

# **Supplement to Contra Brown**

**A Critical Review of “Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus”**

**By**

**Rabbi Yisroel Chaim Blumenthal**

## **Introduction**

The underlying premise of Brown's work is that if all the pertinent information were to be put on the table, the human sensitivity to truth would choose Christianity over Judaism. These five volumes serve to confirm the exact opposite. Brown has spared no effort to put forth the best arguments on behalf of Christianity. Ten years of work and 1500 pages should have provided Christianity with a platform to substantiate her claims. Yet when we boil down the arguments it becomes apparent that there is no logical basis for Christianity. Some of Brown's arguments are based on false premises, others are internally inconsistent, and the rest of them are simply flawed.

With these brief comments I hope to make clear why Brown's book deserves no consideration. The following criticisms begin with the title, and proceed in order along the pages of the book. Each comment will be preceded by the relevant quotations from these five volumes, so that the reader need not constantly turn to the book and back to the comments. May it be clearly understood that these comments constitute but a small portion of the criticism that these books deserve. My goal here is to bring to light the more salient errors and the most glaring inconsistencies contained in these volumes. My silence on any one point should in no way be considered an agreement to the arguments that I did not critique.

## Volume I

**I. 1.** The title of the book *“Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus”* is misleading. The title suggests that Jesus and Christianity are the defendants, while Judaism is the accuser. Brown is trying to give Christianity the advantage of being “innocent until proven guilty”. The reality is quite the opposite. The burden of evidence rests solely upon the shoulders of the Christian. Until Jesus was born he was not a proven prophet. Before Jesus was born he could lay no claim to being the Messiah. (The truth is that he still is neither a prophet nor the Messiah, but even Christians can agree that before Jesus was born there were no grounds for such a claim.) The status quo is Judaism. It is Christianity that is trying to introduce new concepts. It is not necessary to “object” to Jesus. Until conclusive evidence is brought forth, there is no reason to consider Jesus.

This is not merely a legal issue (“innocent until proven guilty”), but this is also a moral and ethical issue. Let us look at a hypothetical situation where one cannot decide if the Jewish interpretation of Scripture is correct or if it is the Christian interpretation that is correct. This person is in a state of doubt. Which of the two belief systems should this person follow until he or she comes to a final conclusion? Should he or she follow Judaism or Christianity? It is clear, that from a moral standpoint, this hypothetical person cannot accept Christianity. If Jesus was not who he claimed to be than devotion to him is the greatest rebellion against God imaginable – it is an act of idolatry, an act that Scripture describes as spiritual adultery. It is clear that from a moral and ethical point of view, the burden of evidence rests solely upon the shoulders of the Christian.

**I. 2.** *Page xx of the introduction.*

*“Sadly enough, the more religious a person is and the more time that person spent learning in a Yeshiva (a school for traditional Jewish studies), the more biased and distorted that person’s views will be concerning who Jesus is, what he taught, and how he and his followers lived.”*

The argument that Brown is advancing is that knowledge of Judaism from within Judaism (Yeshiva study) will distort a person’s view as it relates to Jesus’ claims for divinity. The inconsistency of the argument is apparent. Jesus claimed to be the Messiah of Judaism. In other words, Christianity admits that Judaism was here first and that their only claim is that Jesus is a fulfillment of Judaism’s Messianic expectation. The only way Christianity can make that claim is by transforming the meaning of God, of Messiah, and introducing new doctrines on the issues of Law and atonement. The issue is not “who Jesus was”. The issue is – What did God teach us about worship of the Divine, about the Law, about Atonement and about Messiah, through Judaism. If a person does not study in Yeshiva, that person will be unaware of some very important information. If a person rejects Judaism without seeing the inside of a Talmud, that person is making an uneducated decision. He will never appreciate the Jewish connection to God, and he will have a difficult time understanding why Jesus’ claims contradict Judaism as established by God through Moses.

Brown’s statement is not only flawed, it is actually hypocritical. One who spends time studying in a Yeshiva will hear very little about Jesus and his followers. The traditional Jewish texts have almost nothing to say about the early Christians. Throughout the entire

2700 page Talmud, there are three paragraphs that some understand as a reference to Jesus. On the other hand, the authors of the Christian scriptures spent a lot of time presenting their readers with a warped view of Judaism. The Christian scripture has poisoned the mind of Western civilization against Judaism and continues to do so to this day. People who read the Christian scriptures come away with a very negative understanding of Judaism that has no basis in reality. The key issue in this discussion is: what is the belief system established by God through Moses? The Christian scripture presents inaccurate information on this foundational issue. Yet Brown is “concerned” that Yeshiva study will distort people’s view of Jesus!

**I. 3.** *“The real question is, What do the Hebrew scriptures teach? Which Jewish expression follows the Bible? That must be the rule of Jewish faith and practice.”*

I believe that if we follow the criteria that Brown set forth the doctrines of Judaism will be vindicated, and I will substantiate my position in the following pages. But it is in place to note that the Brown’s question assumes a certain Christian principle that has no Biblical basis. Protestant Christianity posits that the only means God provided to discover His will is the Bible. This is both, not true and self-contradictory. God provided the living testimony of a nation to inform us of His will and to teach us of the Bible’s significance.

**I. 4.** *“...no Jew keeps the Torah as it was originally given.”*

This argument has no basis in reality. Although we were forced to discontinue many practices since the destruction of the Temple but the essence of our belief system has never changed. The Torah itself testifies to this truth. In Deuteronomy 30:2 Moses tells us that when we are in exile we will return to God through obedience of the Torah as he (Moses) taught it. It is obvious that many of the commandments of the Torah are not practically applicable in our exiled state. Yet that does not stop Moses from referring to our obedience with the words: “everything that I command you today”. The circumstances and the situations change, but the Law of Moses is the same. The original Law incorporated the possibility that our circumstances will change over time, and the methods of dealing with these new situations are already present in the original Law.

**I. 5. Objection 1.1**

*“...all of Jesus’ original followers were Jews”*

Fine, but were they Christians? An honest reading of Christian scripture will reveal that the early followers of Jesus did not subscribe to the Christian belief system. They viewed Jesus as a Jewish Messiah, and not as a god who dies for the sins of the world (as evidenced by their participation in the Temple rituals for the expiation of sin after the crucifixion of Jesus – Acts 21). They rejected Paul’s claims to prophecy (as evidenced by their discussion in Acts 15 without reference to Paul’s alleged prophecy on the matter), and accepted the rulings of the Pharisee Rabbis (as Jesus taught in Matthew 23 – see also Acts 15:5 – see below # IV. 11 and # V. 69).

**I. 6.** *“...within a few years after his death (and resurrection), thousands of Jews believed in him”*

This statement is based on the Christian scriptures. There is no reason to consider this testimony to be reliable. The same system that God put in place to teach us that the books

of Esther, Ezra, Ruth and Daniel were written with divine inspiration, teaches us that the Christian scriptures were not.

**I. 7.** *“Since then, in every generation there has been a faithful remnant of Jews who have followed Jesus (the Messiah), numbering from the thousands into the tens of thousands.”*

This assertion is not even based on the biased words of the Christian scriptures. This is pure fantasy. Let us take the years 300 CE to 1300 CE. Who were these Jewish believers? Is there any record of Jewish believers from that era? Let us take this one step further. According to Dr. Brown (page 115) true believers love the Jewish people. Every historical document tells us that anti-Semitism was considered an integral part of Christianity for many centuries. We challenge to Dr. Brown to present evidence that could substantiate the claim that there were 1000 “true” gentile believers in the years 300 CE to 1300 CE.

**I. 8.** *“...some (of these Jewish believers) are ordained rabbis”*

Who are they? Our challenge to Dr. Brown is please provide a list of people who were respected in the Jewish community as Rabbis and converted to Christianity.

**I. 9.** *Objections 1.2, 1.3, 1.4.*

Brown makes a valid point. “Once a Jew, always a Jew”. The question though is not, “who is a Jew?” The real question is “what is Judaism?” What is the belief system that God established through Moses? There is one religious point upon which all Jews agree, and that is that to attribute divinity to a human, is immoral. This is one point that binds Jews from every stripe and in every generation. “Messianic Judaism” stands apart from Jewish history and from the Jewish nation, in accepting the claims of divinity for a created being.

**I. 10.** *Page 5*

Brown tells us that Israel was chosen to be a light unto the nations. Indeed. Our loyalty to the One Creator of all has brought blessing to the world, even influencing the Christian Church. Had we chosen the path that Brown suggests, and directed our devotion to Jesus, we would have repudiated our calling as God’s witnesses to the world. Had we succumbed to the empty urging of the Christian missionaries, there would have been no counter-force to the Medieval Church. It is highly doubtful if mankind could have pulled itself out of the Dark Ages imposed by the followers of Jesus, without the influence of the Jew.

The bottom line is that the Jew was chosen by God to testify to the world that there is One Creator and everything in heaven and earth are but His creations and as such are subject to Him and to Him alone. For a Jew to direct his devotion to an inhabitant of this earth is a rejection of the very heart of our covenant with God.

**I. 11.** *Page 7*

*“...we rejected the Torah and the prophets as a nation”*

If there was any truth to this claim, we would not have the Torah nor would we have the books of the prophets today. It was only through the Jewish nation’s fierce loyalty to the Torah and to the books of the prophets that these were preserved to this day. Indeed, there were always certain elements of the nation who chose to abandon the Torah, and

who refused to heed the prophets' warnings. Those elements of the population were lost to assimilation. But the spiritual core of the nation preserved the words of the prophets and maintained their loyalty to the Torah. Had they not done so, the world would have never heard of Isaiah or Ezekiel.

### **I. 12. Pages 8 and 9**

Brown supplies us with a fanciful version of early church history. One sentence runs – *“the emerging Rabbinic Jewish community began to disassociate itself from the many thousands of Jews who were followers of Jesus”*

Another sentence informs us that – *“At some point toward the end of the first century some of the Rabbinic leaders either composed or adapted a prayerful curse to be recited against believers in Yeshua”*

There are several points that Brown would have his readers believe, none of which have any basis in fact. Brown wants his readers to believe that the Rabbinic community was “emerging” in the first century CE. In other words, Brown would have us believe that the belief system that he calls “Rabbinic Judaism” was only coming into existence in those years. Every historical document from the times of Second Temple and beyond – including the Christian scriptures, testify unequivocally that the belief system known as Rabbinic Judaism was firmly in place before the advent of Christianity, and was followed by the vast majority of Jews. The Christian scriptures testify that the masses of Jews followed Pharisee ideology (- the mere fact that they accepted and followed the Pharisee calendar is evidence enough). The Christian scriptures also tell us that many, if not all of the early Jewish Christians were Pharisees by belief. Matthew has Jesus exhorting his disciples to obey the Pharisees because they sit in the seat of Moses. There is no question that the Rabbinic community was not “emerging” from anywhere in the first century CE.

It was the Christian community that began to disassociate itself from the body of the Jewish nation. As the Christians, both Jewish and gentile, began adopting pagan beliefs and practices, they effectively cut themselves off from the stream of Jewish history. When the Christian community began identifying with the Roman oppressors, they became a threat to the physical existence of our people. Their early writings are only a partial reflection of the hatred they harbored towards Jews and Judaism. The Christian scriptures themselves are full of venom against Judaism. The writings of the early Church Fathers continue in that same vein. These include but are not limited to; The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, the Epistles of Ignatius, the Epistle of Barnabas, and the Epistle to Diognetus. All of these writings, dating from the first and second centuries of the Common Era, reflect an intense hatred towards the Jews. By presenting Jews and Judaism in this light to the Roman rulers, they were opening the way for legitimized persecution. The Rabbis instituted a prayer, adopted by all Jews until today that God may save His people from their enemies, and that God's enemies may see no hope. Indeed this prayer was directed against the early Christians. But this was the prayer of all the people, in a desperate plea to God for their very survival.

### **I. 13. Page 12**

*“The traditional Jewish calendar is followed because its general accuracy is accepted. (We do not automatically reject everything Rabbinic.)”*

Messianic congregations accept the Jewish calendar because there is no other option, there is no other calendar followed by the Jewish people. The hypocrisy is mind-boggling. The holidays are Scriptural in nature. The Bible itself exhorts that the Jewish people observe the holidays in their appointed times. Yet nowhere does the Bible say how to construct a calendar. The Jewish people accept that God taught Moses a certain calendric system that was never recorded in scripture. This calendar required that authorized courts of Rabbis meet every month to determine the length of the month, and every year to decide the length of the year. The calendar that is followed today is based on the decisions of the last authorized court – before the Christian persecutions put them out of existence. So the Messianic Jews today, by following the “Rabbinic” calendar, are faithfully abiding by the decision of men who considered their belief system idolatrous. If, as the Messianics believe, that Moses taught no more than he wrote in the Five Books, they should construct their own Scriptural calendar. And if they accept that God did provide instruction outside of the books of Scripture, they should ask themselves, to what means of communication did God entrust His message? And is God using that same means of communication to tell us other articles of information as well?

