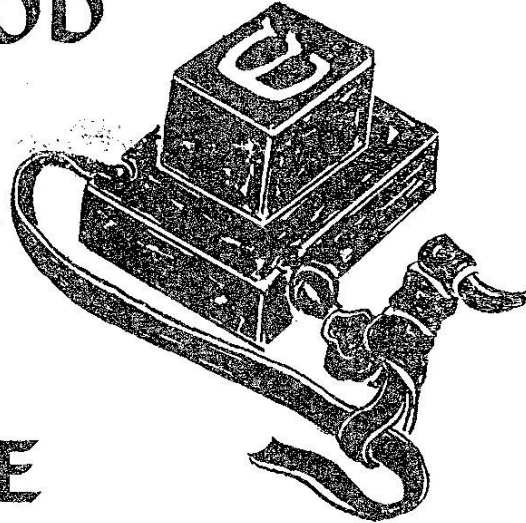


THE
PHYLACTERIES
OF GOD

שדרי



THE
PHYLACTERIES
OF SATAN

שטן

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HOW LONG HALT YE BETWEEN TWO OPINIONS?

Why can't the Messianic Jewish Movement make up its mind with regards to the Sabbath and the annual holy days? The whole gamut from a strict, almost rabbinical, observance of the "Jewish" holy days to complete indifference or even participation in Sunday church services and other Christian holy days of obligation, such as Easter and Christmas, is presented by a multitude of books down to simple tracts, that keep flowing from the pens of Jewish believers in Messiah Yeshua. (Recently we noted a congregational newsletter calling Christmas: "Yom Yeshua"!) Moreover, chances are, that Jewish believers who still celebrate the Jewish feasts do so more out of nostalgia for the taste of gefilte fish and matzot, than for any other reason.

But should not Jewish believers, who have turned to Yeshua because it was proved to them by the Holy Scriptures that He is their prophesied Messiah, also look into these same Scriptures for a solution to this dilemma? In the New Covenant Writings Rav Sha'ul (Paul) pointed out that the Old Covenant Writings were written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come (1 Cor. 10:11). One of the great (yet, unheeded) lessons of the Old Covenant Writings is, that apostacy always began when Israel changed or neglected God's appointed holy days, and that a return to them always signified repentance and began revival. If we, therefore, would act on this admonition, we may confidently expect a true, Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) breathed revival, not only within the ranks of the Messianic Jewish Movement, but also as a rub-off among our Jewish brethren, who have as yet not come to the knowledge of the truth.

But which holy days are we to observe? Those of Leviticus chapter 23 or those of the liturgical calendars adopted by various Christian denominations? Or are the holy days of Leviticus 23 for the Jews only and a different calendar of one's own choice for the Gentiles; or may all follow one or the other? After pointing out that God laid a foundation for this theme of feast days ("My feasts," Lev. 23:1, 37) on the fourth day of creation (Gen. 1:14), when God set the sun and the moon and the stars in the firmament for signs and for "seasons" (Heb., mo'edim, = religious seasons or appointed feasts) and called all He did on that day good, we might adopt the opening quote to our theme as follows:

"How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Sabbath be the Lord's, observe it: but if Sunday, then observe it."

THE PHYLACTERIES OF GOD

Unless his father was a Karaite or held to the teachings of Rashbam (Rabbi Samuel ben Meir, who flourished in the first half of the 12th century), every Bar-Mitzva boy learned and still learns to don the TEFILLIN, this sign, memorial, or mark, tied to the forehead and hand. The New Covenant Writings refer to the tefillin just once, in Matt. 23:5, where Yeshua chides the Pharisees for using them in an ostentatious manner. Matthew employs the Greek word, which the translators of the King James Version left untranslated: PHY-LACTERIES. The rationale for these prayer bands and boxes is primarily found in Exodus 13:9. But they are a rabbinical interpretation of that verse, which reads: "And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the Lord's law may be in thy mouth." (All quotes are from the KJV.)

