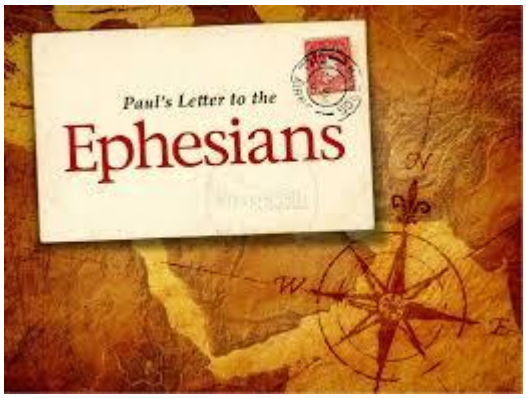
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Ephesians from a Messianic Jewish Perspective

*To Sarah, my daughter, who loves **the Lord** and loves her family. She is **training up** her girls and my granddaughters **in the way they should go (Proverbs 22:6).***



Ephesians resembles a typical rabbinic *drash* (discourse). In **Chapters 1-3**, **Sha'ul or Paul** (see the commentary on **Acts, to see link click Bm – Paul's First Missionary Journey: Paul is Sha'ul and Sha'ul is Paul**), the respected rabbi, gives Torah instruction about who **YHVH** is and how to relate to **Him** as individuals and as the collective **Body of Messiah**. The rest of the letter lays out *halakhah* (mitzvot governing **Jewish** life), practical ways to live according to the Torah that **Sha'ul** has just taught. The first half of the letter has few, if any, direct quotes from the Torah, but there are many concepts from it. In the second half, which deals more with *how* the community functions with **God** and one another. **Sha'ul** includes several important quotations, basing **his** instructions squarely upon the Torah.

In **2:11-22**, **Sha'ul** cites several problems **Gentiles** had, mainly because of **their** spiritual separation from **ADONAI**, **their** physical separation from the commonwealth of **Isra'el**, and their resulting separation from **Isra'el's** covenants (see the commentary on **Jeremiah Af – The Covenants of the TaNaKh**). The verses that follow describe how in **Yeshua**, the **Gentile's** problems are solved. Not only are they brought to **God** and **the Messiah**, but **they** also become fellow citizens with **God's people**. **Sha'ul** reminds believers of this reality, and that this

union of **Jewish** and **Gentile** believers as equals in **the Body of Messiah** is accomplished through **Yeshua**.

Finally, as a member of the people of **Isra'el**, **Sha'ul** welcomes **the Gentiles** into **their** midst by using familiar Torah language in **2:19**. In the Torah, those who are not native-born **Israelites** are called **foreigners** and **strangers** (Hebrew: gerim). But in **Ephesians**, **Sha'ul** proclaims that **Jewish** believers in **Yeshua** are to consider **Gentile** believers as brothers and sisters in the faith.[1]

Authorship: Twice in this letter **Paul/Sha'ul** referred to **himself** by name as the author of the book **(1:1** and **3:1)**. Yet, the **Pauline** authorship of **Ephesians** has been greatly disputed in recent years (It sounds to me that some people needed a topic for their doctrinal thesis!). Some critics think that the book reflects aspects of vocabulary, style, and doctrine that differ from **Paul's** other writings. Though the book has a close affinity to **Colossians** (see below), critics claim that **Ephesians** is uncharacteristic of **Sha'ul**. They suggest that the book was pseudonymous, that is, written by someone who did not use his own name, but who instead claimed to be **Paul**. However, pseudonymity was not practiced by the early Church. Also, this book is regarded by many as the crown jewel of all **Sha'ul's** writings. Thus, it seems strange that a disciple of **Paul** would be greater than **the apostle** in theological and spiritual perception. Furthermore, **Ephesians** was extensively and indisputably accepted by the early Church as **Sha'ul's** letter. **Sha'ul** mentions that **he** was **a prisoner of Messiah (3:1)**, **a prisoner of the Lord (4:1)**, and **an ambassador in chains (6:20)**. There is not strong reason for rejecting the **Pauline** authorship of **Ephesians**.[2]

Date and Destination: Paul wrote this letter from prison in Rome in 60 AD (see the commentary on **Galatians Ae – Dates of Books in the B'rit Chadashah**) to believers whom **he** had pastored. Because the phrase "who are in Ephesus" is not in many early manuscripts, and because there is no mention of a location, situation or individual believer, many scholars think this letter was encyclical, intended to be circulated among all the churches in Asia Minor (including those in Smyrna, Thyatira, and Sardis, as well as **Ephesus**). It may be that that letter was first sent to **Ephesus** and became especially associated with that **church**.[3]

Purpose: Though no particular problem is raised in the book, the reason for writing this epistle becomes clear when one considers the contacts **the apostle** had with the **Ephesians**. On the return from his third missionary journey (see the commentary on **Acts Ce – Paul's Third Missionary Journey**), **Sha'ul** told to

Ephesian elders at Miletus (57 AD) to beware of evil teachers from without and of professing believers within who would teach perverse things (see the commentary on **Acts Cj – Paul's Farewell to the Ephesian Elders**). From **Revelation** one can see that the **Ephesian** church had succeeded in keeping out **false teachers**, but had failed to maintain the vibrancy of **their first love** for **Messiah** (see the commentary on **Revelation Az – The Church at Ephesus**). This is substantiated in **First Timothy 1:5**, when **Paul** wrote from Macedonia to **Timothy** at **Ephesus** (64 AD) that **the purpose** of **his** instruction was **to promote love from a clean heart, from a good conscience and from sincere trust.** Thus, the theme of **love** needed to be stressed for **the Ephesians**.