#### **I. 14. Page 17**

In an attempt to mock Judaism, Brown presents a parable in which the owner of a professional basketball team offers jobs to people who are less than five feet tall on condition that they make the team. Brown compares this scenario with Judaism’s encouragement that through observance of God’s Law we could be considered righteous before God. Perfect observance of the law is an impossible task according to Brown. It is not Judaism that Brown is making fun of. He is mocking God’s word in the Bible. Throughout the Bible God exhorts humans to be holy, which Brown believes is an impossible task. The truth is that God is fair, He knows our frailty and He takes our humanity into consideration (Psalm 103:13, 14).

#### **I. 15. Page 19**

*“...both faiths (Judaism and Christianity) believe in One God”*

Since one of the salient differences between Judaism and Christianity is their argument about the definition of “One God”, it is misleading to say that they agree on this point. It would be comparable to saying that the communist and the capitalist both agree in principle to the same economic structure, because they both believe that the country should follow the best economic structure. This happens to be the point of contention, what is the best economic structure? Here as well, the point of contention is – What do we mean when we say “One God”? There is no way to say that we agree on this point.

#### **I. 16. Objection 1.8**

Here Brown tries to explain to his readers why Jews have not accepted Jesus as their god. Brown fails to tell his readers the most important reason why Jesus was never an option for the Jew. The Christian Scriptures themselves testify that the most important Jewish reaction to Jesus was: “how can a man claim to be god?” In other words, Jews in Jesus’ time and until today, recognize that attributing divinity to a human being is idolatry. It is for this reason and for this reason only that Jews gave their lives rather than accept Jesus.

Judaism teaches that human life is sacred, but in order to avoid idolatry, one must be ready to die.

Imagine the following scenario. A certain drug manufacturer developed a drug that he claimed would cure chicken pox. The FDA refuses to approve the drug, because they recognize that some of the ingredients of this drug are extremely dangerous toxins. When asked why the FDA turned down his product, the manufacturer responds by complaining that they never seriously tested his drug. The manufacturer never tells his prospective customers that the FDA considers the contents of his drug to be harmful and dangerous. The word “dishonesty” does not begin to describe the salesman’s attitude.

Brown is doing the same thing. He fails to inform his readers, that the Jewish people, who were entrusted by God with preserving the message of Sinai, consider his product idolatry. Instead he tries to convince his readers that the product he is trying to market was not given a fair trial!

Another point to consider on this issue is Brown’s own admission that the Church had been preaching false doctrine. For centuries upon centuries, the Church had been teaching that Israel is no longer the elect of God. Even today, many Churches contend that the Jewish people can no longer consider themselves God’s firstborn sons. So how are Jews supposed to accept the “truth” of Christianity? The Christian teaching that the elect of God are the followers of the Messiah is nowhere to be found in the Jewish scriptures. Should the Jews have accepted a non-scriptural election and repudiate the scriptural election? According to Brown’s own standard that he set forth in the introduction – “follow the Bible” – and according to Brown’s own interpretation of the Bible, the Church has miserably failed. Why does Brown value the conversion of Jews to Christianity at a time when conversion to Christianity meant rejecting God’s firstborn son? (Exodus 4:22, Jeremiah 31:8)

#### I. 17. Page 21

*“Most Jews have never seriously studied the issue (of Christianity)”*

According to Brown (on page xx of the introduction), the real issue is – what does the Bible teach? Many of the prominent Jewish commentators of the Bible explain the Christian usage of the verses, and go on to explain why the Christian interpretation is not honest. Any Jew who studies scripture in a Jewish setting, will become acquainted with the Christian interpretations of scripture through the writings of Abarbenel and Ibn Ezra. Many of the classical Jewish works on philosophy will present the Christian scriptural arguments and the appropriate refutations. This is because throughout our history, we were forced to face the question of Christianity. In forced debates, in sermons that we were forced to attend, and from the general pressure of a hostile Christian world.

The fact of the matter is that it is much easier for a knowledgeable Jew to find the Christian Scriptural arguments in a Jewish library, than it is for a Christian to find information about the Jewish Scriptural arguments in a Christian library.



The truth is that none of this is really relevant. One does not have to be a scholar to recognize that Christianity is not an option for the Jew. Every Jewish child who knows the story of the revelation at Sinai, knows that God taught the Jews “I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods before me.” We were shown at Sinai that the Creator of heaven and earth is God, there is none else (Deut. 4:35). Since no one ever claimed that it was Jesus who was revealed to our ancestors at Sinai, so he cannot be worshipped. That’s all there is to it.

Brown “graciously” acknowledges “*can Jews be blamed for thinking that Christians worship idols when the churches were filled with worshipers bowing before large beautiful statues...?*”

Brown would have us believe that idolatry is limited to obeisance to statues. This is not true. Worship of anyone or anything other than the God who revealed Himself at Sinai, is idolatry. In any case Brown himself advocates (in theory) worship of a physical body. Brown, along with all (Trinitarian) Christians, claims that while Jesus was alive he ought to have been worshiped. In other words, while Jesus was alive Christianity would have its adherents prostrating themselves in adoration and worship of a human. This too, is blatant idolatry.

#### **I. 18. Page 22**

Brown presents the Christian scripture’s argument that it is spiritual blindness that prevents Jews from seeing the “truth” about Jesus. Brown does not present another argument offered by the Christian scriptures, and that is that the Jews are children of the devil, and are thus incapable of seeing the “truth”. This “tolerant” and “philo-Semitic” statement is attributed by John to Jesus (John 8:44).

Another important point to consider, is that if Christianity is the “obvious truth” and it is only a supernatural blindness that prevents Jews from appreciating it, where is the evidence? It is 2000 years now, and Christianity has still failed to present a logical and honest argument why it is that one should worship Jesus.

#### **I. 19. Objection 1.9**

Brown presents the issue as a question between; following God versus following the ways of our fathers. What Brown does not tell us, is that God Himself designated the national tradition of our fathers as a means to communicate with us about the revelation at Sinai (Deut. 4:9). In the passage from Deuteronomy that Brown quotes, God refers to idols as “those which your fathers knew not”. In other words we are to look to the testimony of our fathers to enable us to identify idolatry when we see it. This means that the testimony of the Jewish nation concerning the revelation at Sinai is a divinely ordained means of communication, and not an immature emotional hang-up as Brown would have his readers believe.

#### **I. 20. Objection 1.10**

In this section, Brown presents an age-old philosophical problem with Christianity. Where are all those who did not believe in Jesus? Are they all in hell? Brown throws up a

smoke-screen by pointing out that no one is perfect in God's eyes. But Brown utterly missed the point of the objection. The question is – is there really no difference in God's eyes between Hitler and someone who may not have been all that righteous but was no Hitler (such as their grandmother)? According to Christian theology it is all the same. Judaism believes that God does not make demands of people that are beyond them. God knows our inclination (Psalm 103:13,14) and is close to all those who call to him with sincerity (Psalm 145:18). God is just, and everyone receives reward and punishment according to their ways (Eccl. 12:14). There is indeed a difference in God's eyes between Hitler, and Hitler's victims.

#### **I. 21. *Objection 1.11***

Here too, Brown attempts to deal with a major philosophical question. What happens to Nazi murderers who accept Jesus? According to Christian theology, one who accepts Jesus is cleansed of his sins. Many rational people have a hard time believing that a past filled with sin could be so easily erased. This Christian doctrine seems to be giving these evil people an undeserved "free pass".

Brown responds by telling us that the Bible teaches that through repentance God forgives all sin. Indeed the Bible does teach that repentance atones for sin. It is interesting to note that Brown makes a mockery of this teaching in volume 2 (page 103), but here the teaching serves his purpose.

According to Judaism, repentance includes facing the sin squarely in the face and recognizing the evil and the guilt. If a Nazi murderer would truly repent, the feelings of regret should kill him. How many Nazi murderers actually repented according to the standards of the Jewish Bible? Yet many Nazis did not find the free pass offered by the Church too demanding.

#### **I. 22. *Page 39***

Brown claims that repentance is an essential part of the message of Christianity. What is repentance? True repentance includes a departure from sin, and reentry into obedience of God's holy law. When a person regrets his sin with his whole heart, admits his guilt before God, and makes restitution to the people he harmed, and accepts upon himself to obey God's commandments in the future – God wipes the slate clean. Is this the process that Jews who put their faith in Jesus undergo? How many of them observe the scriptural commandments of Sabbath, Kosher, or family purity. This is to say nothing of their total disregard of the first two of the Ten Commandments.

#### **I. 23. *Page 35***

*"...the fact that these people died in the holocaust does not necessarily make them saints"*  
Judaism believes that if someone died in a situation such as the holocaust, his death served as an atonement for all of his sins (perhaps with certain exceptions, but certainly if the person accepted his death as such – see Psalm 25:18). If Christianity accepts the death of one man to serve as atonement for the sin of other people, then why is the sinner's own death meaningless to the same belief system?

### **I. 24. *Objections 1.12, 1.13***

Brown claims that many great Jewish scholars turned to Christianity. This claim has no basis in fact. Brown acknowledges the difficulty in researching the lives of these people. He claims that this is due to Jewish revision of history. Here is how you check it out. Call up any missionary organization. Ask them for a list of Rabbis who recently converted to Christianity. Ask for names and telephone numbers. Call up or write to the alleged “Rabbi” who converted. Ask him some basic questions about Jewish law. You will be astonished at the ignorance of these “Rabbis”, if your search ever got this far.

On the other hand, here is a list of prominent Christians who saw through the lies of the missionaries and converted to Judaism.

- 1) Asher Wade, former Methodist pastor
- 2) Ole Brunell, former Lutheran minister from Finland and Australia.
- 3) JoAnn Fay, a former Catholic nun.
- 4) John David Scalamonti, a former Roman Catholic priest
- 5) John Hove, a former Lutheran pastor.
- 6) Thomas Roper, a former Baptist minister
- 7) Gavriel Sanders, former Pentecostal minister and missionary in Israel.
- 8) Tonica Marlow, a former female evangelical minister and daughter of a Pentecostal preacher.
- 9) Aharón Calderón, a former monk of a Catholic monastery in South America.
- 10) Armando Quiros, a former catholic priest.
- 11) Michael Flanagan, a former Baptist minister, and son of a Minister
- 12) Ahuva Gray, served as a Christian minister in the African American community both in Chicago and Los Angeles for fourteen years
- 13) Nobutaka Hattori, a former Protestant Minister of Japan
- 14) Ary’el Tsion, formerly known as Bert Woudwijk, a Messianic pastor from Holland
- 15) Benjamin Klugger, former Pentecostal missionary
- 16) George Gunsberger, president of the Messianic Jewish Alliance of Australia for 10 years,

### **I. 25. *Objection 1.14***

In this objection, Brown tries to present a picture of Orthodox Judaism’s brainwashing methods. Brown describes a Moslem school in which children are chained to their places in an effort to prevent them from being influenced by untoward influences. Dr. Brown is suggesting that Orthodox Judaism practices some similar type of brainwashing techniques. Brown’s point is that Orthodox Jews are not given the opportunity to examine Christianity in a manner that would enable them to make an educated decision.

The hypocrisy is record breaking. In this series that is presented as a comprehensive response to the arguments of Judaism, Brown fails to address some of the most basic issues. (see “Contra-Brown” and “The Elephant and the Suit” available at <http://www.jewsforjudaism.org>). Brown already acknowledged that the issue is – “what does the Jewish Bible say?” Orthodox Jewish Bible commentators have no hesitations in informing their readership of the Christian interpretations of Scripture. At

the same time, the missionaries exert themselves to no end in their effort to prevent their flock from hearing the Jewish claims. In a book that ostensibly purports to present the Jewish objections to Christianity the issue of the Sinai revelation is given 2 superficial pages in the last volume (see points #V.62 – V.65). This would be the first issue that a Jewish schoolchild would raise as an objection to Christianity. Yet Brown would prefer that his readership not consider this basic issue.

To put it simply – most Jewish people could articulate some response as to why they would refuse to consider the claims of Christianity, while few Christians could articulate why they refuse to consider the claims of Judaism.

#### **I. 26. Page 51,52**

Brown boasts about verbal debates that he claims to have prevailed over prominent counter-missionary activists. A verbal debate is no measuring stick of truth. An agile mind and a more seasoned performer will emerge looking better, no matter what position he is defending. The real question is, – what were the arguments? In these five volumes, Brown has yet to make a case for Christianity.

#### **I. 27. Objection 1.15**

*“...many of us are especially interested in having exchanges with rabbis and religious Jews whenever we have the opportunity, and we especially appreciate interaction with well-informed Jews.”*

This is simply not true. Missionaries are frightened of well-informed Jews. Again this can be tested with a simple experiment. Get the e-mail address of any missionary organization and ask the following question – “do you believe that Hitler and his victims ended up in the same place?” and see how fast you get a response.

#### **I. 28. Objection 1.16**

*“...the Hebrew Bible does not even recognize a “not too good and not too bad” class”*

Another falsehood. Look at the Bible’s assessment of the various kings. Their good points are pointed out as well their faults. Many of them are pronounced righteous – but not like David, who wasn’t totally righteous himself. No one born of a woman can be totally righteous. Yet God still judges every deed and in His abundant mercy deals with each man accordingly. No one can read the Bible honestly and still believe that one who dedicates his life to promulgating idolatry is equal in God’s eyes to the average person. The Bible clearly speaks of especially righteous people, as well as the villains. It is obvious that everyone else falls somewhere in between.

