



“Call No Man Rabbi”

Beit Emet Congregation ~ Vancouver, WA

Ben Ehrhardt, Shamash

2/9/08

www.hearoisrael.org

Today’s teaching is off-topic, as concerns the Torah cycle. It is actually going to be part of a larger article for the website titled, “**The Gifts of Ministry**”. This is something I’ve been working on, in between other assignments, because I feel there is a lot of misunderstanding and “*old baggage*” from our former belief systems that influence our understanding in this area. We need to look at these gifts and callings with fresh eyes, in the light of Torah and historical Hebrew worship. But, one of these “**giftings**” and “**callings**” seems to be at the center of some real dissention within Nazarene Israel, or whatever you choose to call this movement.

Last week, as we studied **Parsha Mishpatim**, we talked a little about “**kindness**” and “**respect**” for Yahweh’s creation and His people. As we closed, I said that I would address **Mattityahu 23:8**, the “**call no man rabbi**” verse. I guess it’s fair to ask, “**Why?**” Why is this an issue? We read a verse in Mattityahu that says, in some of our English translations, “*Call no man Rabbi*” and in others, “*Do not be called Rabbi*”. So, why don’t we just follow that instruction and be done with it? Well, if that was all there was to this sentiment; then, perhaps I could agree and say, if you feel that way about it, don’t call anyone “*rabbi*”. And, don’t call anyone “*father*” or “*leader*”, as the two verses that follow state, according to the ISR Scriptures. Or, if your translation of choice uses other terms, then follow that version. But, there’s a much more important principle at work here.

We touched, last week, on a problem within this movement that has much greater implications than just how we refer to “**teachers**” and “**leaders**” within our community, here in Vancouver, WA and around the world. If we are going to fulfill the commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves, then we have to learn to respect him also. So today, I want us to look into what Scripture has to say on this subject. And, at the end of it all, no matter what terms you decide to use; hopefully, you will come away with a better understanding of how Yahweh expects us to feel and act toward our brethren. Ahmein?

Let’s begin with a little Scriptural background. And, since we’ll be using three different translations, I will identify each of them for you, as we go through this. First, we read from Dr. Trimm’s HRV, translated from the Aramaic, **1 Corinthians 12:27-28**; **Now, you are the body of Messiah, and members in your place. And Eloah placed in His assembly: first emissaries; after them, prophets; after them, teachers; after them, workers of power; after them, gifts of healings and helpers and leaders and kinds of tongues.**

Next, let’s look at a few more verses that Sha’ul wrote after Yahshua condemned the behavior of the Scribes and Pharisees. And, you’ll notice as I read this, that Sha’ul explains how we are to walk in our callings and giftings with a humble heart, forbearing and loving our brethren. OK, again

from the HRV, **Ephesians 4:1-16**; *I, therefore, a prisoner in our Adon, entreat you that you walk as is becoming to the calling that you were called, with all lowliness of mind, and quietness, and long-suffering. And be enduring towards one another in love. And be diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of shalom. And, that you be one body and one spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling. For YHVH is One, and the faith is one and the immersion is one, and one Eloah is the Father of all, and above all, and through all, and in us all. But, to each of us is given favor, according to the measure of the gift of the Messiah. Therefore this is said, "He ascended to a high place and carried captivity captive and gave gifts to men". Now, what is it that He ascended, unless also He had first descended to the depths of the earth? He who descended is He who ascended higher than all the heavens, that He might fulfill all. And, He gave some emissaries, and some prophets, and some proclaimers, and some shepherds, and some teachers. For the perfecting of the set-apart ones, for the work of the service, for the edification of the body of Messiah, until all of us become one and the same in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of Eloah and one complete man, according to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Messiah. And, we should not be infants, who are shaken and turned about by every wind of deceitful teachings of the sons of men, who by their craftiness are plotting to deceive. But, we should be steadfast in our love, that in everything we may grow up in the Messiah, who is the Head. And, from Him the whole body is fit together and is tied together in all the joints, according to the gift that is given by measure to each member for the growth of the body, that its edification might be accomplished in love.*