The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, in its notes to this verse, gives clear expression to the controversy between the rabbis on the one hand and the Karaites and Rashbam on the other: "'IT SHALL BE FOR A SIGN.' As other races wore signs, even cuttings and tattoos, to remind them of their gods, so this feast was to bring before Israel the remembrance of the redemption of Jehova." "FRONTLETS. Hebrew totapot, the New Testament 'phylacteries.' Later Jews literally carried out this exhortation by tying on their foreheads and arms bands to which were attached small leather boxes containing Scripture verses written on parchment. It was God's purpose that this feast and the consecration, NOT little boxes, should serve as reminders for hand and heart" (Emphasis mine). Rashbam and the Karaites understood, that the observance of God's holy days is considered by God AS IF one has God's mark (of ownership) upon forehead and hand! The commandment was entirely spiritual and once having been expressed as a physical gizmo, in time the Jews forgot God's original intention.

The great Keil/Delitzsch commentary on the Old Testament also states this meaning, and several modern translations of the Old Covenant Writings, such as The Jerusalem Bible, The Living Bible, The Good News Bible, and The New International Version, all render this truth unambiguously. We shall see later that the fact that this mark was specifically in the first instance attached to the seven-day feast of Matzot (unleavened bread) had a profound influence on the history of the Early Church. (See footnote at end of article.)

The two days of holy convocations, being the first and seventh days of Matzot, were the first of the seven days of holy convocation to be revealed to Moses. This revelation came on the 15th of Abib, the day after the Passover, on the way from Ramses to Succoth, when Israel was still in Egypt! By extension this spiritual mark (upon forehead - seat of will and intellect; and hand - seat of action) applies naturally also to the other five days of holy convocation, which God revealed later to Moses at Sinai (as well as the weekly Sabbath), for all holy days appointed by God will ever be observed for no other reason, than the fulfillment of the Law of God in the heart of the believer.

Leviticus 23 contains God's instructions when, year by year and in their due seasons, the seven annual holidays (besides the weekly Sabbaths) were to be observed (vv. 3, 7, 8, 21, 24, 27, 35, 36). They had to be proclaimed "holy convocations" in their weekly and yearly procession. "Holy" for on such days man's time is cancelled and replaced by God's time and presence, and hence no servile work is to disturb its sanctity. The list is headed by the weekly Sabbath, making this day an integral part of this halacha. In Daniel 7:25 this entire calendar is called "times and laws" (The Knox version translates: "Calendar and ordinance"). Since the observance of these 'times and laws' is AS IF ONE HAS GOD'S MARK ON FOREHEAD AND HAND, and since this mark is also called "PHYLACTER-IES" in Yeshua's own words in Matthew 23:5, we may call the entire list of holy convocations, which is the divine calendar: 'The Phylacteries of God.'

Because no secular concerns were to disturb the holiness of these days, all servile work was forbidden (Lev. 23:3, 7, 8, 21, 25, 28, 35, 36). But alas, on the basis of Numbers 15:32-36, Exodus 35:3 and 16:29, the Rabbis in their zeal to raise a "fence around the law" virtually substituted a worse kind of servitude to the letter of man-made laws and traditions, than servile work ever was. The result was that the Sabbath was no longer a delight. Although the Sabbath was made for man, it now seemed that man was made for the Sabbath. Man could no longer look forward to the peace and joy of the holy days in order to wipe the sweat of his face due to the curse on the ground God had proclaimed for sin (Mark 2:27; Gen. 3:17-19).

With all due respect to the zeal of the Jewish sages of the past, we believe that the correct understanding of how this halacha is to be fulfilled may be found in the writings of Nehemiah, teacher and ruler of Israel at the same time. The command to do no servile work, as shown in Neh. 10:31(32) boils down to abstaining from buying and selling. Its more comprehensive definition in Neh. 13:15,16 excludes only activities by which a man provides for his livelihood and which need not be done on holy days, for the Lord provides for those days. Nehemiah apparently saw no need to sit in darkness or shiver on winter nights or eat cold food because a day happened to be a Sabbath. Nor did Nehemiah mention any other taboo of any kind.