#### **I. 29. Objection 1.17**

*“If Jesus really is the Messiah, why are there so many objections? – ...There are far more arguments for the Messiahship of Jesus than against it”*

Again Brown misses the point of the objection. Consider the following. In order to establish the logical principles that God exists and that He is in control of nature, God turned over the world (with the miracles of the exodus and Sinai). He did this in front of an entire nation. He left no room for questions. Yet missionaries would have us believe in the paradoxical teaching that attributes divinity to a human being on the basis of the garbled report of people who were devoted followers of this human being!?

Just for the record let us contrast the foundational events of Judaism against the foundational events of Christianity.

Every religious belief system (including atheism) must by definition present a teaching on that which is not visible in the physical world. Judaism teaches that there is one God, Christianity teaches that belief in Jesus provides forgiveness for sin, and atheism teaches that there is no God. None of these teachings could be verified through a physical science experiment.

In order to maintain a minimal sense of credibility, any given religious belief system must explain how it is that it received this knowledge from the realm of the invisible.

Judaism is the only religious belief system that comes with the claim that the foundational elements of knowledge came from the realm of the invisible directly to an entire nation. God Himself spoke to Israel and showed them that He is the only God (Exodus 20:1, Deuteronomy 4:35). God Himself allowed the nation to listen in as He spoke to Moses, affirming Moses' position as God's prophet (Exodus 19:9). These two articles of information (God's reality, and the truth of Moses' prophecy) are the foundations of Judaism, and these were given to the nation directly from God. In stark contrast, the foundational concepts of Christianity were allegedly revealed to individuals (Jesus, and Paul) who passed on what they claimed to have seen and learned. Judaism stands on the testimony of a nation, Christianity (like Islam) stands on the word of individuals.

We could classify miracles into two categories, there are "Wall Street Journal" miracles, and there are "tabloid" miracles. A faith-healing or even a resurrection, are not events that impact the world at large. A respectable newspaper will not put a faith-healing as a headline article because it has no broad ramifications. On the other hand, if the entire army of China were to drown in the sea, the event would make headlines in every respectable media outlet.

The foundational miracles of Judaism impacted the physical lives of nations in a concrete way. The Egyptian army, the world power of the time, was drowned in the Red Sea. A large nation (Israel) was set free from slavery, while another large nation (Egypt) suffered terrible losses. The Nile turned into blood for seven days, the country of Egypt was covered with darkness for three days – events that are visible for miles around and to countless people. In contrast, the alleged miracles of Jesus touched the lives of individuals. Not any individuals, but only those who already had put their faith in him (Mark 6:5). The alleged resurrection was only witnessed by people who already believed in him.

The miracles of Judaism were preserved by the physical descendants of those whose lives were impacted by these foundational miracles. In sharp contrast, there is no family that lives today that claims to descend from those who were healed by Jesus.

In short, the miracles of Judaism are credible from every angle. Christendom acknowledges that God went to these lengths to establish the credibility of the principles of Judaism. And again, the principles of Judaism are logical and straightforward. Yet Christendom expects people to believe that the same God will condemn everyone to hell for not believing the paradoxical teachings of the trinity and the incarnation on the basis of a few “tabloid” miracles?!

(Read Deuteronomy 13:2-6)

### **I. 30. *Objection 1.18***

In this section Brown makes the accusation that traditional Judaism fails its adherents. According to Brown, Traditional Jews do not have an intimate relationship with God, while Christians do have such a relationship. This is an outright lie on both ends. Many Orthodox Jews have a deep and intimate relationship with their Creator, while Trinitarian Christians have a deep and intimate relationship with a human character in a Greek book.

Another point to consider is that the issue here is not an issue of relationship. There is no question that the Grand-Inquisitors who burned Jews at the stake had a deep and intimate relationship with the Christian Jesus. The issue is simply honesty. Are you being honest with yourself? Do you accept your belief system because your sensitivity to truth compels you to do so, or are you ignoring your sensitivity to truth in loyalty to the belief system?

### **I. 31. *Pages 60-63***

Brown describes how some of the Orthodox Jews he interacted with could not describe an intimate ongoing real relationship with God, while Christians are alive with their relationship with their god. At the same time Brown describes how Jewish people he questioned felt that they were not assured of forgiveness for their sins, while Christians revel in the confident assurance that all of their sins are forgiven.

Perhaps this reveals the weakness of the belief system Brown is trying to promulgate. One who is honestly seeking a real relationship with God, will always be questioning themselves. Am I deluding myself? Or is this real? A real relationship with God is a constant ongoing experience that brings a person into constant soul-searching introspection. Of-course there is joy, real joy, in the relationship with God. Just watch the dancing at an Orthodox Jewish wedding or an Orthodox Jewish celebration of one of the holidays. But this joy does not come at the expense of truth. Orthodox Judaism does not attempt to delude its followers into false assurances. The joy of serving God does not come from the delusion of being “saved”, rather the joy is produced by the realization that we are touching the eternal truth of the God of truth. This joy encourages an incessant, relentless, and ruthless pursuit of truth. The joy of Judaism does not allow one to be lulled into a false sense of security. Judaism does not claim to offer safety. Judaism offers truth.

### **I. 32. *Objection 1.19***

*“You missionaries always use the same arguments and proofs. Your faith can’t be very deep – ... We don’t need to come up with some novel, new proofs for the Messiahship of Jesus”*

If you want to live a life honest with yourself and honest with God, you are encouraged not to place your trust in “proofs” that have been clearly refuted 2000 years ago.

### **I. 33. *Objection 2.1***

*“In fact, nowhere in our scripture does it explicitly say, “when the Messiah comes there will be peace on earth”*

Ezekiel did not have the benefit of having read Brown’s book, or else he would not have written – “and I will establish for them one shepherd and he will shepherd them, My servant David, he will shepherd them and he will be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and My servant David a prince amongst them, I the Lord have spoken. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and I will cause wild animals to desist from the land, and they will dwell in the desert in security and they shall sleep in the forests.” (Ezekiel 34:23-25) or – “And My servant David (a) king over them, and one shepherd shall be for all of them, and they will walk in My statutes, and they will keep My laws and observe them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given to My servant Jacob, that your forefathers dwelt there, and they will dwell upon it, them, their children, and their children’s children, unto eternity, and My servant David (a) prince for them forever. And I will make with them a covenant of peace an eternal covenant it will be with them, and I will set them down and I will increase their number, and I will place My sanctuary in their midst forever.” (Ezekiel 37:24-26) Nor would Jeremiah have written concerning the Messiah “in his days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell securely” (Jeremiah 23:6)

The verses we just quoted are verses that Brown simply forgot. This would be bad enough, but it gets worse. Two of the verses that Brown himself quotes to establish the alleged Messiahship of Jesus, namely Haggai 2:9, and Zechariah 9:9,10 explicitly speak of an era of peace. It seems that Brown conveniently chooses which parts of the verses “prove” the alleged Messiahship of Jesus, and which parts of the same verses could be swept under the non-scriptural rug of the “second coming”. By what criteria does Brown decide which sections of the verse must be fulfilled during the Second Temple era and which parts could be indefinitely delayed for the distant future?

The Jewish expectation that the Messiah’s coming will be marked by universal peace is firmly rooted in the words of the prophets. Brown’s denial of this basic scriptural truth is simply outrageous.

### **I. 34. *Pages 70-88***

Brown weaves an imaginative portrait, from strands of Rabbinical literature. The image that Brown tries to present is one in which the Rabbis expected the Messiah to come some 2000 years ago. Brown recognizes that according to his own theology, the words of the Rabbis are not very authoritative, so Brown turns to scripture. By piecing together prophecies of Haggai, Malachi, and Daniel, Brown argues that the scriptures predict the coming of the Messiah while the Second Temple was still standing. Then Brown turns to the Jewish calendar. Brown argues that the structure of the Biblical year parallels the

Christian doctrine as it relates to the alleged “two comings” of Jesus. The first festival of the Jewish year is Passover. Brown tells us that this parallels Jesus’ demise. Then comes Pentecost (Shavuot), fifty days later. Brown argues that this holiday parallels the day when Jesus’ spirit came upon his followers fifty days after he died. Then Brown informs us that the next Jewish holiday, namely Rosh Hashana, occurs five months later. In another sentence, Brown informs his reading audience that Rosh Hashana occurs “almost six months” after Shavuot. According to Brown, Rosh Hashana is a parallel to Jesus’ expected return. Thus Brown argues, the Jewish calendar is a “precise” mirror of Christian doctrines as they pertain to Jesus’ itinerary.

The mathematical facts are quite different than Brown would have his readership believe. Rosh Hashana does not take place six months after Shavuot nor does it take place five months after Shavuot. In fact Rosh Hashana occurs three months and three weeks after Shavuot. In order to create a parallel for Jesus’ 2000 years absence, Brown tried to lengthen the time between Shavuot and Rosh Hashana. The ratio of difference between these three holidays is 1 – 2.1. In contrast the ratio of difference between Jesus’ 3 alleged appearances is 1 – 14,000, and counting. Hardly a “precise” image.

Brown had quoted a passage from Haggai (Haggai 2:6-9), in which we find God promising His people that the glory of the latter Temple (the second) will be greater than that of the first temple. Furthermore God promises to establish peace in that place. Brown argues that Jesus’ arrival is the promised glory, and the peace that the worshipers of Jesus find when they put their faith in him, is the peace that the prophet speaks of. The obvious problems with Brown’s interpretation are manifold. Firstly, the context of the passage tells us that the glory relates to gifts of gold and silver, and not to a visit by a self-styled deity. Furthermore the glory promised pertains to the house, the Temple. Jesus’ career brought no glory to the Temple. On the contrary, according to the Christian scriptures, Jesus’ denigrated the Temple. When his disciples admired the adornments of the Temple, and the gifts that were brought there, Jesus discouraged them (Mark 13:1, Luke 21:5). The peace that the prophet promised clearly applies to the geographical location of Jerusalem, implying that the peace is one which is present in the physical world and not one which only lives in the subjective imagination of a specific group of people.

Brown turns to a prophecy in Malachi (3:1-5), in which he sees a prediction for the Messiah’s arrival during the Second Temple era. Aside from the fact that the prophecy says nothing which would indicate that it is talking of the Second Temple, the passage clearly talks of events that have no connection to the insignificant career of Jesus. The prophet talks of a refinement that will render the Levite’s service in the Temple on behalf of the Jewish nation, pleasing to God as were the offerings of the days of old. Did Jesus come to refine the sacrificial system of the Temple? On the contrary, Jesus came to abolish it. Brown himself (volume 2 page 169) acknowledges that according Christian doctrine the Temple sacrifices play an insignificant role in the Messianic era if at all. So how can Brown claim that this passage in Malachi, which looks to the Temple sacrifices as an ultimate goal, be considered a reference to a man who allegedly came to do away with sacrifice?



Brown quotes the passage in Daniel 9:24-27, to support his contention that the Messiah will come before the destruction of the second temple. Daniel had spoken of 70 weeks of years (sets of 7, totaling 490 years), which were for the purpose of expiating sin and ushering in everlasting righteousness. Dr. Brown is convinced that this is a reference to Jesus' death which took place well before the destruction of the Temple. One of the obvious problems with Brown's contention is that a plain reading of the passage indicates that the seventy weeks of years end together with the destruction of the Temple. (The reader is referred to "Contra-Brown" – available at <http://www.jewsforjudaism.org> for a full discussion of these passages).

#### **I. 35. *Objection 2.3***

Brown talks of the Jewish expectation of the Messiah in the first century. The Jews constantly await the Messiah until he will come. But Brown fails to write about the Christian expectation of Jesus' immediate return, this expectation based on the simple (*sola scriptura*) understanding of Jesus' predictions.

#### **I. 36. *Objection 2.4***

Brown informs us that the crime of rejecting Jesus is the sin which deserves the holocaust. Sad. What is the moral crime of failing to see the scriptural "truth" of institutions that could produce a holocaust?

According to Brown's own standards of right and wrong, and according to his own interpretation of the Bible, Brown would have to acknowledge that the Jewish rejection of Jesus was no sin. In the opening pages of this volume, Brown informs his readers that the "rule of Jewish faith and practice" should be the Bible (pg. xx). Up until recent years, the vast majority of Christians believed in replacement theology, they believed that the Jewish people are no longer chosen by God. The Christianity presented to the Jewish people was one which came along with a rejection of Israel's election – a teaching that Brown recognizes as unbiblical. How could the Jews have accepted Christianity? Should the Jews have seen the "powerful evidence" to the alleged Messiahship of Jesus but not seen the evidence to their chosenness as God's firstborn son? According to Brown's own standard, the Jews made the morally correct choice when they rejected a theology that is clearly at variance with the word of God. Is this a sin?

