quotation.

I delight to do Thy will, O my God; Thy Law is within my heart.

Psalms 40:8

Why didn't the writer of Hebrews finish the sentence with the clause Thy Law is within my heart? It appears that he was trying to steer our thinking away from the Law of God being immutably written on our hearts to other conclusions. First, he apparently believed that the will of God in Psalm 40 was not in support of the Law at the time of reformation when Yeshua came. Second, he apparently believed that the will of God was to replace the Law and that was what Yeshua came to do. Third, he apparently believed Yeshua came to do the will of God by replacing the Law by taking away the first to establish the second. (Does that sound like something was being switched?)

In summary, by omitting the essential clause, Thy Law is within my heart, from his quotation, the writer apparently wanted his readers to believe that Yeshua specifically came to do God's will by replacing the Old (the first) with the New (the second). He viewed the time of reformation as being the coming of Yeshua and the perfect time for God to make this switch. But the last clause of verse 8 supports the opposite of his argument. Maybe that is why he didn't quote it.

Did Yeshua teach that He came to do His Father's will just as Hebrew says? Yes. Did Yeshua say that God's will was to reform the Law, or to replace it, to take away the first to establish the second? No, never. In fact, Yeshua said exactly the opposite.

Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke [jot or tittle] shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:17-19

Is it possible that the writer of Hebrews was teaching differently than what Yeshua himself taught about his Law? Is it possible that the author's intent, based on his Greek way of thinking, was to replace the Old Law with a New Covenant? Would that not constitute the abolishment of the Law, something Yeshua said he did not come to do? Is it possible that he lacked the Hebrew logic that would support the true work Yeshua came to do - renewing the Law that was within his heart by seeking to have it written within the hearts of all who would follow him? Is that why the

writer believed what Yeshua was reforming, rather than completing the Law and bringing it to full meaning and purpose by the example of his life?

If the writer of Hebrews was trying to annul (change or reform) even one little commandment in the Law then he would have been positioning himself to be least in the kingdom of heaven. But if he was intent on replacing the Old Law with a New Covenant, surely he placed himself on the bull's-eye of Messiah's judgment. The writer himself has stated the punishment of the Lord.

Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

Hebrews 10:28.

The Paradigm of Better

The writer of Hebrews apparently tried to sell his version of the "New" Covenant with the advertisement of "It is new, it's improved, it's better."

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

Hebrews 9:11-15

This is probably the writer's best argument for the superiority of Messiah. There is no need to dispute that the Messiah is better. There is no question that the substance of the Messiah is better than the promise alone or the symbols of the Messiah. There is no question that the Messiah is qualified to mediate between God and men and superior to human mediators. Yeshua has shown that He has the eternal life and can give us the gift of eternal life. Instead of death and curses prescribed by the Law for our willful and defiant sins, Yeshua has passed us from death to life as the Passover Lamb, slain from the foundation of the earth in the plan and will of YHVH that was fulfilled by his earthly sacrifice.

The writer made the case for Yeshua's superior mediation position between God and man several times and with this I have no dispute for His sacrifice covers our sins. But the writer described this position as the ministry of Yeshua - what he had come to do in obedience to the will of his Father. As previously discussed, the writer apparently believed that ministry was to replace the Old Law with the New Covenant that is better with better promises.

But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.

Hebrews 8:6

What is the point of this argument? Once again, it appears that the author was trying to diminish and devalue the previous covenants and show Yeshua's ministry as replacing them. In Greek thinking better is like "new." The writer wanted Yeshua to be seen as the mediator (the negotiator or arbitrator) of a better covenant with better promises to replace the former one (the one full of weaknesses that is useless). He was overselling the superiority of the Messiah to undersell the Law.

Wasn't the Messiah present and part of the covenants made with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, or David? According to Scripture, the Messiah is God, in Him is the fullness of God. God made all of the previous covenants. Why was Yeshua's mediation when he was on earth so much better than God (His Father) coming down to Mt. Sinai? No other people have ever heard the voice of God and lived to tell about it. Was the covenant with Noah better than the one with Adam? Yes. Was the covenant with Abraham better than the one made with Noah? Yes, again. In fact, every successive covenant has elements to improve, expand, and increase the relationship between God and Man. That is

why God made each of these covenants, not as a replacements of the old one but as a renewal with enhancements. In chapter 11 the writer made this very argument using the term better multiple times. Is the "New Covenant" better than the previous covenants? YES! But selling the New Covenant because it is better sounds like a trite TV commercial selling a "new and improved" soap. It is the pitch of a merchant. It is more like luring you away from the supposed competition.

