

Think Like a Jew – Part 2

Walk Like a Jew

(Intro Slide)

Introduction

(Slide) When we look for the perfect blueprint of the first person whose thoughts found the most favour with Elohim, we always look to *Avraham Avinu* (our father Avraham). Something you may have noticed, is that our series is entitled “Think Like a Jew,” but technically speaking Avraham was not a Jew. I’d like to attempt to explain why the term “Jew” is preferred.

(Slide) The term “Jew” in Hebrew is *Y’hudi*. It is derived from the name of Ya’akov’s fourth son, Judah--*Yehudah*, and originally applied only to Y’udah’s (Judah’s) descendants, who comprised one of the twelve tribes of Israel. On his deathbed, Ya’akov assigned Y’udah the role of leader and king--a prophesy that would be fulfilled hundreds of years later when all twelve tribes submitted to the reign of King David of the tribe of Y’hudah.

The first individual to be called a Jew (*Y’hudi*) in the Scriptures was Mordecai.

(Click) “There was a man, a *Yehudi*, in Shushan the capital, whose name was Mordecai . . . a *Yemini (Benjamite)*” (Esther 2:5).

(Click) The Talmud states that according Rabbi Yochanan, “He (Mordecai) was a Benjaminite. Yet he was called a *Yehudi*, because he rejected idolatry--and anyone who rejects idolatry is called a *Yehudi* (Is called a Jew).”

So too, Sha’ul HaShliach (A.K.A. Paul the Apostle) was of the tribe of Benjamin.

(Click) “I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Avraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.” (Romans 11:1) And yet in Acts 21:39 Sha’ul says, “...I am a Jewish man of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia.”

(Slide) The word Yehuda comes from the Hebrew word *lehodot*, which means “to give thanks.” Indeed, upon his birth, Leah, Yehuda’s mother, exclaimed *hapaam odeh et Yahweh*, which means “this time I thank you Yahweh.” Feelings of gratitude characterised Yehuda’s birth. The commonly used word *todah*, meaning “thank you,” stems from the same root.

On a deeper level the term Y’hudah means “acknowledgement and submission even to the point of death.” One who acknowledges Elohim’s existence and submits to His authority--to the extent that he is willing to sacrifice his life for the sanctification of His name--he is called a *Yehudi*. So technically it can be said that the name Jew can mean, “I thank you...” or “I love you to death.”

Thus, “There is no Greater love than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” (John 15:13)

(Slide) When Avraham was very young he smashed his father's idols and was brought before the wicked king Nimrod. As punishment for this evil deed and addressing the king as being foolish he was condemned and thrown into a furnace. "And (Nimrod's) servants took Avram and his brother, and they stripped them of all their clothes excepting their lower garments which were upon them. And they bound their hands and feet with linen cords, and the servants of the king lifted them up and cast them both into the furnace. And Adonai loved Avram and he had compassion over him, and Adonai came down and delivered Avram from the fire and he was not burned. But all the cords with which they bound him were burned, while Avram remained and walked about in the fire." (The Book of Jasher 12:22-25)

(Slide) This concept of Avraham being rejected by many Messianics as being the first Jew is detrimental. Why? Firstly, because Avraham is all in all. That is, he was the first convert and he also became like a native born near the end of his life after his circumcision. "Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Avraham's offspring--not only to those who are of the Torah but also to those who have the faith of Avraham. He is the father of us all." (Romans 4:16)

(Slide) Secondly, because defining a Jew by his blood lineage to Ya'akov's fourth son Y'hudah alone goes against a Nazarene's own understanding as it is taught in the Netzarim Ketuvim. "A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Ruach, not by the written code. Such a person's praise is not from other people, but from Elohim." (Romans 2:28-29) That outer part of us, our bodies does not define who we are, it's our righteousness that always defines who we are. This why the word says, **(Slide)** "For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel." (Romans 9:6)" Though the overarching term "Yisrael" is used here, in context Sha'ul is speaking about his Jewish brethren and it illustrates the defining principle that righteousness is the true key to inclusion. Inclusion into what? The commonwealth of Israel. "Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called 'uncircumcised' by those who call themselves 'the circumcision' (which is done in the body by human hands) remember that at that time you were separate from Messiah, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without Elohim in the world. (Ephesians 2:11-12)

(Slide) Yochannan the Immerser tells his fellows Jews, "...do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Avraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones Elohim can raise up children for Avraham.'" (Matthew 3:9) He's saying that physical lineage is not enough, but inward intent of the heart is what defines a person's standing before Elohim. Physical lineage and observance is advantageous! Sha'ul says this, but it's not enough! Furthermore, without physical lineage or righteousness, one is without Messiah and estranged from the Covenants of Promise and without hope!

(Slide) So why don't we use the title "Hebrew" and call this series "Think Like a Hebrew"? The term "Hebrew" (Ivri) means "one who has gone to the other side," a term defining the initial process of our relationship and the term "Yisrael," which means "one who wrestles with Elohim and prevails" describes the process of

deliverance, but it is the term Y'hudi (Jew) that means “acknowledgement and submission even to the point of death” which is the ultimate goal.

In the current climate, we are referred to as Nazarene Israelites so as to define who we presently, but on a deeper level we all become worthy of being called Jews, because we like the Jews reject idolatry. Just as the Jews enveloped the tribe of Benjamin who can interchangeably be called Jews, Messiah Yahshua who is a Jew and enveloped the nations who accept him are also worthy of being called Jews.

Therefore, this series is called “Think Like a Jew” and not “Think Like a Hebrew” or “Think Like an Israelite.” Ironically it is the most controversial term that should be our anchor. Likewise, the most accurate term to define Yahshua is not as a Hebrew or as an Israelite, but as a Jew. **“...this is Yahshua, the king of the Jews.” (Matthew 27:37)** In other words, Yahshua is the king of those who reject idolatry! The word Y'hudim is more than just a nationalistic term! It's more than that!