Again, Sha'ul teaches what Yahshua taught about the heart and intent of Torah, as it applies to our service, in **Romans 12:1-21** (from the HRV); *Now I urge you, my brothers, by the mercies of Eloah, to present your bodies a living and set-apart and acceptable offering to Eloah in reasonable service. And, do not imitate this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your minds and distinguish what is the good and acceptable and complete will of Eloah. Now, I say by the favor that was given to me for all of you, you should not think outside of what is right to think, but every man should think soberly, according to trust in the measure Eloah has distributed to him. For as in one body we have many members and all members do not have one function, so also we who are many are one body in the Messiah and each one of us are members of one another. But, we have various gifts according to the favor that is given to us. There is that which is of prophecy according to the measure of one's faith, and there is that which is of serving one as in his serving, and there is that which is of a teacher in his teaching, and there is that which is of a comforter in his comforting, and of one who gives with simplicity, and of one who presides with diligence, and of one who is merciful with cheerfulness. And let not your love be deceitful, but hate evil and cleave to good. Be compassionate to your brothers and love one another. Prefer one another in honor. Be diligent and not lazy. Be fervent in spirit. Labor for your Adon. Rejoice in your hope. Endure your afflictions. Be steadfast in prayer. Impart to the needs of the set-apart ones. Be compassionate to strangers. Bless your persecutors; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who are weeping. And whatever you think concerning your being, also think about your brothers. And, do not think with a proud mind, but associate with those who are meek. And do not be wise in the thoughts of your being. And, do not recompense a man evil for evil, but be diligent to do good before all sons of men. And, if it is possible, according to what is in you, have shalom with every man. And, do not avenge your being, my beloved, but give no place to anger, for it is written, "If you will not seek judgment for your being, I will perform your judgment, says Eloah. And, if your enemy is hungry, feed him. And, if he is thirsty, give him drink.*

And, if you do these to him, you will heap coals of fire upon his head". Do not let evil overcome you, but overcome evil with good.

Now, I'm not going to give away my whole teaching on the "***Gifts of Ministry***". So, I'll stop here, with the foundational Scriptures. I think you can see that the ministry gifts of the Ruach (Spirit) include teaching. Let me point out two things here, before we go one. First, the Hebrew word used in the passages above for "***teacher***" is "***moreh***" in the Hebrew translations. However, the ancient texts that we have, other than the Greek, are the Aramaic. And, the Aramaic word used for "***teacher***" in the all the above, is "***mal'panai***", which is where we get one of the Hebrew words for "***school***", "***ulpan***". And, these words are also used in the Hebrew TaNaK and the Aramaic Targum, respectively, for "***teacher***".

This brings me to point number two. So, where did the word "***rabbi***" come from and what does it mean? According to all the Jewish sources I read, the word and title "***rabbi***" did not come from Babylon. It came into being after the return of Yehudah to Yerushalayim, after the Babylonian captivity. After their return, Yehudah no longer had a king. Tsidqiyahu / Zedekiah was the last king to sit on David's throne and was taken captive when Babylon entered and utterly destroyed Yerushalayim. His grandson, Zerubbabel, would be Governor of Yehudah, as he led nearly 50,000 back from their captivity. With the Levitical line in disarray and the throne vacant, due to no army; Yehudah would be governed by "***Seventy Elders***" (the *Sanhedrin*) and the "***High Priest***". These elders would be a mix of "***rabbis***", who would form political parties, based on their interpretations of Scripture, ie *Pharisees* and *Sadducees*.

The word "***rabbi***" comes from the Hebrew word "***rab***" or "***rav***", meaning "***great***" as in "***numerous***" or "***much***". We say "***Todah Rabah***" or "***Thank you very much***". Of a person, "***rabbi***" would have the connotation of "***one who has much***". This is why it is used for "***teacher***", as he has much knowledge and understanding. In addition to "***teacher***", "***rabbi***" also means "***master***" or "***leader***" of a group of talmidim (*taught ones*) or of a "***shul***" or "***school***", *yeshiva*, etc. The leader of a synagogue is called an "***overseer***" or "***shaliach***" which equates to "***emissary***" or "***apostle***". Now also, in conversational Hebrew, we have "***rabbon***" or "***rabboni***", which mean "***teacher***" or "***master***" of "***much***". This would equate to a "***teacher***" or "***teachers***". I know that there are those who insist that "***rabbi***" means "***great one***" or some other such title. It's simply not so. It's about "***quantity***". The Hebrew word for "***great***" is "***gadol***". The closest word to that meaning, with the root "***rab***" would be "***Rabbeinu***". Yehudah calls Moshe, "***Moshe Rabbeinu***", as it means "***Moshe, our exalted teacher***". I'm sorry if that does not agree with some of the "***more'im***" or "***teachers***" in this movement. The information is there, simply set aside the biases and do the homework.