There is a much deeper point to consider here. The tragedy suffered by the Jewish people during the holocaust was indeed terrible. But there was a far greater tragedy that occurred during the holocaust. The greater tragedy was the fact that the vast majority of Christian Europe participated in this terrible crime either practically or implicitly. Not only that, but the holocaust rendered 1900 years of Church history as a preparation for the greatest crime committed against God's firstborn son. When the holocaust happened, it retroactively rendered all of the Church teachers that lived for the past 2000 years – inciters for murder. Their acceptance of Jesus did not save them from this terrible tragedy. Our rejection of the same Jesus saved us from the worse of the two evils.

If the crime of rejecting Jesus brought the holocaust upon us, we thank God that it effectively prevented us from being the perpetrators.

### **I. 37. Page 110**

Brown's compares of the accusation that the Christian Scriptures is a book of hate to the anti-Semitic accusation that the Talmud is a book of immorality. This analogy is outrageous. No one who revered the Talmud ever read it as a license to be immoral, but many people who are still considered authorities on the Christian Scriptures read it as a license to hate Jews.

There is another relevant question that must be asked here. The entire purpose of communication is to transport ideas from the mind of the communicator to his intended audience. The words the communicator uses are not the end-goal of the act of communicating. The words are just a means to reach the end-goal. The ultimate purpose of any communication is the ideas that the target audience walks away with. With this information in front of us, we can appreciate why any wise communicator will evaluate the world-view of his or her audience before deciding which words to use to get the message across. If you are speaking to a crowd that is deeply imbued with the principles of the essential equality of all people and the extreme value of human life and you tell them that the Jews are the children of the devil, you could perhaps expect them to reinterpret your words according to the principles that they hold dear (even that is a stretch). But if you are speaking to an audience that never heard of these principles, and you teach them that the Jews are the children of the devil, what message do you expect them to hear?

Now the Christian scriptures are in essence a communication from the first Christian teachers to Christians in all generations. Did the authors of these books have any inkling as to how their words would be understood in future generations? Did these authors have any idea how the mind-set of their intended audience will influence the way their words are understood? If they did, then they were partners to the murderous activities of the Church. If they were myopic, simpleminded people who could not foresee how their words would be understood by the very audience that they were addressing, then how can anyone attach significance and value to their words?

Brown quotes Jesus as saying "love your enemies". Where does Jesus say anything positive about his own enemies? Where does Jesus acknowledge the moral responsibility to question his authority? After all, if he wasn't who he claimed he was (which he wasn't) then obeying him is the most grievous sin against God. Together with the false prophets of history, Jesus could not recognize the simple truth that God desires an honest heart.

### **I. 38. Page 113**

Brown responds to the contention that Jesus must be a bad tree as the evil fruit that Christianity produced seems to indicate. His basic argument is that anyone who fails to be a moral person cannot be labeled a Christian. (page 115). What line does a person have to cross in order to be considered immoral? If someone says a lie, does that make him lose his standing as a "true" Christian? How about anger, pride, lust, self-centeredness – would any of these character faults remove a person from Brown's roll of "real" Christians? Where did Brown find a billion Christians earlier in his book?

We all agree that one should be a moral person; that is not the point of contention. The point of contention is should we worship the Master of all and Him alone, or should we worship Jesus? Should we look to the Christian scriptures for guidance or should we look to the Talmud? We have a case history. We have two societies. One worshiped Jesus and revered the Christian scriptures, while the other worshiped God as an absolute unity and venerated the Talmud. Compare.

Idolatry eventually produces immorality. It doesn't have to show itself in the first generations of enthusiastic, spiritually motivated, and sincere (if misguided) believers. But it will eventually show up.

**I. 39. *Objection 2.6***

*“No Jew has ever been put to death for refusing the NT message of the love of God”.*

When a person dies for his beliefs, he does not give much thought to the beliefs of his murderers. The martyr must be convinced that what he believes is true and worth dying for. The Jews all died because they believed that attributing divinity to a man is idolatry. Is this “counterfeit Christianity”?

**I. 40. *Objection 2.7***

Brown claims that Thomas Aquinas did not contribute to anti-Semitism. Aquinas was the fellow who taught that the Jews know that Jesus is the Messiah; yet still reject him, (as a simple reading of John would reveal). This teaching reinforced the Christian image of the Jew as a partner of the devil. This teaching had a significant influence on the development of Jew hatred.

In any case, there is a much deeper question to be asked here. Why is Brown satisfied with the fact that this great genius did not “contribute” to anti-Semitism? If “true” Christianity includes a love for Jews, why is it that the greatest Church scholars believed the opposite? Why did so many men of learning, revered by Christendom until today, believe that Jew hatred is an integral part of Christianity? These theologians did not see anything wrong with the Church's bitter hatred and disdain toward the Jews. They did not see it as a contradiction to any of their beliefs, or to any of the books they held sacred. That should tell you something about Christianity.

**I. 41. *Page 135***

Brown claims that Luther's anti-Jewish writings fell into “virtual oblivion” until the Nazis got hold of them. A cursory study of German history will reveal that this is not the case. Lutheran Germany was thoroughly imbued with anti-Semitism with the encouragement of the Lutheran Church leaders. Here are some historical facts. In 1612, one of Luther's anti-Semitic tracts was republished in an effort to stir up hatred against the Jews of Frankfurt. The popular wave of hatred that was generated resulted in the deaths of 3000 Jews and the expulsion of any survivors. Try telling the Jews of Frankfurt that Luther's writings fell into “virtual oblivion”.

Luther's anti-Semitic beliefs were so prevalent, that when Wilhelm Marr (1879) founded a political party whose only agenda was anti-Semitism, he was referred to as "the new Luther" (Robert Micahel, Palgrave 2006, Holy Hatred, pg. 141). It is clear that Germans were well aware of Luther's deep hatred towards God's firstborn son.

Brown's statement that "Hitler and most of his officers came from Austria—a country largely untouched by the Protestant reformation" is simply false. Hitler did indeed come from Austria, but by no stretch of the imagination can anyone say that "most of his officers" came from there as well. Brown is implying that Protestant Christianity was not afflicted with anti-Semitism. This too is false. To quote Goldhagen "The moral bankruptcy of the German Churches, Protestant and Catholic alike, regarding Jews was so extensive and abject that it warrants far more attention than can be devoted to it here. Already during Weimar, the anti-semitism of the churches as institutions, of their national and local clergy as well as their acolytes, was widespread and ominous. During Weimar 70 to 80 percent of Protestant pastors had allied themselves with the antisemitic German National Peoples Party and their anti-semitism had permeated the Protestant press even before the Nazi were voted into power" (Hitler's Willing Executioners page 107).

#### I. 42. *Page 138*

Brown argues that Jewish slander of Jesus (who lived amongst us) is part of a vicious cycle. Centuries upon centuries of institutionalized persecution, torture, and the murder of millions is somehow balanced in Brown's mind by the Jews poking fun at someone who claimed to be god.

Brown compares modern Orthodox Jewish persecution of missionaries to the historical Christian persecution of Jews. Some individual Orthodox Jews persecute people who are actively using deceptive tactics in order to influence their own brothers and children to convert to Christianity. If these Christians would not bother the Jews, they would be safe. How does this compare to the religiously sanctioned, institutionalized, persecution of a nation that is minding their own business?

#### I. 43. *Objection 2.8*

Brown compares the invective of the Christian scriptures against the Jews to the rebuke of the Jewish prophet's. Another outrageous analogy. The prophets wrote and spoke their rebuke as a rebuke to their own following, while the authors of the Christian scriptures wrote their invective as accusations against people outside the sphere of their following. The Jewish books of scripture were read as a chastisement to the people who considered the prophet's words holy, while the books of the Christian scriptures are read until today, as character assassination of Jesus' opponents, and as words of self-righteous reassurance to the "believers". The Jewish prophets included themselves when they spoke of the sins of their nation (Exodus 16:28, Jeremiah 14:29, Isaiah 64:5, Psalm 106:6, Daniel 9:5, Ezra 9:6, Nehemiah 9:33). The authors of the Christian scriptures never saw themselves or their intended audience as a part of the group that they were maligning.

#### I. 44. *Objection 2.9*

*“No Church leader in history ever advocated exterminating Jews” “The Church’s historical anti-Judisam bore no resemblance to Hitler’s racial anti-Semitism.”*

Brown would do well to study some history before making such irresponsible statements. Luther called for the execution of the Jews when he wrote “we are at fault for not slaying them” (On the Jews and their Lies). Alonso de Espina, whose work was widely read in Church circles, encouraged the annihilation of the Jews. Not only did he encourage the extermination of Jews who lived as Jews, he encouraged the systematic annihilation of Jewish converts to Christianity as well. His was a thoroughly racist anti-Semitism (Origins of the Spanish Inquisition, B. Netanyahu, 1995). Racial anti-Semitism and the plan to exterminate the Jews were cultivated and nurtured in Church libraries, and in the hearts and minds of Christian scholars.

#### **I. 45. Page 194**

Brown asks how the suffering of the holocaust brought healing to the world. In contrast, he claims, through the suffering of Jesus, countless millions were healed. The suffering of Jesus inspired countless millions to hate God’s firstborn son (Israel). The holocaust brought the Church’s top theologians to re-evaluate their assessment of this hatred. In any case, the prophet explains that a full understanding of the healing provided by the servant’s suffering will only come with the full revelation of God’s glory upon the servant.

#### **I. 46. Objection 2.11**

Brown tries to deny the basic fact that the continued resistance of Jews to the message of Jesus poses a theological threat to Christianity. Let us accept this distorted view of history for a moment. How could a Christian be complacent in face of the Jew’s willingness to die before accepting Jesus? Remember, God chose Israel as His witness to the world. How could someone who believes in the Bible not be moved by the testimony of God’s witness?

#### **I. 47. Objection 2.12**

Brown claims to have won all of his debates with Rabbis. A verbal debate is quite a weak method to discover the truth. Time is limited and people do not have the ability to process all of the information while listening to the debate. In these volumes Brown presents the best argument he could muster for Christianity. Please check out his arguments.

#### **I. 48. Objection 2.13**

Brown responds to the Jewish objection which points out that there was no Jewish continuity to the early Jewish Christian community. He argues that they did retain a Jewish identity for several centuries after the death of Jesus.

Brown missed the point of the objection. The fact that the Jewish Christians had no continuity as a Sabbath observing community tells us that they were cut off from the covenant of God. Exodus 31:13 tells us that observance of the Sabbath stands as an eternal sign for God’s sanctification of His chosen people. God miraculously preserved the sign of the Sabbath amongst the Pharisee community for 2000 years. He did not do so for the Messianic community.

**I. 49. Page 202**

*“Messianic Jews were excluded from the synagogue by Rabbinic Jews and misunderstood by gentile Christians”*

Brown tries to get his readers to believe that the treatment the Messianic Jews received at the hands of the Rabbinic community was harsher than the treatment they received at the hands of the gentile Church (excluded vs. misunderstood). The facts are quite different. Rabbinic Jews excluded the Messianics from the synagogues. Why the Messianics would want to join is beyond me. But the gentile Church slaughtered them. Once the gentile Church gained power they cruelly eradicated every form of Christianity they considered heretical, including the Jewish sects that were still extant at the time.

**I. 50. Objection 2.16**

Brown brings up the Jewish objection which points out that the Jews who lived with Jesus and his followers were not swayed by Jesus' message. Brown responds by encouraging his readers to over-turn the decision of those Jews who lived with Jesus.

Again Brown missed the point of the objection. The people who lived with Jesus and interacted with him were by and large not impressed. Aside from a few who were obviously blinded by his charisma, the populace at large saw a person polluted by the same character flaws that afflict most false prophets. So who knew Jesus better? Is it the Gentile Church (founded by Paul – who never saw Jesus outside of his imagination)? Or is it Jesus' own Jewish neighbors?

## VOLUME II

### II. 1. Page 4

Brown addresses Maimonides' statement that Jews must believe in God as an "only one (- absolute unity): *"There is no doubt that this reaction was due to exaggerated, unbiblical, "Christian" beliefs that gave Jews the impression Christians worshipped three gods."*

Brown would have his readers believe that Maimonides' statement is a "reaction. He would have his readers believe that this "reaction" was due to an incorrect understanding of Christianity.

I have a difficult time imagining a statement that would be more offensive and insulting to Jews and to Judaism. Brown has "no doubt" that the core belief of Judaism is a "reaction" to another belief system. That would be like saying that there is no doubt that Christians revere Jesus as a "reaction" to the Moslem reverence of Mohammed. Or that the reason two people got married to each other was to avoid marrying someone else.

The Jewish people are married to their God. They met Him at Sinai and their hearts are pledged Him ever since. We know our God and we do not have to "react" to redefine our God against other belief systems.

Another underlying misconception that needs to be cleared up is the idea that Maimonides felt threatened in any way by Christianity, as if Christianity is a belief system that somehow loomed large and threatening on the horizon of Maimonides' thought-process. This is false. It is obvious from the writings of Maimonides that the theology of Christianity in no way intimidated him. He viewed a belief system that deifies a human as something that hardly deserves mention. If Maimonides ever felt the need to "react", it was not to Christianity.

Finally, a "correct" understanding of Christianity would have done nothing to change Maimonides' views on the matter. Every form of Trinitarian Christianity attributes deity to a person that walked this earth. This concept, however it is presented, is the antithesis of Judaism.