The Hebrew concept of better is found in the word "fulfill." When a promise was completed or fulfilled, it was better because it had been filled full of enhancements. The Messiah came to fulfill the prophecies, to fill them full of meaning and example and enhancements. Therefore the Renewed Covenant in Yeshua was even better. When the Messiah returns to earth and establishes His Kingdom it will be – even better. But it won't replace any previous covenants.

The Paradigm of Testament

For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives.

Hebrews 9:16-17

This is another example of how a Greek word with multiple meanings is used by the writer to introduce a "new" concept. The Greek word in this verse (diatheke) translated as covenant has three meanings or definitions. One definition is like the meaning of the Hebrew word "brit" that is usually translated as covenant and means in plain English an agreement between two people or a contract. The second definition of diatheke is a will. The third definition is a testament. The will a person writes before he dies leaving his instructions for disposing of his property.

By introducing the death of the one who made it into this paragraph, the writer of Hebrews has just defined the New Covenant as being a last will and testament rather than being an agreement between God and man. But the New Covenant described by Jeremiah (31:31-33) using the word brit is not a testament or will left by a dead person. It is an agreement, a covenant between God and His chosen one people. The writer has switched the meanings to make a Hebrew covenant into a Greek will and testament.

The Hebrew concept of covenant may also be likened to a treaty or marriage. No one has to die when a treaty or agreement for marriage is established. The Apostle Paul draws attention to the marriage covenant comparing it to what the Messiah is doing with us (Eph 5:32). Additionally, the Hebrew concept of covenant (brit) usually involves some form of "cutting" in the formation of the agreement such as the sacrifice of animals by cutting them (Jer. 34:18). And covenant formation often employs the powerful symbol of blood to show the great significance and permanence of any covenant formed. Blood means life.

For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.

Leviticus 17:11

Apparently, the writer of Hebrews has turned the blood of atonement into the shedding of blood meaning death. Which definition for covenant do you think we should be using for the definition of the New Covenant; the Greek definition of testament or the Hebrew concept involving cutting and blood? As a Messianic believer, I think we should stay strictly with the Hebrew concept. What need was there for a reformation and redefinition from what God had ordained from creation? And why would the definition of brit found throughout the Law (that Yeshua said he did not come to change in any way) need to be changed by the writer of Hebrews? What did he intend to accomplish by doing so? He is not here to answer, but we have discovered the very roots of covenant and replacement theology.

The Paradigm of Blood

Therefore even the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you." And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood. And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no

The writer of Hebrews takes his readers back to the formation of the covenant that God made with Moses and the children of Israel at Mt Sinai involving cutting and blood. His description sounds authoritative and precisely detailed. But it is not accurate when compared to the Scriptures he seems to be referring to. And more confusion is created in the minds of those who would take the time to review the facts.

Actually, there are two events being spoken of here, not one as the writer is suggesting. The first event was when Moses came down from the mountain, recounting the Torah. The second was approximately a year later, after the tabernacle was set up at its inauguration. Setting aside the fact that these were two different events, even though they are improperly combined by the writer, let's examine his argument. It leads to a powerful conclusion about the Messiah.

The writer says that Moses used the blood of calves and goats. He used water, scarlet wool, and hyssop. He sprinkled the book and the people. He goes on to say that Moses also sprinkled the tabernacle and its vessels with blood. He says that this was all done according to the Law. Let's examine what the Law really says. (We are about to compare one deck of cards to another like in our introductory paradigm illustration.)

Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, "All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do!" And Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord. Then he arose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the sons of Israel, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings to the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and the other half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!" So Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words."

Exodus 24:3-8

The writer of Hebrews has made a much bigger mistake here than the placement of the altar of incense in the Holy of Holies we described earlier. Moses did not use the blood of goats; he used only the blood of bulls (calves). Moses did not use water, scarlet wool, or hyssop. Moses did not sprinkle the book; he read the book to the people and he sprinkled the altar and then he sprinkled the people.