Yeshua's treatment of the Sabbath issue demonstrates His total agreement with Nehemiah's ruling. What then is forbidden servile work, stripped from its rabbinical traditions, that does profane the Sabbath? The answer is simply: "buying and selling." When Nehemiah found Gentiles and Jews entering Jerusalem and trading in partnership with them on the Sabbath days for the purpose of "buying and selling," he proclaimed measures to prevent recurrence and he even threatened to kill any delinquents (Neh. 13:15-21). This, of course, allowed those traders and tradesmen who conformed, that is, who respected God's holy days by not buying and selling on them, to buy and sell freely on ordinary weekdays. In fact, if Nehemiah had prepared a proclamation to express his actions as a Jerusalem Council by-law, he might have nailed the following to the gates:

'NO MAN MAY BUY OR SELL, SAVE HE THAT HAS THE MARK OF GOD'

THE PHYLACTERIES OF SATAN

By now, my reader, if you are familiar with the Book of Revelation, you would not have failed to notice the astounding similarity between the above paraphrase of Neh. 13:15-21 and Rev. 13:15-17, which reads: "NO MAN MAY BUY OR SELL, SAVE HE THAT HAD THE MARK [OF THE BEAST]."

There is, then, a "mark of God" and a "mark of the beast." But who is the "beast"? According to Rev. 13:2 the "beast" received his power from the dragon, who is Satan (Rev. 12:9). HaSatan, the fallen angel Lucifer, Hillel the lightbringer, who became God's adversary and who does all his works by counterfeiting the works and blessings of God.

The challenge to follow God or Baal in the holy days may now be answered by a reference to Daniel 7:25: "He [the little horn] shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and THINK TO CHANGE TIMES AND LAWS"

This "little horn" changed the "Phylacteries of God" (God's divine calendar as per Lev. 23) into the "Phylacteries of Satan"! This little horn insinuated upon the Early Church a man-made calendar that is a counterfeit of the divine calendar. It has indeed a heptad of days of rest and worship, which, however, always misses by one and a quarter day the time God appointed "from even to even" (Lev. 23:32). It also has holy days which are deliberately placed so as not to coincide with the times of the "Jewish" holy days. Now the little horn grew strong between ten horns (kingdoms) which came from the head of Daniel's fourth beast, the Roman Empire (Dan. 7:7,8).

Revelation 13:1-10 gives further details of this Roman Empire beast and the rise of the little horn, and his thoughts to change times and laws is depicted in verses 11-18. The great words the little

horn spoke against the most High are the words of the other beast, that had two horns like a lamb, but spake as a dragon (v. 11). This beast has two horns for it consists of two parts making up the Universal Church: the Roman Catholic and the Greek Orthodox Church, each part ministering to one of the two legs of the statue that Nebuchadnezzar saw, and which two legs symbolize the two parts of the Roman Empire.

WHY THE SWITCH REMAINS UNNOTICED

Perhaps it is not correct to say that this switch from the "Phylacteries of God" to the "Phylacteries of Satan" remains unnoticed, for the switch has been defended as well as attacked in thousands of books, tracts, catechisms, and sermons. It has been the cause of cruel persecutions in which untold multitudes of God-fearing souls lost their lives, just as Daniel had prophesied. (Can anyone doubt that these atrocities were the work of the "Synagogue of Satan," since the beast with the two horns like a lamb [Yeshua] speaks as, or on behalf of, the dragon [Satan]?)

But what remains unnoticed is God's utter condemnation of this switch, as, for instance, in Rev. 14:9-12, 16:2, and 20:4. On the other hand, one passage, which describes the saints in heaven, declares that they HAD GOTTEN THE VICTORY OVER THE MARK OF THE BEAST (Rev. 15:2), and, evidently, once one gets this victory over the mark, God forgives and reckons that man as never to have had it (Rev. 20:4) and that man will be in the first resurrection (v. 5).