### II. 2. Page 4

Brown argues against the identification of God as an absolute unity as if this question would somehow be tied to the distinction between the two Hebrew words "echad" (- one) versus "yachid" (- unique, alone). Brown accuses Maimonides of inserting the word "yachid" whereas the word "echad" is the word that the Bible uses.

This argument is irrelevant. The famous thirteen principles of faith as they are printed in the popular Hebrew were not formulated by Maimonides. Maimonides wrote a lengthy essay in Arabic, which was summarized in Hebrew by an anonymous author. When we read Maimonides' Hebrew work that addresses these matters (Yad Hachazaka, Yesodei Hatorah 1:7) we clearly see that Maimonides did not get confused between "echad" and "yachid". The fact is that the word "yachid" could refer to a compound unity just as easily as the word "echad", so changing the word would not have helped Maimonides in any case. The point that Maimonides is making is that unless we are speaking of an absolute

unity, then the word “echad” (- one) is only a relative term. Maimonides understood that the Shema is not using relative terminology to speak of God.

### **II. 3. Page 6**

Brown argues that the Shema (-Hear O Israel... Deuteronomy 6:4) only says that God is alone and not that He is absolutely One. This point is also irrelevant. Which God is the Shema referring to? The One that the Jews believed in, the One that took them out of Egypt and who revealed Himself at Sinai, Him alone – and no one else. Who is excluded? If someone were to take a graven image and claim that this is “one and the same” with the God of Israel, is that not excluded? When Jerobaam pointed to the calf and said “this is who took you out of Egypt” (1Kings 12:28), was that not excluded? When the Buddhists point to a stone statue of Buddha and claim that this is the incarnation of the Creator of heaven and earth, is that not excluded by the “one” of Shema? The “one” of Shema points back to the Sinai revelation. At that revelation God made clear to the Jewish people who it is that they should be directing their devotion to. It was not Jesus. Furthermore, at Sinai God gave the Jewish people to understand that everything in the heaven and earth are but His creations. Any theology that justifies worship of an inhabitant of this earth is precluded by the Sinai revelation and by the Shema.

### **II. 4. Page 7**

Brown claims that the Jewish rejection of the trinity is the result of a “gut level negative reaction to anything Christian”. Where did this negative reaction start from? According to the Christian scriptures, the Jews rejected Christianity because it did not fit with their understanding of God; an understanding that preceded Christianity.

Another point to consider is the fact that the far more likely scenario is that the Church adopted belief in the trinity as a gut level negative reaction to anything Jewish.

The same Council of Nicea that adopted the trinity as a Christian belief, was plagued with a “gut level negative reaction” to anything Jewish. The same Church Council that ratified the trinity also prohibited celebration of Easter in conjunction with Passover. The basis for this decision was not some scholarly calculation or an esoteric argument. I will allow Eusebius, the Church historian who was present at that Council, to speak for himself: “And these are the words with which the Emperor addressed the assembly at Nicea; “Why should we follow in the footsteps of these people who are scorned by God, to celebrate our holy festival together with them? Is there any greater impertinence than this, that these hated Jews should be able to say that we cannot celebrate and observe our festival unless we follow their calculations?” (De Vita Constantini 3:2).

Hatred of Jews and Judaism was reason enough to move this Church Council to change their practices. Is it not likely that the vote against Arius (who opposed belief in the trinity) was also influenced by this hatred of Jews?

### **II. 5. Objection 3.2**

Brown chose to phrase the Jewish objection with the following words. “*You are guilty of making God into a man.*” The wording of the objection is misleading. No one accuses Christianity of “making God into a man”. Even unlearned people recognize that Christianity believes in God as God and in a man as god. We accuse Christianity of making a man into god, and that objection still stands.



## **II. 6. Page 15**

Brown considers the argument “your god wore diapers”, to be crude. But the Bible ridicules graven images as those which cannot see, hear, eat, etc. I can hear a Native American who pays devotion to a totem pole, laugh at this. “I am not worshipping the wooden pole, I am worshipping the spirit behind this pole. What a crude argument this book is trying to present, these are certainly not the words of an all knowing God.” Most idolaters can provide some sophisticated rationale which seems to justify their worship. The arguments that Brown uses to justify worship of Jesus can just as easily be used to justify worship of the spirit of thunder that the totem pole represents. But God’s words stand forever, despite the derision of misguided men. If an object of worship can be represented by a physical body, then the worship is foolish, and ought to be ridiculed by pointing to the deficiencies inherent in the physical manifestation/representation/incarnation of the object of worship.

Brown tells us about Sai Baba, a Hindu man-god. What Brown does not tell us is how exactly is Jesus different from Sai Baba? Is it just that one of Jesus’s followers can come up with a “Biblical justification”, and Sai Baba’s followers did not? Let one of them come across Brown’s book. They can use most of Brown’s arguments, and using Brown’s style, they could probably come up with more. The followers of Sai Baba can also claim that Sai Baba is an incarnation of Jesus, if they haven’t done so already

## **II. 7. Page 23**

*“Jesus is the replacement of the ancient Tabernacle”.*

So was the body of the Tabernacle “cosubstantial” with God? Was the Tabernacle 100 percent God and 100 percent human?

## **II. 8. Page 43**

Brown accuses the Jewish Publication Society of producing words out of “thin air” in their translation of the Bible. Amazingly, Brown does the very same on this same page. The words “will last” do not appear in the Hebrew of verse 7 of Psalm 45. Brown just produced them out of “thin air”.

## **II. 9. Objection 3.4**

Here Brown addresses a basic Jewish objection. According to Deuteronomy 13 Jesus was a false prophet because he advocated worship of himself. Brown responds by informing us that all of Jesus’ miracles pointed to God, and directed people’s devotion to God.

Again, Brown misses the point of the objection. Brown claims that everything Jesus did was for the glory of the God of Israel. These are word games. The worship of the Christian is motivated by an awe and a reverence for the suffering experienced by a human body. The devotion of the Christian is inspired by the righteousness that was allegedly displayed by a man who lived on this earth, breathed the same air that we do, and died. The Christian considers these to be acts of the god to whom he is directing his devotion. This is not the worship of the God of Israel. This is not devotion to the Creator of heaven and earth. This is worship of something that is smaller than heaven and earth. Our devotion

is due to God because He is our Creator. To direct the devotion due to God towards a created being is idolatry.

Another way to approach this would be to ask Brown, if the entire function of Jesus was to point people to the God of Israel, then why are you trying to convert people who already worship the God of Israel? The fact that Jesus' followers encourage people to direct devotion to Jesus even if their heart already belongs to God, tells us that Jesus is not pointing people TO the God of Israel. He is pointing people AWAY from the God of Israel.

Another way of formulating this point would be to ask Brown or any Christian: "do you really believe that devotion to Jesus is only a means through which a higher goal can be reached?"

## **II. 10. Objection 3.7**

Here Brown puts a crude objection into the mouth of the Jew. Brown has the Jew arguing "*We are righteous by what we do.*"

No knowledgeable Jew would claim "we are righteous by what we do". We do, because we were commanded to do. All of creation obeys God, because He is the Creator of all. If God wants to impute righteousness to us on the basis of what we do that is His business, and we consider it an undeserved kindness from God.

## **II. 11. Objection 3.9**

Here Brown puts another objection into the mouth of the Jew in order to be able to condemn Judaism. Brown has the Jew arguing that the sacrificial system of scripture was repudiated and replaced.

Judaism never repudiated the sacrificial system. It is Christianity which repudiates the entire sacrificial system. Jews who are loyal to God and His word believe in every detail of the sacrificial system as taught by Moses. We study its intricate laws and we hope and pray for the restoration of the system. It is Christianity who does not satisfy itself with the anti-scriptural teaching that the sacrifices were replaced by Jesus. The author of Hebrews takes this rebellion against God's word one step further. He tells his readers that the sacrifices of the Hebrew Scriptures never really atoned at all (Hebrews 10:4)

## **II. 12. Page 74**

*"It is unthinkable to us – based on the Torah – that the sacrificial system was simply discarded and replaced with prayer."*

Indeed. It is likewise unthinkable to us – based on the Torah – that the sacrificial system was simply discarded and replaced with Jesus.

## **II. 13. Page 75**

Brown's translation of Micha 6:6-8 left out the Hebrew words "ki im" (in verse 8 – translated as "but" in the KJV). Why?

## **II. 14. Page 94**

*“All this should give us pause for thought, since it would be highly unlikely – to put it mildly – that the Lord would hang a major life-critical Torah revising revelation, on just one verse, especially when that verse in the original Hebrew is somewhat obscure grammatically...”*

These are Brown’s words in criticism of Rabbi Singer. It would do Brown a bit of good to pay heed to an ancient Jewish proverb which says: “Before you point to the splinter in the eye of your friend remove the beam from your own eye”. The theology of Christianity argues that God hung major Torah revising revelation on solitary verses where the Hebrew is grammatically obscure. The entire theological principal which posits that atonement can only come through “a life for a life” is based on a misreading of one solitary verse. The entire concept of a virgin birth is based on a misreading of one solitary verse. The entire concept of a second coming is based on a misreading of one solitary verse. This is not to mention the many Christian doctrines which do not have even one solitary mistranslated verse to lean on at all. These include but are not limited to; the idea that the sacrificial system is to be replaced, the teaching that our devotion ought to be directed to Jesus, the concept that all men are damned to hell for ever and ever because of Adam’s sin, the anti-scriptural teaching that contends that repentance alone does not have the power to atone for sin, the concept that a new election is created on the basis of devotion to an individual, the concept that devotion to an individual is a prerequisite for atonement, the teaching that the Aaronic priesthood is to be abolished – amongst many others.

## **II. 15. Page 100**

*“Despite all this, however the Rabbinic view that became normative was that with the Temple’s destruction, prayer replaced sacrifice”*

This statement has no basis in reality. Who wrote the “normative” Siddur which Brown quotes to prove that sacrifices are indeed important? Who prayed the words of the Siddur with sincerity and love? (Yes! Some Jews are sincere) When the Talmud says that prayer is in place of sacrifice, they were saying that within prayer we can still find some of the spiritual concepts inherent in sacrifice, as well as within charity and Torah study. This was true before the Temple was destroyed as well. Only, with the Temple’s destruction, prayer took the place of sacrifice as the chief means of expressing this type of self-negation towards God. But everyone who said this and everyone who read this statement, was fully aware that it is because of our sins that we lost the sacrificial system. To portray the Rabbis of the Talmud as if they were not consciously aware of the spiritual loss we suffered with the loss of the sacrificial system, and tried to hoodwink themselves into believing that we are missing nothing now, is not honest. There is not one Rabbinic statement which says that prayer is stronger now that the Temple is destroyed, or that we are not missing anything with the sacrifices because we have prayer.

## **II. 16. Objection 3:10**

*“- numerous authoritative Rabbinic traditions state that without the shedding of blood, there is no atonement.”*

False.

## **II. 17. Page 118**

Brown claims that he addressed every Torah reference that speaks of atonement without blood. Another falsehood. He did not address Deuteronomy 30:1, 2.

## **II. 18. Page 148**

Brown tries to repudiate the message of Ezekiel 18, and 33. The prophet clearly speaks of atonement for sin through repentance and repentance alone. The first technique that Brown uses to nullify God's word is that he puts the Jewish argument into a straight-jacket. He has the Jews arguing that Ezekiel was only referring to a situation where the Temple is destroyed. Once the Jewish argument is safely locked up, Brown launches his counter-attack. He argues that once the Temple was rebuilt the prophet's words would be meaningless. He makes the point that Ezekiel's contemporaries looked forward to the restoration of the sacrificial system. He also informs us that Ezekiel himself prophetically predicted a restoration of the sacrificial system. Brown argues that according to the Jewish reading of Ezekiel, which posits that all one needs is repentance then all of the other commandments such as Sabbath and Passover would be of no importance. Finally, Brown argues, that the interpretation of Ezekiel 18 and 33 which teaches that repentance is all that is necessary for atonement from sin was unknown to the Talmudic and medieval Jewish Rabbis. It is only an argument created under polemical pressure from Christianity. He "proves" this preposterous premise by pointing out that this text was not used in the Jewish-Christian debate for the last 1900 years.

Every one of Brown's arguments is fallacious. The prophet clearly says that with repentance all sins are forgiven. Repentance means a change of attitude. Repentance means returning to obedience from rebellion. Someone who repents, by definition, accepts upon himself or herself all that God has commanded. This includes the Sabbath as well as the blood offerings spoken of by Moses. As long as one has sincerely accepted all that God has commanded, he has repented. If for whatever reason, it was impossible for the person to fulfill the Law practically, the repentance still stands. As long as the person accepted upon himself or herself to be obedient to God he or she has repented and is forgiven. For example; a man repents on Sunday. The Sabbath is still 6 days away. He has not fulfilled the Sabbath yet. Will God forgive? Similarly, if one accepts the validity of every word in the Torah, including the commandments about the sacrifices, he has repented. The fact that he cannot practically fulfill the sacrificial offerings does not nullify his repentance and he will be forgiven. On the other hand if one refuses to accept the validity of Moses' words, and claims that the sacrifices were replaced, then he or she has not repented. God's words through Ezekiel retain their eternal meaning. Repentance alone effects atonement. The fact that the people were looking forward to the Temple does not mean that repentance does not work. Repentance means yearning to fulfill every one of God's commandments, even those commandments which we cannot practically fulfill.