One last little thing here. Can we really know that "***rabbi***" means "***teacher***" in Scripture? That's a fair question. As a matter of fact, we can know this. When in doubt, let Scripture interpret Scripture. We read from the ISR Scriptures, in ***Yochanan 1***, after the prophet Yochanan immerses Yahshua, that two of his talmidim follow Yahshua, in ***verses 35-40***; ***Again the following day, Yochanan was standing with two of his taught ones, and looking at Yahshua walking, he said, "See the Lamb of Elohim!" And the two taught ones heard him speaking, and they followed Yahshua. And Yahshua turning, and seeing them following, said to them, "What do you seek?" And they said to Him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are You staying?" He said to them, "Come and see." They went and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day. Now it was about the tenth hour. Andri, the brother of Shim'on Kepha, was one of the two who heard from Yochanan, and followed Him.***

Now, you'll notice that the end of **verse 38** reads, *And they said to Him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are You staying?"* The phrase in "*which means teacher*" is in parenthesis. Now, one might think this means it was added by the translators. And, James Trimm has omitted this phrase from his HRV translation. But, when I looked at the Aramaic on Peshitta.org and AramaicNewTestament.org I found it to be in the text. It also appears in the Greek text as the word "*didaskalos*", being the Greek word for "*teacher*".

So, what was Yahshua saying in **Mattityahu 23**? Well, some "*wise guy*", I mean wise man, once said that "*text without context is just pretext*". Huh? In order to get the full picture, we need to read more than just a verse or three. So, let's look at the whole picture. Now, we need to go all the way back to **Mattityahu 20**. It opens with Yahshua comparing the "Kingdom of Heaven" to householder of the vineyard who goes out to hire workers for his vineyard. Remember, the ones who worked only a portion of the day received the same wage as those who worked all day. He finishes the parable by saying in **verse 16** (ISR Scriptures); "*Thus the last shall be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.*"

Then on their way to Yerushalayim, we read in **verses 20-28**; *Then the mother of the sons of Zabdai came to Him with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him. And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Command that these two sons of mine might sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your reign." But Yahshua answering, said, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and to be immersed with the immersion that I am immersed with?" They said to Him, "We are able." And He said to them, "You shall indeed drink My cup, and you shall be immersed with the immersion that I am immersed with. But to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father." And when the ten heard it, they were displeased at the two brothers. But Yahshua called them near and said, "You know that the rulers of the nations are masters over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever wishes to be first among you, let him be your servant, even as the Son of Adam did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."* So here, before they get to Yerushalayim, Yahshua is admonishing His *taught ones* not to seek being "*great*" or "*lifted up*" in the eyes of each other or other men. Remember this, as we go through the rest of the story.

Now, in the first part of **Mattityahu 21**, we see Yahshua coming into Yerushalayim to complete His mission. After entering the City, he goes directly to the Hekal (the *Temple*) and drives away those selling and the moneychangers; declaring in **21:13** (ISR Scriptures); *And He said to them, "It has been written, 'My House shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of robbers.'*" Then we see the events begin to unfold as the leadership of the Yehudim become upset in **verses 14-16**; *And blind and lame ones came to Him in the Set-apart Place, and He healed them. But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonders which He did, and the children crying out in the Set-apart Place and saying, "Hoshia-na to the Son of Dawid!" (Save us now, Son of David!) they were greatly displeased, and said to Him, "Do You hear what these say?" And Yahshua said to them, "Yea, have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of babes and nurslings You have perfected praise'?"*

The next day, as Yahshua encounters the chief priests and elders again, they continue to contend with Him. But, as Yahshua speaks to them about the "*Kingdom of Heaven*" in parables, they are

unable to refute Him and begin to plot against Him. They send Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees to test Him. Let's jump in, with **Mattityahu 22:34-46** (still with the ISR); *But the Pharisees, having heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, were gathered together, and one of them, one learned in the Torah, did question, trying Him, and saying, "Teacher, which is the great command in the Torah?" And Yahshua said to him, " 'You shall love YHVH your Elohim with all your heart, and with all your being, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great command. And the second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commands hang all the Torah and the Prophets." And when the Pharisees were gathered together, Yahshua asked them, saying, "What do you think concerning the Messiah? Whose Son is He?" They said to Him, "The Son of Dawid." He said to them, "Then how does Dawid in the Spirit call Him 'Master,' saying, 'YHVH said to my Master, "Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies a footstool of Your feet" ' ? If then Dawid calls Him 'Master,' how is He his Son?" And no one was able to answer Him a word, and from that day on no one was bold enough to ask Him any more questions.*