Was the writer of Hebrews intentionally misleading his readers or was he just very confused about that Law. Or could it be that someone has tampered with this text, adding things for effect? If he was just confused and has made an unintentional mistake, then he has compromised his own testimony of promoting the superiority of the Messiah. By the way, Judaizers already know about these mistakes and use the book of Hebrews as one of their best evidences to disparage the entire New Testament.

The writer also wrote that Moses also sprinkled with blood the tabernacle when it was established. So he makes another mistake.

On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. And you shall place the ark of the testimony there, and you shall screen the ark with the veil. And you shall bring in the table and arrange what belongs on it; and you shall bring in the lampstand and mount its lamps. Moreover, you shall set the gold altar of incense before the ark of the testimony, and set up the veil for the doorway to the tabernacle. And you shall set the altar of burnt offering in front of the doorway of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. And you shall set the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it. And you shall set up the court all around and hang up the veil for the gateway of the court. Then you shall take the anointing oil and anoint the tabernacle and all that is in it, and shall consecrate it and all its furnishings; and it shall be holy. And you shall anoint the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and consecrate the altar; and the altar shall be most holy. And you shall anoint the laver and its stand, and consecrate it.

Exodus 40:2-11

Moses did not use blood to sprinkle the tabernacle and its vessels. He used anointing oil and he anointed them. He didn't use water, scarlet wool, or hyssop either.

Why was the writer of Hebrews completely mistaken about these two events. Why are these other elements added to his argument for the superiority of Yeshua as Messiah? Has someone tampered with the original writing? It appears that the writer is confused about the cleansing ceremonies in the Law and with the cleansing power of Yeshua's blood for our sins (1 John 1:7). It looks like he disregarded the elementary teachings and instruction of washings (Heb 6:1-2) too early. It seems he thought Moses was washing and cleansing the book, the people, and the tabernacle as he wrote further in the next verse.

Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

Hebrews 9:23

Based on this error concerning the prior acts of Moses, the writer boldly pronounced that Yeshua took His own blood to the temple in heaven apparently for the purpose of cleansing. I agree that Yeshua's blood is an atonement for sins. But on what basis and with the support of what other witnesses could the writer possibly conclude that Yeshua had to go to the temple in heaven to cleanse the temple? There is no basis for this conclusion and no other Scripture supports it.

For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor was it that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood not his own. Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Hebrews 9:24-26

History tells us that Yeshua came approximately 4,000 years after creation. A Biblical age is considered to 2,000 years. Since the days of Yeshua, we have seen approximately 2,000 more years. Yeshua's sacrifice for sin was not the consummation of the ages. We are witnesses of another full age after Yeshua's work of redemption. The writer of Hebrews was at least one full age (2,000 years) off of the mark declaring the consummation of the ages. Besides, the prophets of Israel, the Messiah Himself, and the Apostles all taught that the consummation of ages comes with the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord has not happened yet. Paul even addressed that point (2 Thess 2:1-2). The writer of Hebrews made another Biblical blunder.

The Paradigm of Perfect

For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those who draw near.

Hebrews 10:1

According to this statement, the Law (which was not understood by the writer), was also not perfect.

The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

Psalms 19:7

The writer is not disputing the Psalmist. He is changing the meaning of the Hebrew word perfect. He is using the Greek definition of perfect which means sinless, having no defect whatsoever, no weakness, nor fault. The Hebrew definition for perfect is mature, complete, sound, blameless, having integrity. Paul uses the Hebrew definition in his teachings.

Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Messiah Yeshua.

The writer of Hebrews took his concept and definition of having no defect whatsoever to the next level – sanctification - by writing that the sanctifying work of Yeshua made us perfect according to his Greek definition.

By this will [replacing the first with the second] we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. For by one offering He has perfected [made us without defect whatsoever] for all time those who are sanctified.

Hebrews 10:10,14

The writer wants to get us all the way to holy perfection. To do that, he must address the subject of sanctification. The problem with changing a few earlier definitions is that it never stops. You have to keep making changes to make everything fit. So he must also change the definition for sanctification.