There are chiefly three overarching terms we can use, Hebrew, Israelite or Jew. Normally we do not refer to ourselves as Jews because we are wild olive shoots. It is the Jew who is the cultivated olive shoot. And at this time, while we are still significantly different in our level of observance from a Jew (which is not through want of trying) But ultimately, we are grafted in to the same tree.

In the beginning the nation was called Israel, then they thinned out to Judah after the Northern Tribes disappeared, but eventually they (us) will be Israel again, because what is wedged in the beginning, is wedged in the end.

Why Judah?

(Slide) But before we continue there should be another nagging question. Why did Judah merit the position of royalty and carrying the lineage of Moshiach? **“The sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his.” (Genesis 49:10)**

Y'hudah, the fourth son of Ya'akov, the progenitor of the tribe of Y'udah, did some very bad things! Why did his offspring gain so much merit? Let's look at his track record:

“Judah departed from his brothers and...met the daughter of a Canaanite man named Shua. He married her and made love to her.” (Genesis 38:1,2)

“When Judah saw (Tamar), he thought she was a harlot, because she had covered her face. Then he turned to her by the way, and said, ‘Please let me come in to you.’” (Genesis 38:15)

After secretly laying with his daughter-in-law Tamar, she falls pregnant and when this is made known Y'hudah is the first to have her killed by fire. **“Bring her out and let her be burned” (Genesis 38:24b)**

So what is it that gave Y'hudah the standing to take on the role of lawgiver? He had broken faith with his family by marrying a Canaanite **(Genesis 38:2)**, had

raised such wicked sons that Yahweh put two of them to death (**Genesis 38:7,10**), had treated his daughter-in-law as a prostitute (**Genesis 38:24**) and had hatched the plan to sell his own brother (Yoseph) as a slave (**Genesis 37:27**).

Y'hudah was quick to acknowledge his sin with his daughter-in-law, after finding out who she was, declaring, “(Tamar) is more righteous than I.” (**Genesis 38:26**)

But ultimately, he spoke up for When Yoseph demanded that his brothers return home to Yitzhak without Benjamin (**Genesis 44:17**) Y'hudah emerged as the group's spokesman, putting his own life on the line for his brothers and father's well-being, finally fulfilling his name “I will love you to death.”

Why Avraham?

So, the blueprint of the first Jew is Avraham. Why? Why isn't it Adam or even Noach? Why is Avraham singled out? (Slide) Putting it frankly, Avraham pushed the envelope. Unlike his predecessors, who also acknowledged Yahweh, he understood the need to go out and share this revelation with others. The Midrash likens spiritual knowledge to a bottle of perfume. If you leave the bottle of perfume corked and sitting in a corner, what good is it? Shem was like a closed bottle of perfume, off studying in a corner somewhere. But Avraham went out and taught people about monotheism. He pitched his tent, which was open on all four sides, in the middle of an inter-city highway.

The Three Walks

There are three ways we can walk with the Almighty. We can walk “with,” “before” or “after!” Where do we get this teaching from?

(Slide) Regarding Noach, the Torah states that he “walked with Elohim” (**Genesis 6:9**) and regarding Avraham, he “Walk before Me” (**Genesis 17:1**).

And the Torah itself charges us to “walk after Yahweh, your Elohim” (**Deuteronomy 13:5**).

Not all *tzaddikim* (righteous) are equal. Different individuals attain different levels of holiness and righteousness. The Torah calls our attention to these distinctions.

But what does it mean “to walk?” After Adam and Hava sinned and the natural order of creation underwent a drastic shift, Elohim did not seek to correct the world instantaneously. The acting of walking symbolises a slow but steady moral progression. It's literally an act of walking out the repair. No-one rushes a repair. That's why we don't run, we walk.

Prophecy is not revealed to the world all at once, but in a measured fashion, according to our ability to receive and assimilate it (**Vayikra Rabbah 15:2**)

The Torah tells us that Noach ‘walked with Elohim’ Noah was just and good according to the standards ordained for his time. For this reason, the Torah emphasizes that Noach was “*faultless in his generation.*” His level of righteousness corresponded to the moral expectations for his generation.

Avraham, on the other hand, sought to awaken the entire world to integrity and holiness. Avraham ‘walked before Elohim,’ preparing the world to be ready for the

greatest enlightenment, the Torah. Since Avraham helped ready the world for the Torah, the Sages wrote that he fulfilled the Torah before it was given (*Yoma* 28b).

So which way should we walk? Answer: All three!

In Judaism there is an expression called “Halacha” which essentially means “the way one should walk.” Sha’ul HaShliach mentions this expression in every one of his letters. This expression means the best execution of a task according to the Torah. Now the Torah does not cover every single minute aspect and detail of life. This is why the Torah appointed judges within communities to rule and adjudicate on such matters. The almost limited number of variables that can affect a correct course of action could in no way be encapsulated in any written code. **(Slide)** “The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails--given by one shepherd. Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them. Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body.” (Ecclesiastes 12:11-12)

Ultimately, our walk should be as closely as we can get it to the perfect Jew. Who is the perfect Jew? None other than King Messiah Yahshua. Sha’ul says, “You are to imitate me, just as I imitate Messiah.” (1 Corinthians 11:1) And in Philippians 3:17 it states, “Join one another in following my example, brothers, and carefully observe those who live according to the pattern we set for you.”

“And you became imitators of us and of Adonai when you welcomed the message with the joy of the Holy Spirit, in spite of your great suffering.” (1 Thessalonians 1:6)

(Ministry of Silly Walks Slide)