OK, the stage is set for us to understand what comes next. We read, from the Salkinson-Ginsberg Hebrew DuTillet translation, in **Mattityahu 23:1-7**; *Then Yahshua spoke to the crowds and to His taught ones, saying, "On Moshe's seat sit the Scribes and Pharisees. And all that he says to you, observe and do. But do not do according to their works, for they say, but do not. For they bind up heavy burdens, and put them on men's shoulders, but they will not stagger around with them themselves. And so all their works they do that they may be seen by the sons of men, for they make their Tefillin broad, and enlarge the tzitziyot of their martuta (mantles), and love the chief couches at the feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the salutations in the marketplace, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi.'"*

An interesting side note here, is that Yahshua doesn't tell them that wearing Tefillin is wrong at all. It was an accepted practice for keeping the command to "*bind the words of Torah as a sign on your hand and that they shall be as frontlets between your eyes*". But, that's another teaching. What Yahshua is plainly saying here is that people are to obey what Moshe says, in other words, the Torah, and not what the Scribes and Pharisees **do**. While they were teaching Torah, they were doing something different; "*for they say, but do not*". They imposed heavy oral burdens on the people, that they didn't keep. But, the works they did, were for show, so that they would be lifted up in the eyes of the people. Which is exactly what Yahshua told His taught ones that they had better not do.

Next, from the same Hebrew DuTillet translation, **verses 8-12**; *"But, do not seek to be called rabbi, for only one is our rabbi, and all of you are brothers"* Let me pause a moment here to point out that Yahshua said that "*only one is our rabbi*". He's speaking of our "**Teacher**", Ruach HaKodesh, not Himself. "*Call no man Father on the earth, for one is your Father, He who is in heaven. Neither seek to be called leaders, for One is your leader, the Messiah. But, he who is greatest among you will be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.*"

So, what's Yahshua saying to them? Do not become "**rabbis**" or "**teachers**"? No, that is a "**gift of ministry**". Do not be known as a "**father**"? No, even Sha'ul called himself the "**father**" of Onesimos in **Philemon 1:10**. Scripture refers to the patriarchs as our "**fathers**" too many times to count. Do not be or become known as "**leaders**"? No, at the last supper, after Yahshua broke the bread and gave thanks, we read in **Luke 22:24-26**; *And there also took place a dispute among them, as to which of them seemed to be greater. And He said to them, "The sovereigns*

of the gentiles rule over them, and those who control them are called 'workers of good.' ***But not so with you, but let him who is greatest among you be as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves.*** What Yahshua is saying to the Scribes and Pharisees is what He said to His taught ones and to us today; do not exalt yourself. Do not seek to be "**somebody**" in the eyes of your brothers and sisters. This is not to say that we do not acknowledge the giftings and callings that we see in the brethren. A "**rabbi**" is a "**moreh**" or a "**teacher**", a "**father**" (whether *physical* or *spiritual*) is a "**progenitor**" (a **patriarch**) and a "**leader**" is an "**emissary**" or an "**elder**". Yahshua is declaring to the Scribes and Pharisees, and Sha'ul is reminding us all, that these people and offices are "**servants**", as they serve the body of Messiah.

Did you see what else is being said here? In the midst of teaching what He taught His talmidim back in **Chapter 20** and what He'll go on to teach again by washing the feet of His taught ones at the last supper (be humble, not puffed up, be servants and be filled with love for your brother); what Yahshua is also teaching is Who Elohim is. **Verse 9** really caught me by surprise. "**Call no man Father on the earth, for one is your Father, He who is in heaven.**" In the Hebrew, it also reads, "**Call no man Father of the earth, for one is your Father, He who is in heaven**". The Hebrew word used here for "**Father**" is of course "**Ab**", which also means "**Progenitor**" or "**Creator**". The Ruach is our Teacher, Yahweh, Creator of the earth, is our Father and Yahshua Messiah is our Leader. Everything bears witness of Elohim.