THE GREAT DELUSION: JUSTIFYING THE SWITCH

Now the reason why this utter condemnation remains unnoticed is stated in Rev. 19:20. We read: "The false prophet [an alias of the little horn]...deceived them that HAD received the mark of the beast." How did this false prophet deceive them that HAD received the mark of the beast, which is, as we have seen, the change in God's calendar (times)? The false prophet deceived them who had fallen into this heterodoxy by justifying their heresy. Instead of rebuking and excommunicating the false apostles, who had crept in unawares, the Church accepted the deeds and later the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, for the Church had left her first love (2 Cor. 11:13-15; Jude 4; Rev. 2:6, 15, 4).

First the times began to be changed, only then was the false prophet able to deceive them that had received the mark of the beast, by changing the laws as well. The Church began to teach that God's law had been fulfilled and that the change from Sabbath to Sunday expressed this. The teaching took root, that God had always intended to abolish "Jewish" feasts, which, it was now claimed, God hated (Isa. 1:14; Hos. 2:11; Amos 5:21). To observe the "old" feasts was now called "Judaizing," and it was taught that Christian Judaizers had fallen from grace and lost their salvation.

On the other hand, the Church formulated its own laws, the first of which reads: "To assist at Mass on all Sundays and holydays of obligation," and ruled that to disobey this law is a mortal sin. The change in times and laws, which God had foreseen and revealed to Daniel and had utterly condemned in the Book of Revelation, was now declared necessary for salvation.

Truly, the Church now looked like a lamb but spoke as a dragon (Rev. 13:11). When the false prophet changed the times and laws and the people changed the phylacteries of God for the phylacteries of Satan, they also changed the law in their mouths (and hearts) from God's law to Satan's law! They bound Satan's phylacteries on their foreheads and hands and they could buy and sell, whereas the saints, who refused this mark of the beast, were refused such public freedom. They were ostracized, subjected to war, and prevailed against (Dan. 7:21). Few survived. Those who had taken Satan's law into their mouths simply declared: "God's law is abolished. You can do what you like. There is no law." For that IS Satan's law! "God's law is abolished" finally became a buzz-word of most of the evangelical churches.

One of the consequences of the process of justification was that Scripture was stood on its head (Isa. 5:20-24). For where the Lord said He hated Israel's feast days, the Lord referred to the "days of Baalim" (Hos. 2:13). Those were the feast days originally introduced by King Jeroboam in the eighth month, which he had devised of his own heart (1 Kings 12:26-33). Hosea 2:11 says that the Lord will cause all her mirth ("merry" Christmas, "happy" Easter) to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts, and He will bring Israel into the wilderness and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt (Hos. 2:11-15). Does it really need any further comment, which days the Lord hated? It is taught that Col. 2:16,17 means that no one should judge another believer for whatever days he should desire to keep or not to keep. But without the confusing embellishments translators have added to these verses, a literal translation reads:

"Let no man [that is, the unconverted pagan, who does not know the Lord and does service to them which by nature are no gods (Gal. 4:8)] therefore judge you in meat or in drink [as you as fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God (Eph. 2:19) now honor clean food laws] or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath: which are a shadow of things to come; but [let] the body of Messiah [do the judging]."

For since holy days are shadows of things to come, that is, they are prophecies, which define biblical eschatology, Rabbi Sha'ul/Paul insisted that no outsiders should sit in judgment on the congregation (1 Cor. 6:1-5), and pressurize the "called out" ones to return to the pagan days in which they formerly took their places! For now, after ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how should ye return again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereto ye once were in bondage, by observing [these pagan] days and months and times and years (Gal. 4:8, 9)? "Days, times, months and years" is not a description of the divine calendar, but of the calendars of the pagans. Romans 14 is another exegetical pitfall, since that chapter does not deal with holy days but with a superstitious attitude regarding the most propitious days for fasting. In addition to these passages there are several others, all of which, instead of proving that Sunday replaced the Sabbath, on the contrary, establish the opposite. Truly, the false prophet deceived them that had received the mark of the beast.