The fact that the Rabbis did not use these passages in the polemical debates of the middle ages is because the Catholics who they debated did not bring up the issue of atonement. But in non-polemical settings the Rabbis certainly did quote Ezekiel 18 and 33 to prove that repentance works. These include the Talmud (Yoma 82b, Kiddushin 40b), the Midrash (Tanchuma Vayeyitzi 22) and the Yom Kippur liturgy.

**II. 19. Page 152**

*“God has always had one system of atonement and one system alone, namely, substitutionary atonement.”*

In the book of Micha 6: 1-8 the prophet is clearly talks about substitution. “Shall I give my first born for the sin of my soul?”, and God’s answer is no. ONLY (“ki im”) to do justice and love kindness, and walking humbly with your God. Does this mean sacrifice is not necessary? Certainly not. Included in walking humbly with God, is the acceptance of all of His commandments. But the prophet is clearly telling us that the key is not substitution. The key is obedience. This is also the message of Jeremiah 7:22 where God says that He didn’t command us about sacrifices, and that He only demands obedience. Of-course obedience includes bringing a substitutionary offering where we are so commanded, but the key remains obedience. There is no way that the Christian can look at his worship of Jesus as obedience to the God of Micha.

**II. 20. Objection 3:15**

Brown points to the Talmudic teaching that the death of the righteous has the power to atone for sin. He argues therefore that Christianity’s belief in vicarious atonement is rooted in the Jewish traditions.

Brown has just destroyed his arguments articulated in objections 3:9 through 3:14. Until now Brown had argued that the only method of atonement is substitutionary atonement. He went on to say that with the Temple’s destruction, substitutionary atonement is no longer available to us so we are lost in our sins. But if the death of the righteous has the power to atone, then we still have substitutionary atonement.

**II. 21. Page 154**

Brown speaks of the idea of a “redemptive analogy”. He explains how a missionary could not communicate with a tribal people in New Guinea who did not understand some of the underlying concepts of Christianity. At some point the missionary experienced a breakthrough. He found that a certain aspect of the tribal culture could serve as an analogy for the foundational principles of Christianity. By utilizing this aspect of their culture as an analogy, the missionary was able to communicate with these primitive people.

Brown compares this situation with the concept that the suffering of the righteous atones for sin that is found in Judaism. Brown considers this concept a “redemptive analogy”, an analogy that could facilitate communication between Missionaries and the Jewish people.

The comparison is invalid. There is no communication barrier between missionaries and Jews. Jews have no problem UNDERSTANDING the concepts that the missionaries are preaching. We reject the missionary teaching because we fully understand it and we recognize it as anti-scriptural.

## **II. 22. Page 165**

Brown points out that the Rabbis taught that a sacrifice has the power to atone for future sins. He sees in this teaching support for the Christian teaching that Jesus' death has the power to atone for future sins.

It seems that Brown isn't satisfied to destroy his own previous arguments, he wants to bury them as well. If sacrifices have the power to atone for future sin, then the fact that we don't have the Temple now does not mean that we are without substitutional offerings. The sacrifices of the Temple could atone into the future. The binding of Isaac can atone into the future. The sacrifices of our martyrs can atone into the future.

## **II. 23. Page 182**

Brown addresses the prophecies which tell us that the sacrifices are coming back. According to Brown the sacrifices were replaced with Jesus, so the prophetic prediction of their return poses a problem to Brown. His answer? First he negates the message of Ezekiel by telling us that even the Rabbis had difficulty understanding his prophecy. Then he addresses the other prophecies by telling us that they generally deal with the gentiles bringing offerings, they do not speak of offerings for atonement, and they only take up a total of three verses.

First it is in place to note that Brown seems to be unaware of at least four other prophecies which speak of the blood offerings in the Messianic era (Isaiah 56:7, 60:7, Ezekiel 20:40,41, Malachi 3:3,4). This is aside from the many prophecies that predict complete observance of the Law, which obviously includes a restoration of the sacrifices. In addition, Brown seems to have forgotten the many passages which tells us that the Law is eternal and unchanging, with a special emphasis on the laws concerning the sacrifices. Furthermore, by claiming that the prophets that speak of the offerings in the Messianic era do not speak of atonement offerings, Brown has just buried another one of his arguments. Earlier in this book (page 98), Brown argues that because God called the Temple a "beit zevach" (2Chronicles 7:12), this proves that the primary function of the Temple is to atone for sin through the substitutionary offerings. But here Brown informs us that the Hebrew word "zevach" does not necessarily refer to sacrifices for the atonement of sin. If that is the case, then the verse in Chronicles does not say that the primary function of the Temple is for atonement. Finally, Brown's argument that the prophecies only take up three verses, implying that they cannot be considered too central to God's message, deals another fatal blow to Brown's previous arguments. Brown has argued that the central concept of salvation is the idea of a "life for a life". This "central" concept is only spelled out in one verse in the Jewish Bible. According to Brown's own guidelines this should tell us that the concept of "a life for a life" cannot be too central to God's message.

## **II. 24. Objection 3:18**

Brown speaks about humanity desperately needing God's salvation. Brown quotes several passages from the Jewish scriptures which describe how the prophetic authors looked forward to God's salvation. Indeed, we all need God's salvation in every aspect of our physical and spiritual lives. But the prophets taught us that God Himself has the power to

save, without the services of a long deceased resident of the upper Galilee. God is close to all who call upon Him in truth (Psalm 145:18).

In any case, Brown has missed the main point of the Jewish objection. The argument against Christianity is not that we do not need God's help. Of-course we need God's help and without His salvation we are lost. The point of the Jewish objection is that no one starts out with damnation to eternal hellfire. And even though we need God's help to pull ourselves closer to Him, but we are not condemned before we start as Christianity teaches. This teaching has no basis in scripture.

## **II. 25. Page 194**

Brown points to the shortfalls of our people, and asks, so do we not need salvation? I turn and point to the shortfalls of people who worship Jesus, and ask: do they not need salvation? Are they free of all human shortcomings?

## **II. 26. Objection 3:19**

Brown addresses the Jewish objection which argues that Jews don't need Jesus because they don't need a middleman between themselves and God.

Brown responds by pointing out that Jews do need middlemen in the form of priests, prophets, and Rabbis (teachers). It is clear that Brown has not grasped the point of the objection. When our forefathers loved God, there was no other entity in their imagination aside from the Creator of heaven and earth. When our forefathers spoke to God, they spoke directly to the One who holds everyone's breath in His hand. The reverence our forefathers felt towards God was not precipitated by the suffering that took place in a human body. The reverence that our forefathers felt towards God was the awe one feels in the presence of the Master of all. This reverence was not mixed with the reverence towards an inhabitant of a human body. The truth is, that this is not something that is unique to the Jewish people. Every created being is called upon to approach their Creator directly. There is no room for anyone or anything else in the reverence and love that a created being feels towards its Creator.

## **II. 27. Page 202**

*"God made Adam in His own, perfect image, but Adam – after his disobedience and fall – produced offspring in his own, imperfect image. The image of God our Father has been corrupted through the image of our father Adam to the point that, by nature, we are more the children of Adam than we are the children of God."*

God called us His children after the fall of Adam (Deuteronomy 14:1). The Bible teaches that the reason murder is prohibited is because God has created us in His image (Genesis 9:6). This is stated after the fall of Adam. If humanity corrupted the image of God, as Brown argues, murder would be permitted. Perhaps the teaching of the Church about the intrinsic evil of man is the factor which lead Christian Europe to attribute so little value to human life – as a cursory examination of their history reveals.

## **II. 28. Page 208**

Brown tells his readers that by putting faith in Jesus, they can be free from sin. He then admits, that *“we will not experience total perfection”*. My question to Brown is; by what criteria do you measure this? According to Brown, the fact that people struggle with envy, pride and greed, proves how binding the nature of sin is (page 202). Are Christians free from these character faults?

## **II. 29. Objection 3:24**

Brown addresses the Christian doctrine of a “second coming” of the Messiah. From a Biblical standpoint, the only argument he has presented is the seeming contradiction between Zechariah 9:9, where the Messiah is to come riding on a donkey, and Daniel 7:13, which has the Messiah riding on the clouds. Brown’s solution for this “problem” is that messiah will come twice. Once as a suffering Messiah, in fulfillment of Zechariah’s prophecy, the second time he will come on the clouds in fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy. The problem with Brown’s “problem” is that Daniel 7:13 says nothing about the Messiah riding on the clouds. The angel himself told Daniel that this was a symbolic image of Israel acquiring the kingdom in the Messianic age (Daniel 7:18,27).

## **II. 30. Objection 3.25**

Brown claims that Christianity does more than any other religion in humanitarian aid and charity. Perhaps he is technically right. But when judged proportionately, Judaism surpasses Christianity in every area. When you throw history on the balance (before it was fashionable for the Church to help the masses, while the Jews were always charitable) plus the crimes of Christianity, there is no contest. Many of the achievements that Brown lists were opposed or suppressed by the establishment Church. Why was the world plunged into the dark ages with the rise of Christianity? Up until the renaissance, Christian Europe was by and large illiterate – thanks to the Church’s fear of knowledge. Despite the fact that the Jews had their hands tied behind their backs (- thanks again to the “compassionate” Church), Jews played a prominent role in developing civilization. When the Church discouraged the practice of medicine (such as at the Council of Rheims 1135), it was the Jew who kept this knowledge alive. A cursory study of history reveals that only when the power of the Church was tempered with a questioning mind (something the Church tried very hard to eradicate), did mankind move towards progress.

Brown’s argument that Christians did more for humanity than adherents of all other religions combined is mitigated by the simple fact that more people were killed in the name of Christianity than in the name of all other religions combined.

## **II. 31. Page 240**

Brown quotes a book entitled “What if Jesus Had Never Been Born?” I want to answer that question. On the whole the world would be a much better place. The Jews, who were always in the forefront of enhancing civilization, would have played a more prominent role in the development of society. They would not have been locked into ghettos, tens of million more of them would be alive today. The secular sciences would not have been suppressed during the dark ages.



To sum it up: It is only the Judaism within Christianity which brings good to the world. Anything that is originally Christian is evil. It just so happens to be, that because humans are created in the image of God, that the Judaism within Christianity is the part that attracts people to Christianity, and guides people in their quest for holiness.

**II. 32. Page 241**

Brown credits Christianity with the abolishment of slavery. If slavery would still be around, and Brown would consider slavery a virtuous practice, he would be able to credit Christianity with the same “achievement”.

**II. 33. Objection 3.28**

Brown addresses a serious objection that is raised against Christianity. Brown words the objection this way; *“But I find it impossible to believe in a religion that condemns all people to hell – including many moral, good, kind and sensitive people, not to mention countless millions of religious Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists – simply because they don’t believe in Jesus. I can’t follow a religion whose God tortures people in flames forever for not believing in someone they never even heard of.”*

Brown does not answer this weighty objection. Brown is not willing to say that God is fair, and that He will not hold anyone accountable for that which they were not capable of doing, or for that which they were not capable of knowing. The Jewish scriptures teach, and Judaism affirms, that God judges every action, both good and bad (Ecclesiastes 12:14). Even the idolater’s positive actions are rewarded by God. But according to Christianity, a person who lived a moral life is condemned to hell if they did not believe in Jesus.

## VOLUME III

### III. 1. *Objection 4:1*

Brown discusses a Jewish objection to Christianity. *“If Jesus is really the Messiah, and if he is so important, why doesn’t the Torah speak of him at all?”*

Brown responds on behalf of Christianity. *“You would be surprised to see how many passages and concepts actually point to Jesus ... in the Torah. But before you question my beliefs, are you aware that the Torah doesn’t say much about the “traditional” Jewish Messiah? Does this mean the Messiah is unimportant to traditional Judaism? And the Torah says nothing about the oral law. What does this imply? You might want to think twice about your argument.”*

We will address Brown’s point one at a time. Brown begins by stating that many passages and concepts “point” to Jesus. He goes on to substantiate his claims by showing how certain characters in the Torah “pre-figure” Jesus. But why does the Torah not speak of the concept of a Messianic redeemer openly and unequivocally?

The fact is that the Torah does speak of the Messianic redeemer openly and unequivocally. The passage in Numbers 24:14-19 speaks clearly of a Jewish redeemer in language that is directly parallel to Obadiah 1:18-21. Brown acknowledges this in endnote #1, but for some odd reason, fails to mention this open Messianic passage in the main body of his book. Furthermore, the passage in Deuteronomy 30:1-10, while it does not mention the Messianic leader, certainly speaks openly and unequivocally about the Messianic age. When we look at these passages that directly speak of the Messiah and the Messianic age, it becomes clear that the Torah’s view of the Messiah has nothing to do with Christianity and Jesus. According to the Torah, the key points of the Messianic age will be Israel’s return to the Law of Moses, an ingathering of the Jewish exiles, God’s favor upon the Jewish people, complete observance of the Law of Moses, and the destruction of those who persecuted the Jewish people. This is hardly a fitting description of the Messianic era according to Christianity. The Torah’s most open prediction about the Messiah has him crushing Israel’s enemies and bringing victory to Israel – hardly a fitting description of Jesus.