This is in harmony with the contents of **Ephesians**, for the Greek verb for **love** (*agapo*) is used 9 times in **Ephesians** whereas **Paul** used it only 23 times in all his other letters. **Sha'ul** used the noun for love (agape) 10 times in **Ephesians** compared to 65 times in all **his** other letters. Therefore, of the 107 times **Paul** used the verb or noun form of **love**, 19 are in **Ephesians**. So more than one-sixth of **his** references to love appear in this small letter to the **Ephesians**. This letter begins with **love (1:4** and **6)** and ends with **love (6:23-24)**. Also, **Ephesians** teaches us that **Jewish** and **Gentile** believers are now **one in Messiah** (see **Ba – The Unity of the Body**), which is demonstrated by **their love** for one another. This **love** can come only from **ADONAI**. Possibly **Sha'ul**, realizing that **they** were beginning to abandon **their first love**, wrote to encourage **them** to **love** both **God** and each other.[4]

The similarity between Ephesians and Colossians: **Ephesians** and **Colossians** are two of the so-called Prison Epistles, written by **Paul** during **his** first Roman imprisonment in 60 AD. **They** were sent by the same messenger (**Tychicus**) who also carried them to Philemon. **They** are companion letters, not only because **they** were written at about the same time, but primarily because **Ephesians** speaks of **the Body** of **Messiah** of which **He** is **the Head**, and **Colossians** presents **Him** as **the Head** of **the Body**. **Colossians** was written to combat the **Colossian** heresy, a discussion of which the reader will find in the introduction to that book. In **Colossians** we find **the Person** of **the Lord Yeshua** more clearly presented than in any other of **Sha'ul's** letters. The very necessity of defining **His Person** in view of the heresies about **Him**, made this imperative. While the **Colossian** letter was addressed to the local church at that place, the **Ephesian** letter appears to have been a circular letter sent from church to church.[5]

The Use of the Complete Jewish Bible: Because I am writing this commentary

on the book of **Second Corinthians** from a **Jewish** perspective, I will be using *the Complete Jewish Bible* unless otherwise indicated.

The use of ADONAI: Long before **Yeshua's** day, the word **ADONAI** had, out of respect, been substituted in speaking and in reading aloud for **God's** personal name, the four Hebrew letters *yod-heh-vav-heh*, variously written in English as **YHVH**. **The Talmud (Pesachim 50a) made it a requirement not to pronounce the Tetragrammaton**, meaning the four-letter name of **the LORD**, *Yod-Hey-Vav-Hey,* since the ancient manuscripts do not give any vowel sounds, and this remains the rule in most modern **Jewish** settings. In deference to this tradition, which is unnecessary but harmless, I will be using **ADONAI** where **YHVH** is meant. In ancient times when the scribes were translating the Hebrew Scriptures, they revered the name of **YHVH** so much that they would use a quill to make one stroke of the name and then throw it away. Then they would make another stroke and throw that quill away until the name was completed. **His** name became so sacred to them that they started to substitute the phrase *the Name*, instead of writing or pronouncing **His Name**. Over centuries of doing this, the actual letters and pronunciation of **His Name** were lost. The closest we can come is **YHVH**, with no vowels. The pronunciation has been totally lost. Therefore, the name Yahweh is only a guess of what the original name sounded like. Both **ADONAI** and **Ha'Shem** are substitute names for **YHVH**. **ADONAI** is more of an affectionate name like *daddy*, while **Ha'Shem** is a more formal name like *sir*. Therefore, Jews, being respectful of the Third Commandment, use these words as replacements. **The Talmud explains, "In the Sanctuary, the Name was pronounced as written; but beyond its confines a substitute Name was employed (Tractate Sotah VII.6).** **God** has only one name, **YHVH**. All **His** other "names" like **ADONAI Elohei-Tzva'ot**, **ADONAI Elohim**, **ADONAI Nissi**, **ADONAI Tzidkenu**, and **ADONAI-Tzva'ot**, merely reflect **His** attributes.

Contrary to what some religious groups say today, no one can say with confidence how to pronounce **God's Name**. The "name" Jehovah, for example, is a made-up word by a Franciscan monk in the dark ages. He took **YHVH**, and inserted vowels between the known letters to invent a new word: **Y**e**H**o**V**a**H**. Jews never, NEVER, use this made-up word. The last book of the B'rit Chadashah tells us that when **Yeshua** returns to the earth, **He** will reveal **the Name that no one knew but Himself (Revelation 19:12)**. It seems best to leave this lost pronunciation unresolved until the **Messiah** comes.

The use of TaNaKh: The Hebrew word **TaNaKh** is an acronym, based on the

letters **T** (for "**T**orah"), **N** (for "**N**evi'im," the Prophets), and **K** (for "**K**etuvim," the Sacred Writings). It is the collection of the teachings of **God** to human beings in document form. The term "Old Covenant" implies that it is no longer valid, or at the very least outdated. Something old, to be either ignored or discarded. But **Jesus Himself** said: **Don't think I have come to abolish the Torah and the Prophets; I have not come to abolish but to complete (Matthew 5:17 CJB).** I will be using the Hebrew acronym **TaNaKh** instead of the phrase the Old Testament, throughout this devotional commentary.

The Use of the phrase, "the righteous of the TaNaKh," rather than using Old Testament saints: Messianic synagogues, and the **Jewish** messianic community in general, never use the phrase Old Testament saints. From a **Jewish** perspective, they prefer to use the phrase, "righteous of **the TaNaKh**." Therefore, I will be using "the righteous of **the TaNaKh**," rather than Old Testament saints throughout this devotional commentary.