THE VICTORY OVER THE MARK OF THE BEAST

The Book of Revelation contains the last warning to the Body of Messiah against the apostacy or the "mystery of iniquity [lawless-ness]," which was already at work in the congregations in Rav

Sha'ul's/Paul's time. This apostasy was to wax worse and worse (2 Tim. 3:13) until destroyed at the parousia. When the Church began to justify her substitution of the phylacteries of God with the phylacteries of Satan, the Lord (and not Satan) sent upon the Church a strong delusion. That strong delusion turned her into the "synagogue of Satan," which blasphemously say they are Jews but are not, but do lie (Rev. 2:9; 3:9), that they all should believe this lie, that they all might be damned, who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness (2Thes. 2:3-12).

Rev. 17:9-18 shows that just prior to the parousia there will be a one-world government under the direction of the great whore, who is the same as the false prophet. Then the synagogue of Satan will again enforce the decree (which is now in abeyance, for the great whore is at present in the bottomless pit [v.8]), that it is necessary for salvation to attend Mass on Sundays and holidays of obligation, offering the key to hell for the key to heaven.

For the word of the Lord declares that He will pour out His terrible wrath upon the men that have the mark of the beast. Neither will they be in the first resurrection. But there are some standing before the heavenly throne, singing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb: for THEY HAD GOTTEN THE VICTORY OVER THE MARK OF THE BEAST (Rev. 14:9-11; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4; 15:2, 3). The Lord expects us to take this victory so seriously, that while He exhorts us to take it, He also warns that those who get this victory might be "beheaded" for it. But what alternative is there?

Respectability in the eyes of the world in which we may buy and sell freely on God's HOLY days, when all buying and selling is forbidden? How shall Zechariah 8:23 be fulfilled if a Jew's new-found faith in Yeshua should cause him to submerge himself in the synagogue of Satan, adopting the times and laws (lawlessness) of the false prophet?

The whole issue is twofold. First, the feasts of the Lord are shadows of things to come: they explain d/Mca/eschatology, a subject we cannot go into here. Secondly, the whole issue is, of course, simply a matter of obedience in response to the blood sacrifice Yeshua offered in order to set us free from the penalty for our law breaking.

God will not, nor can He, change or set aside His eternal moral law expressed in the Ten Words. The Lord chose Abraham and made of his seed a peculiar nation to be witnesses unto Him, and He gave us the Sabbath as a sign, that we might know that He is the Lord that sanctifies us (Ex. 31:13). This sign is as valid for Jews as it is for "the stranger that has joined himself to the Lord" (Isa. 56:1-8). Therefore, let us, as Messianic Jews, no longer halt between two opinions: If the Sabbath is the Lord's, let us observe it! But let the "stranger" who has joined himself to the Lord come out of her (Babylon - Rev. 18:4) and celebrate the feasts of the Lord with us, for so it is ordained (Zech. 14:16-19; Isa. 66:23)! Meanwhile, as followers of Yeshua, we should pray earnestly that our willingness to sacrifice our lives may keep us from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth (Rev. 3:10).

NOTE ON THE EARLY CHURCH

The special significance of the Days of Matzot for the Early Church was in this, that as a result of the victory of the heretical policy of the bishops of Rome over the bishops of Asia Minor in the so-called "Paschal controversy," the Church as a whole was forced to celebrate the Passover every Sunday

morning, instead of once a year on the 14th of Abib. The Seven Day Festival of Unleavened Bread, which cannot be separated from Passover, had to be abolished, for it is impossible to celebrate this feast 52 times a year! It is no coincidence that Satan's attack upon the holy days began with the feast of Matzot, the one to which God explicitly attached His mark. Its early demise from the liturgy of the Church obliterated the trail of the mark of the beast through Scripture, which we have retraced briefly in this article.