Let's go back to the Law of Moses and Yeshua to get the Hebrew definition for things that are sanctified and how they become sanctified. Sacrifices do not sanctify; altars sanctify sacrifices. Sanctified means separated, specifically separated wholly unto God. We are not sanctified by the sacrifice of Yeshua using His body or blood as the writer says. We are sanctified by truth, the Word of God, and His commandments (John 17:17, Eph 5:26)

Perfection and sanctification are very powerful theological concepts with far reaching implications. The book of Hebrews has led many Christians to believe that the sacrifice of Yeshua is imminently more significant than the altar service in the temple. However, consider what Yeshua said about sacrifices, altars and sanctification.

Woe to you, blind guides, who say, "Whoever swears by the temple, that is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obligated." You fools and blind men; which is more important, the gold, or the temple that sanctified the gold? And, "Whoever swears by the altar, that is nothing, but whoever swears by the offering upon it, he is obligated." You blind men, which is more important, the offering or the altar that sanctifies the offering? Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears both by the altar and by everything on it. And he who swears by the temple, swears both by the temple and by Him who dwells within it.

Matthew 23:16-21

Do you know why the Catholics have a doctrine of infallibility? It is based on the concept of perfection (having no defect whatsoever) and sanctification (being made separate and Holy unto God) from the book of Hebrews.

Because God had provided something better for us [New Testament saints], so that apart from us they [Old Testament saints] should not be made perfect.

Hebrews 11:40

The book of Hebrews seems to differentiate between Old Testament saints who weren't perfect from New Testament Christians who apparently were. Some Christian theologians teach that one becomes perfect, sinless, infallible because of the sacrifice of Jesus. This may be why Catholics are fixated on the sacrifice of Yeshua (symbolized by the crucifix) and not his resurrection. They have also advanced the concept of perfection to the doctrine of infallibility for the office of Pope. While Protestant Christians do not agree, they carry over a similar concept of perfection for those in leadership. For conservative Protestants in particular, once you are saved and become a Christian and a leader, you must never make any big mistakes again (like sin) or you will be removed from leadership. For example, if you get divorced, then you're out of the ministry. You are treated like a leper; you're unclean, you're not perfect anymore. Most conservative churches won't let you be a Pastor anymore. Only perfect Christians get to be leaders and teachers in those churches. Before you get offended at my characterization, read further what the writer of Hebrews says.

For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame.

Hebrews 6:4-6

For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

Hebrews 10:26

Other Paradigm Problems

So where does all of our study and discussion concerning the paradigms of the book of Hebrews take us? There are other examples that could be argued as possible errors. They include the paradoxical statements made concerning Abraham and whether he did or did not receive the promises (Heb 11:13,17). There is the request of Jacob to Joseph for his burial with the blessing of Joseph's sons, which is mixed together in Heb 11:21. But those don't bear the same weight of theological consequences as those expressed in chapters eight through ten.

However, Messianic believers do need to consider how the writer concluded his letter to the Hebrews.

Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, through which those who were thus occupied were not benefitted. We have an altar, from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.

Hebrews 13:9-10

What varied and strange teaching was the writer of Hebrews warning his readers about? What foods or teaching of foods was he referring to? The writer seems to have taken direct aim at pro-Torah Messianic believers. He seems to refer to the ceremonial foods that are associated with the feasts of the Lord. He may even be referring to the instructions about kosher (clean and unclean things). If so, then he taking issue with eating only unleavened bread at Passover and not eating any food on the Day of Atonement. He wrote that none of those observances ordained by God in his Law do any good whatsoever. He has urged us to leave that all behind. Surely his statements constitute changing, if not annulling, some of the instructions of the Law and teaching others to do so. Personally, I consider the writer's final exhortation to be a varied and strange teaching.

Conclusion

I, too, will conclude with something the writer concluded with. We have an altar, from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. This statement appears to offer an altar for us to worship at different from the altar in the temple in Jerusalem. Let's consider that.

Moses said that an altar is required for a sacrifice to God. Yeshua said that the altar sanctifies the sacrifice – sets it apart for a specific purpose. Let me ask a very serious theological question born out of the theological implications of the book of Hebrews.

How was the blood of Yeshua sanctified to be the New Covenant and the atonement for our sins? Was it because Yeshua was taken out of the temple as the writer suggests? Is it because He ascended to heaven after His resurrection?