The method that Brown uses to find the passages that “prefigure” Jesus, is a classic example of circular reasoning. He finds a parallel to Jesus in the binding of Isaac. But nowhere does the Torah tell us that the binding of Isaac has anything to do with the Messiah. If we allow the scriptures to tell us about the concept of the Messiah, we will end up with a completely different set of “prefigures”. After we know that the Messiah is supposed to be a redeemer, working victory for Israel (Numbers 24:9-14), we will realize that Moses and Joshua are the two men from the Five Books of Moses who most closely “prefigure” the Messiah.

### III. 2. *Page 13*

*“There is nothing in Genesis 49:10 that would rule out Yeshua.”*

This prophecy tells us that the Messiah will come from the tribe of Judah. This clearly eliminates the Christian Jesus as a viable candidate for the title of the Jewish Messiah. The Christian scriptures admit that Jesus did not have a Jewish father from the tribe of

Judah. That claim is incompatible with the Jewish scriptures description of the Messiah. In order to qualify for the position of the Messiah according to this passage in Genesis you need a human father from the tribe of Judah.

### **III. 3. Page 23**

Here Brown addresses the “virgin birth” prophecy of Isaiah 7:14. Brown acknowledges that the word the prophet used (“alma”) does not mean “virgin”, rather the word refers to a young maiden, whether a virgin or not. Brown puts forth the argument that the Hebrew word “betula” also does not necessarily refer to a virgin, therefore when Isaiah wanted to refer to a virgin the Hebrew word “alma” was just as good as the word “betula”. Brown fails to tell his readers that when the Bible wants to refer to virginity it always uses the Hebrew word “betula” or a grammatical derivative of that word. (See Deuteronomy 22, and Judges 11:37). If the point Isaiah was making was a point about the virginity of the maiden he would have used “betula” and not “alma”.

Furthermore, this simple Hebraic point (the fact that “alma” means a “young maiden”), seems to have escaped the authors of the Christian scriptures. Both Matthew and Luke fail to tell us that Mary was young.

### **III. 4. Page 27**

Brown argues that we should recognize that Matthew made use of the “midrashic” method of interpreting scripture. The “midrashic” method of interpreting scripture is so flexible that it can be used to “prove” anything. The “midrashic” method of interpreting scripture is only valid when applied by people who are already recognized by God’s witnesses to be imbued with a spirit of Godliness. One cannot use the “midrashic” method of interpreting scripture to establish one’s own credibility.

### **III. 5. Objection 4:4**

Here Brown argues that Isaiah 9:5 is a reference to Jesus. Brown acknowledges that the context of the passage tells us that this child must be born eight centuries before Jesus (*page 34*). Brown argues that some Messianic prophecies were partially fulfilled in one time period, but only reached complete fulfillment in Jesus. Brown doesn’t seem to understand that the context of the prophecy clearly and unequivocally refers to the salvation that God wrought through Hezekiah’s prayer. That salvation was the destruction of Sennacherib’s hordes at the gates of Jerusalem. If we will look for a parallel to this event, it will be something akin to what is described in Numbers 24:14-19, or Micha 5:1-8. We will look for a victory for God and for His firstborn son, Israel, over those who want to annihilate them. We will not look for the founder of a new religion.

### **III. 6. Page 41**

*“Interestingly, the national interpretation is not found once in the Talmuds, in the Targums, or the midrashim (in other words not once in all the classical foundational authoritative Jewish writings). In fact, it is not found in any traditional source until the time of Rashi...”*

This statement is false. The Targum speaks of the suffering of the remnant of God’s nation in verse 10, the Talmud (Berachot 5a) speaks of the suffering of the righteous in relation to the same verse. The Midrash (Bamidbar Rabba 13:2) applies verse 12 to Israel as a

whole. All of these support Rashi's explanation that the passage refers to the righteous of Israel. Brown quotes these on page 59 but he doesn't tell his readers how he makes this exaggerated statement on page 41. In any case Brown has missed some important midrashic references (3 references in Tana devei Eliyahu and one in Aleph Beitot D'Rabbi Akiva).

### **III. 7. Page 43**

Brown points to the passage in Isaiah 49 where God's servant is called "Israel" yet is sent to redeem Israel. Brown argues that this can only be referring to an individual within the nation. According to Brown this individual can only be the Messiah. Brown seems to have forgotten Isaiah 51:12-16 where Israel is being addressed in plural terminology, yet they are sent to declare to Zion that they are God's nation. It is obvious that the servant who is sent to Israel is not an individual but rather a plural entity. It is the righteous of Israel as Rashi affirms.

It is also interesting to note that this interpretation is supported by the Christian scriptures. Acts 13:47 interprets Isaiah 49:6, which speaks of the individual servant, as a reference to the righteous community.

### **III. 8. Page 49**

Brown claims that Nachmanidies "embraced" the Messianic interpretation. This is false. In his disputation with the apostate Nachmanidies said "According to its true sense it speaks only generally of the people of Israel". In recognition that several midrashim apply the passage to the Messiah, Nacmanidies wrote a commentary explaining how this midrashic interpretation does not support Christianity. But he clearly says that he himself recognizes that the most straightforward reading of the text supports the national interpretation.

### **III. 9. Page 50**

Brown argues that it would have been tempting for the Jewish rabbis to interpret Isaiah 53 in a manner that negates the Christian manipulation of these verses.

Brown is projecting his own moral standards on the Rabbis. He is assuming that it is perfectly fine to conveniently reinterpret God's word in order to avoid some polemical pressure. The Rabbis operated in an arena where the highest value is truth.

In any case, Christianity never posed a theological threat to Judaism. There was never a "temptation" for the Rabbis to reinterpret their own holy writings to avoid the Christian interpretation.

### **III. 10. Page 56**

Here we have the only substantial paragraph out of the 45 pages that Brown devotes to the discussion on Isaiah 53. It is here that Brown addresses the authentic Jewish interpretation as opposed to the fictional interpretation that he spends so much time refuting. Here Brown tells us why he cannot accept Rashi's interpretation that applies

Isaiah 53 to the righteous remnant. He argues that the remnant is not an identifiable entity. It has no specific history so the words “he grew up like a tender shoot, as a root from dry land” cannot apply to them. Second, Brown argues that the righteous remnant was not always silent and submissive in the face of their suffering. And third he argues that the righteous remnant was never exalted.

It seems that Brown has not read Isaiah 65:8-15 which describes the ultimate exaltation of the righteous remnant. When that exaltation occurs, people will realize that the suffering that the remnant underwent as part of Israel was for the purpose of cleansing the world. The history of the remnant is the history of Israel because Israel’s experiences are her experiences. And Israel was generally silent in the face of the Christian mobs who butchered them, especially the righteous remnant, as described in Psalm 44.

### **III. 11. Page 61**

Here Brown quotes Origen’s reply to those who argues that Isaiah 53 is a reference to Israel. His argument focuses on verse 8 where the servant is smitten for the sins of “my people”. It is safe to assume that the phrase “my people” is a reference to Israel, so the servant must be someone else. It seems that Origen, like Brown cannot understand that the servant is the righteous remnant. Thus the righteous remnant is smitten for the sins of Israel. In Isaiah 51:12-16 we see clearly how the prophet speaks to the righteous remnant and commissions them to declare to Israel – “you are My nation”.

Another point to consider here is the fact that Brown is contradicting himself. Here he insists that the speakers of this passage must be the people of Israel. Yet when he speaks of the healing brought about through the servant’s suffering, Brown speaks of “a sinning world” (page 52). We challenge Brown to identify the speaker of the passage. Is it specifically Israel, or is it the world at large?

When we focus on the “healing” that Jesus brought to Israel, we see the crusades, the inquisition, and the holocaust. None of these would have occurred had Jesus not been born.

Even when we focus on the nations that put their faith in Jesus, it is hard to find the “healing” that he brought them. The guilt of 2000 years of a deep hatred of God’s firstborn son (Israel) was brought upon the European people through Jesus and his followers. Had Jesus not been born, Europe would have been spared from this scourge. When one steps back and looks at the full scope of history, it becomes clear that Jesus did NOT bring healing to the world or to the Jewish people.

(The reader is referred to Contra-Brown for a more comprehensive analysis of Isaiah 53. This document is available at <http://www.jewsforjudaism.org>)

### **III. 12. Page 90**

Here Brown ridicules Rashi’s interpretation of Daniel 9. He compares it to the countdown towards an expected launching of a rocket – but no lift-off occurs. He does not tell his

readers that on pages 95-100 he will speak of a Christian interpretation which has God's program beginning at one point in time and coming to its final fulfillment at another time. It seems that this is allowed for Christians, but not for Rashi. The exile which begins at the close of the 490 years represents the beginning of God's program, while the program will come to full fruition in the Messianic era. Rashi's interpretation accurately notes that the cutting off of the anointed one takes place together with the destruction of the city (verse 26) – something that does not work with any of the Christian interpretations. Interestingly, in the 24 pages Brown devoted to the discussion on Daniel 9, he does not clearly address this basic Jewish objection – that the cutting off of the anointed one ought to occur together with the destruction of Jerusalem.

### **III. 13. Page 103**

Brown argues that the difficulty in joining the two time periods in Daniel 9:25 (the seven and sixty two weeks) is not grammatical. This is incorrect. The Hebrew word which follows the sixty two weeks (“tashuv”) lacks the prefix “and” (the Hebrew letter “vav”). Unless we recognize that the sixty two weeks is separated from the previous seven, the last part of the verse is hanging in the air in a grammatical sense.

### **III. 14. Page 130**

Brown charges that the Psalmist (Psalm 40) “failed miserably” to live out the ideal of the Torah. The Psalmist here is David (verse 1). God points to David as an example to be followed in obedience to the Torah (1Kings 11:38). It seems that God didn't get a chance to read Dr. Brown's book.

### **III. 15. Page 131**

Missionaries quote Psalm 45:7 as a proof that the Messiah is to be divine. The Psalmist literally addresses the king with the words “Your throne God forever”. The Jewish response to this missionary argument points out that the word used for “God” does not necessarily have to be translated that way. The same word could refer to a human judge. Furthermore, in context of the complete scripture we understand that the verse cannot be calling a human divine. Brown responds to this objection by advising his readers; *“Try this simple test: Write out the verse in Hebrew by itself, give it to anyone who is fluent in biblical Hebrew and ask him or her to translate the verse.”*

In the same vein I would suggest that the readers take Jesus' statement to the Jewish people in John 8:44, 45: “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth ye believe me not.” Ask them if the man who spoke these words was or was not a racist anti-Semite.

### **III. 16. Page 133**

Brown pontificates *“we do best to take the scriptures in their most obvious basic sense, allowing the Bible to dictate our theology, rather than imposing our own theology on the word of God.”* This remonstrance is directed to the Jewish commentators who understand that a man cannot be God and interpret the Bible accordingly. Is Brown not aware that this is not “our own theology” but is firmly rooted in the words of the Bible?

Furthermore, in volume two, Brown reinterprets every scriptural passage that explicitly declares the efficacy of repentance to cleanse from sin, in a manner that fits his own theology. It seems that “imposing our own theology on the word of God” is OK for Christians, but not for Jews. (For an expanded analysis see “The Elephant and the Suit” available at <http://www.jewsforjudaism.org>)

### **III. 17. Page 143-145**

Brown is in his lecturing mode again. Here he lectures the Jewish commentators for failing to take note of the priestly role of the Messiah. Brown argues that the scriptures speak of the Messiah and the priest as one person and he upbraids the Rabbis for failing to take note of this. The two scriptural references that Brown provides for his theory are Psalm 110 and Zechariah 6. As it relates to Psalm 110 the Rabbis had no problem acknowledging that this spoke of the Messiah as Brown himself points out on the previous page (142). So Brown’s accusation is simply false. The Rabbis did acknowledge that the Messiah is in some sense a priest. When it comes to the second reference (Zechariah 6) Brown tells us that the Rabbis interpreted the passage as a reference to two separate Messianic figures, a king and a priest. Brown then ridicules this interpretation and informs us that the only correct interpretation is that there is one figure that is both priestly and royal. What Brown fails to tell his readers is that the text in Zechariah explicitly makes reference to “the two of them”- obviously talking about two separate individuals.

My question to Dr. Brown is: Why do the Christian commentators fail to take note of the plurality of the redeemers mentioned explicitly several times in scripture (Obadiah 1:21, Micha 5:4, Zechariah 2:3, 4:14)?

### **III. 18. Page 151**

Brown argues that the multiple usages of the pronoun “they” in Zechariah 12:10 ought to refer to the same group of people. How about the pronoun “they” in 2Samuel 17:20,21?