I don't know if you caught Monte's Erev Shabbat teaching last night, live on the internet. But, he was teaching on the Torah portion this week, Terumah. I missed most of it. But, I did catch part of it, as he related how the three pieces of furniture for the Tabernacle, shown to Moshe and described in detail, the Ark with the Mercy Seat, the Table of Shewbread and the Menorah, were pictures of Yahweh revealed to us. The Mercy Seat representing Yahweh, as it is where He sits (His throne); the Table of Shewbread represents Yahshua (Yahweh shown to us); and the Menorah, having seven branches, representing the seven Spirits of Yahweh (Ruach HaKodesh). It was a beautiful teaching. It's archived on his website and well worth your time. Everything testifies of Elohim. Baruch HaShem Yahweh!

Finally here, Yahshua comes to the crux of His issue with the leaders of Yehudah. We read in **Mattityahu 23:13-15**, from the same translation; "**Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and as a pretense, you make long prayers. Therefore, you will receive greater condemnation. And, woe to you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites! Because you shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men; for you don't enter in yourselves, neither do you allow those who are entering to enter. Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites! For you travel around by sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of Gehenna as yourselves.**"

Wow! I'm sure glad He ain't talking to me. But, could He be talking to us? Well, we're not Pharisees. We're against all that rabbinic stuff. See where it leads. That's why Yahshua was mad at them. Yahshua rebuked these leaders, who would put on a great show of being religious, yet were taking advantage of the poorest of people, whom they were admonished throughout Torah to take care of. Are any of us, and I mean leaders, putting on a great show, while taking financial advantage of people?

Do we, as Nazarene Israel at large, shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against others? And, fail to enter in ourselves? Well, what does that mean? When we get self-righteous about all this truth that we have, we had better not *condemn* people for their so-called pagan practices, or for that

matter, their rabbinic practices. This behavior stops up their ears and closes their hearts to the true Gospel of the Kingdom. But rather, we are to humbly teach people about the Kingdom in meekness. I love what Sha'ul said in **Galatians 5:22-6:1**; *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustworthiness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no command. And those who are of Messiah have impaled the flesh with its passions and the desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. Brothers, if a man is overtaken in some trespass, you the spiritual ones, set such a one straight in a spirit of meekness, looking at yourself lest you be tried too.* Throughout the Book of Mattityahu, Yahshua taught about the Kingdom. He also said of Himself in **Mattityahu 11:28-30**; *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I shall give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and humble in heart, and you shall find rest for your beings. For My yoke is gentle and My burden is light.”*

Thirdly, what do we do with the proselyte, when we do make one? While it's the Set-apart Spirit of Yahweh that draws people to Himself and reveals all truth, as the Ruach is our **“Great Teacher”**; we are accountable for what we put into people, the words we speak and what we teach them. That's a huge responsibility. Do we teach them the same prejudices that we have? We criticize the rabbis because they follow an “Oral Torah” as well as the written. We sometimes criticize the church because their ways are pagan and they say that all you need is love; and, it's Yahshua's love that did away with Torah. And, we know that is not Scriptural; and, we embrace the Torah. But family, let's not throw out **“love”**. It's the other one of the **“Two Great Commands”** of Torah, according to the Word, that is Yahshua.

Our focus, here at Beit Emet, is Torah. It should be; and as long as I have breath, it will be. But, we still need to read the rest of Scripture, including the Brit Chadashah. Ahmein? Let me leave you with some very wise words written by one of the **“rabbis”**, a **“Pharisee of Pharisees”**.

1 Corinthians 13:1-13; *If I speak with the tongues of men and of messengers, but do not have love, I have become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophecy, and know all secrets and all knowledge, and if I have all belief, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am none at all. And if I give out all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but do not have love, I am not profited at all. Love is patient, is kind, love does not envy, love does not boast, is not puffed up, does not behave indecently, does not seek its own, is not provoked, reckons not the evil, does not rejoice over the unrighteousness, but rejoices in the truth, it covers all, believes all, expects all, endures all. Love never fails. And whether there be prophecies, they shall cease; or tongues, they shall be silent; and knowledge, it shall cease. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part shall cease. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I thought as a child, I reasoned as a child. But when I became a man, I did away with childish matters. Now, as in a mirror, we see in a parable, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know, as I have been known. And now belief, expectation, and love remain – these three. But the greatest of these is love.*

Baruch HaShem Yahweh!