We know that the life and blood was provided by Yeshua. But what about the altar? What altar sanctified His sacrifice to be the Lamb of God? Was it the altar in Heaven? Is that what the writer of Hebrews is trying to say?

It wasn't the altar in Heaven. This is the testimony of the other books of the Bible that answer this question.

Yeshua was declared to be the Lamb of God by a Levitical priest (John the Baptist). Behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. He was purchased (30 pieces of silver) and presented for slaughter by the elders of the temple in Jerusalem. He was handed over to the fit man (the Centurion) like the Scapegoat. He was taken out of Jerusalem directly across from the temple mount to the Mount of Olives, where the altar for the red heifer, the bull and goat of Yom Kippur is set. His head was caught in the thicket of thorns and He was offered just like the ram Abraham did in place of Isaac. Abraham said that "in that place" the Lamb would be provided by the Lord Himself.

And Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And Abraham called the name of that place The Lord Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the Lord it will be provided."

Genesis 22:8a,14

Yeshua was raised up on the tree (cross) just like Moses' staff in the wilderness. He was elevated above the altar in the

temple in Jerusalem. All sacrifices are called "elevation" offerings. His Father was sitting in the Holy of Holies on the mercy seat, looking out through the veil, and beyond the holy place and its furnishings. From His vantage point, He saw the body and blood of His Son, the Son of God elevated above the great altar in the court of Israel. All of this was in accordance with Law of Moses. At the moment of His life given, our Heavenly Father rent His outer garment (the veil) from the top down. The Centurion also saw the veil and the tombs opened on the Mount of Olives. He proclaimed that Yeshua was truly the Son of God. The Apostle John at the base of the cross saw the water and blood come from His body when He was pierced and proclaimed that He was a witness to the water and the blood. It was just like the water libation ceremony that is presented on the altar on the last day (John 7:37) of the Feast of Tabernacles (which is even more significant than the Day of Atonement which was days earlier).

The altar in the temple in Jerusalem sanctified the blood of the New Covenant in accordance with the Law of Moses. The writer of Hebrews, apparently, does not understand this and is directing us away from that altar.

The paradigm of Hebrews is the basis for the organization of the Bible in the form of Old and New Testaments. The paradigm of Hebrews is also the greatest source for those in the faith to be opposed to the Torah. It is the root teaching for Covenant and Replacement Theology. It is the basis for the rejection of the entire temple/altar service in Jerusalem. Additionally, those outside the faith consider the book of Hebrews to be the best source material to discredit the entire New Testament due to the errors about the Law expressed in the book itself.

Why do we believe that the book of Hebrews is the authoritative Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and inerrant? It appears that the answer is primarily because it is already printed in the Bible, it speaks for the Messiah, and because of the Paradigm. As presently printed in our Bibles, the book of Hebrews in a side-by-side comparison does not accurately reflect the Law of Moses. It appears to misrepresent Hebrew definitions and concepts by willfully substituting Greek definitions and concepts. Its conclusions of what Messiah Yeshua did with His own blood in the Heavenly temple are disturbing and unsubstantiated. It disregards the altar in Jerusalem that sanctified the blood of the New Covenant.

What is our basis for Messianic brethren to call the Book of Hebrews the Word of God – Scripture? Should we simply defer to the previous decisions of the Catholic and Protestant Church Fathers? Should we defer to the present day majority opinion of the brethren because of the paradigm? There is no question that this is a controversy and difficult to bear. What do we do?

I am calling for a council of many Messianic leaders and teachers to convene and discuss this matter more fully, at a minimum the instances and issues I have cited. Has the book been tampered with? Is this really what the writer intended? We need to be reconciled to these issues and, ultimately, we need to decide if we are going to bear the exhortation of this book. Historically, this is how controversial matters have been addressed (Acts 15). Is the leadership of the Messianic Movement mature enough to convene such a council and face such a question?

We need to do this soon. Because, soon, another altar will be erected on the temple mount in Jerusalem. It is prophesied to be. God will measure us with that altar (Rev 11:1). What will we say about that altar in that soon coming day? Will we reference Moses and Yeshua or the book of Hebrews? Churchmen are already on record about any altar in Jerusalem. They use the Paradigm of Hebrews. My question is directed to my fellow Messianic believers.



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