In the larger context, Brown does not tell his readers of the obvious problem with the Christian interpretation. According to the Christian understanding, the mourning that will take place will be a cry of shame and embarrassment. Yet the prophet speaks of a mourning like the mourning of one who loses a child – hardly a fitting metaphor for a cry of shame. (The scriptures have no problem describing a cry of embarrassment and shame in a manner that is unambiguous – see Micha 7:10,16.) Furthermore, Brown has also failed to note the obvious parallel to 2Samuel 1 where David, the prototype of Messiah, inaugurates his kingdom with a lament for Saul. The parallels between the two stories are too striking to be ignored. These are the only two men in scripture who die through piercing (or stabbing with the Hebrew root d’k’r) and are mourned nationally. One event inaugurates the Messiah’s kingdom the other inaugurates David’s kingdom. In both situations a Jewish army was a contingent in a gentile army in a battle against other Jews (Zechariah 12:2 and 1Samuel 29:2) – the only two instances in scripture that such a situation occurs. And finally, Zechariah was not the only prophet who described Israel’s crying in the end of days Jeremiah described this spirit of grace and supplication as well (31:8, and 50:4). It is clearly not a cry of shame, but a cry of prayerful entreaty to God, who will have compassion on His firstborn son, Israel.

### III. 19. *Objection 4.32*

*“Jesus fulfilled none of the Messianic prophecies!*

*To the contrary, we know that Jesus is the Messiah because he fulfilled so many Messianic prophecies.”*

This is false. Christians “know” that Jesus is their Messiah because of their emotional experience. In Brown’s own life, he first had a subjective encounter with Jesus and only afterward did he learn that Jesus “fulfilled” the Messianic prophecies.

Let us examine the prophecies that Brown claims that Jesus fulfilled.

Brown tells us: *“He was born where the prophet said he would be born (cf. Targum Jonathan, Rashi, Radak on Micha 5:2[1]).”*

The prophet says nothing about the Messiah’s birthplace (neither does the Targum, Rashi, or the Radak). The prophet spoke of the clan from which the Messiah will come. The prophet is talking about a family, not a geographical location.

Brown tells us: *“He came into the world when the prophets said he would (according to the combined prophetic witness of Daniel, Haggai, and Malachi, along with hints found in the Talmud...)”*

I have dealt extensively with this argument in *Contra-Brown*. To summarize we can say that none of these prophecies are quoted by the authors of Christian scripture as support for Jesus’ claims. According to Brown (page 18) a prophecy that is quoted only once by the Christian scriptures cannot be considered a “central” prophecy. This should certainly hold true with prophecies that are never quoted at all. There are serious problems with the Christian interpretations of these passages. These problems include (but are not limited to); the cutting off of the anointed mentioned by Daniel is to occur at the same time as the destruction of Jerusalem, The glory that Haggai speaks of is attributed to the Temple, not to a replacement of the Temple, and the visitation that Malachi speaks of is one that brings back the Levitical priesthood, not one which deposes it.

Brown: *“He performed miraculous deeds of deliverance and healing, in accordance with the prophecies of Isaiah (Isa. 35:5-7; 49:6-7; 61:1-3).”*

Isaiah 35:5-7 explicitly tells us that these miracles will occur at the time of Israel’s physical restoration to the land. Isaiah 49:6-7 does not speak of miraculous healings. It speaks of God’s deliverance, which again, is associated with Israel’s physical restoration to their land. And Isaiah 61:1-3 also speaks of Israel’s physical restoration. In fact specific mention is made of comforting the mourners of Zion. These are those who yearn for Israel’s restoration and honor, not those who look forward to Israel’s embarrassment.

Brown: *“He was rejected by his own people, as was prophesied (Ps. 118:22; Isa. 49:4; 53:2-4).”*

Psalms 118 does not explicitly speak of the Messiah. Isaiah 49 describes the subject as a servant to rulers, not a very fitting description of Jesus. And Isaiah 53, speaks of a rejection by the kings of nations, not by the subject’s own people.



Brown: *“He suffered before his exaltation, as the prophets declared (Psalm 22; Isa. 52:13-15; Zech. 9:9).”*

Psalm 22 does not explicitly speak of the Messiah. Isaiah 53 also does not explicitly speak of the Messiah, and the exaltation described by the prophet does not fit the career of Jesus. Zechariah speaks of a king who will put an end to war and govern in a literal sense, not a person who inspired more bloodshed than any other person in history.

Brown: *“He died and then rose from the dead, according to the scriptures (Isaiah 53; Psalm 16; 22).”*

Isaiah 53 is not talking of the Messiah. Psalm 16 and 22 don't speak about a resurrection, they don't mention the Messiah either. In any case, there is no reason to believe that Jesus rose from the dead. The only people that claim to have witnessed this event were people who were already totally devoted to him. It is clear that the standard of evidence that these people would have required before believing a resurrection would not be the same as the standard of evidence that an objective bystander would require.

Brown: *“He has brought the light of God to the nations, as the prophets said he would (Isaiah 42, 49, 52) – so that countless millions of people who were once “pagans” now worship the God of Israel through him.”*

Isaiah and the other scriptural prophets clearly and explicitly prophesied that the light will only come to the nations with the physical restoration of Israel (Isaiah 17:12 – 18:7, 25:1 – 8, 30:26, 34:1 – 35:10, 40:1 – 11, 41:17 – 20, 49:8 – 13, 52:7 – 10, Zephaniah 3:8 – 20, Psalm 9:8 – 13, 40, 66, 69, 98, 102, 117). The prophets were not looking forward to an age where a human being, a subject of nature, is deified by many nations. The prophets looked forward to a day when the only one exalted is the Supreme Master of Nature.

Brown: *“His last act, before he returns to Jerusalem in power and glory, will be to turn his people Israel back to him (Isaiah 49) – and it is this that he is now doing!”*

Isaiah 49 speaks nothing about a “last act” and the restoration that the prophet is talking of has nothing to do with an insidious missionary campaign that only succeeds amongst those who are ignorant of their heritage.

Thus the “main” messianic prophecies that Jesus allegedly fulfilled are either, non-existent, not messianic prophecies, not fulfilled by Jesus, or testify against the claims of Christianity. The Jewish objection rings loud and clear – Jesus fulfilled none of the Messianic prophecies.

### **III. 20. Page 154**

Brown goes on to argue that there are many “minor, specific fulfillments, along with allusions, foreshadowings, and midrashic (i.e., homiletical) applications of texts” that were fulfilled by Jesus. He provides the following list; *“he was to be betrayed by a friend, sold for thirty pieces of silver, be forsaken by his disciples, be accused by false witnesses, be mocked and beaten, be pierced in his hands and feet, be crucified with thieves, pray for his persecutors, be the object of ridicule, have his garments gambled for, be deserted by God, agonize with thirst, commit himself to God, have his friends stand far off, be spared having his bones broken, be pierced be hidden by darkness, be buried with the rich, and die a voluntary, substitutionary death.”* Brown goes on to admit that not all of

these references can be called messianic prophecies. Brown explains that the authors of the Christian scriptures “*in keeping with the sentiments later expressed in the Rabbinic writings, saw the whole of the Hebrew scriptures as pointing to King Messiah.*” Some of these “allusions” are nowhere to be found in the Jewish scriptures. No one in the Jewish scriptures was sold for thirty pieces of silver, no one is pierced in his hands and feet, no one is crucified with thieves, and no one is buried with the rich. These are the products of the Christian imagination.

Even the allusions that are to be found in scripture do not support Brown’s position. Using Brown’s arguments we could say one can claim to be the Messiah if he sleeps (Psalm 3:5, 4:9), cries every night (Psalm 6:7), does battle against enemy regiments (Psalm 18:30), leaps over a wall (Psalm 18:30), NOT to die with sinners (Psalm 26:9), to bring offerings of victory in the Temple (Psalm 27:6), be abandoned by his parents – both father and mother (Psalm 27:10), NOT to be given over into the hands of his enemies (Psalm 31:9), be saved from a besieged city (Psalm 31:22), to afflict himself with fasting when his enemies fall sick (Psalm 35:13), to be saved from a mud-filled pit (Psalm 40:3), be healed from sickness (Psalm 41:4), be considered sub-human (Isaiah 52:14), be barred from habitation with other people (Isaiah 53:3), be buried with the wicked (Isaiah 53:9), be killed with the rich (Isaiah 53:9), be unjustly accused of violence and deception (Isaiah 53:9), and be hired for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12).

I do not believe that the Messiah has to accomplish any of these, what I am demonstrating here is that Brown’s list of “allusions” is entirely arbitrary and proves nothing.

### **III. 21. Page 157**

Brown argues that the Rabbinic application of scripture to identify the Messiah is more convoluted than the Christian application of scripture. After quoting some midrashic references to the Messiah Brown asks his readers: “*Whose interpretation of the Messianic texts is more sober and systematic, the Jewish authors of the New Testament, or the Jewish authors of the Rabbinic texts? Clearly, it is the former.*”

Here Brown is at the height of his audacity. If you ask a Jew what he believes about the Messiah he will tell you to read the Jewish Bible. You will find a clear understanding of the Messiah and his times. The midrashic literature only complements the picture after it is already clearly developed by the prophets. The midrashim do not argue with the biblical portrait, they only enhance it. The Christian vision of the Messiah stands as a polar opposite to the Messiah of the Jewish Bible. According to the Jewish scriptures we understand that the Messiah will destroy Israel’s physical enemies (Numbers 24:17), will be imbued with a spirit of fear of God (Isaiah 11:2), will judge the people on earth with righteousness (Isaiah 11:4), will smite the wicked dead (Isaiah 11:4), Israel will dwell in security under his reign (Jeremiah 23:6), in his time, evil beasts will no longer affect the Land of Israel (Ezekiel 34:25), in his time, the fruit of the land will be blessed (Ezekiel 34:26), under his reign, those who oppress Israel will be broken (Ezekiel 34:27), under his reign, Israel will no longer be plundered by their enemies (Ezekiel 34:28), in his time Israel will be gathered from all the lands and brought back to their own land (Ezekiel 37:21), in his time Israel will observe God’s law (Ezekiel 37:24), in his times God’s sanctuary will be with the Jewish people to the eyes of all the nations (Ezekiel 37:26,27),

The prophets compare the Messiah to David (Jeremiah 30:9, Ezekiel 34:23, 37:24, Hosea 3:5). It is obvious that the comparison does not apply to every peripheral activity of David (such as being thirsty). Rather, the prophets are pointing to the central features of David's personality in order to give us an understanding of the Messiah. David was constantly praising God (Psalm 34:2), David's love for God, reverence for God, and gratitude towards God, fill the Psalms. David is described as the sweet singer of Israel (or – the one who gives pleasantness to Israel's songs – 2Samuel 23:1). David's love for God's law (Psalm 119:97), and his awareness of his own sins (Psalm 51:5) were a constant and integral part of David's life. In order to give expression to his total love for God, David put aside his own honor as king of Israel (2Samuel 6:14).

This is the Messiah that God taught us to wait for. The character that is described by the writers of the Christian scriptures possessed none of these qualities.

### **III. 22. Page 158**

Brown tells us that a traditional Jew told him that the burden of proof is on the Christian to prove that Jesus is the Messiah. Brown argues that this is not so since "*Jesus fulfilled many clear and significant biblical prophecies*".

Brown doesn't seem to understand the concept: "burden of proof". In every trial it is necessary to first determine who it is that bears the burden of proof. In a situation where someone is accused of a crime it is the prosecutor's responsibility to prove the person's guilt. We say that the accused is innocent until proven guilty. In the case of Christianity the burden of proof is totally upon the Christian. Until the missionary provides conclusive proof – the missionaries themselves should recognize that it is immoral to accept their claims. Every Christian would admit that if Jesus was not who he claimed to be then devotion to him would be idolatrous. If there is the slightest reasonable doubt that Jesus is not who he claimed to be, then the missionary should understand that no one can morally accept his claims. From the Jewish perspective it is obvious that Jesus did not fulfill even one of the Messianic prophecies. But even from Brown's erroneous perspective, where he sees Jesus fulfilling many prophecies, he should still recognize that he has not proved his point. Brown recognizes that there are many clear and significant prophecies that Jesus did not fulfill. Brown should also recognize that the entire theory of a "second coming" has no real biblical basis. So how could he expect anyone to accept the claims of Jesus?

### **III. 23. Objection 4.33**

*"Jesus fulfilled none of the provable prophecies!..."*

*I'll divide my answer into four parts: 1) provable prophecies fulfilled by Yeshua that no one else can ever fulfill, 2) provable prophecies fulfilled by Yeshua of a worldwide, indisputable nature, 3) provable prophecies that continue to be fulfilled, and 4) provable prophecies yet to be fulfilled."*

To show how Jesus fulfilled some provable prophecies that "*no one else can ever fulfill*", Brown again turns to his interpretation of Haggai, Malachi and Daniel where he sees that the Messiah had to come before the destruction of the Second Temple. Brown adds that; "*In a sense, these are the most important of all the so-called provable prophecies*".

If these “prophecies” are indeed so important then why do the Christian scriptures never mention them?

According to Brown, Jesus fulfilled certain provable prophecies on a worldwide scale. These prophecies were fulfilled, explains Brown, by the conversion of many people to Christianity.

This argument assumes what it attempts to prove. Brown must admit that if Jesus is not who he claimed to be, then worship of him is idolatry. The fact that many people have converted to Christianity proves nothing if Christianity is idolatry.

In endnote 324, Brown tries to distinguish between Jesus and Muhammad. Brown tells us that the difference between these two men is that Jesus claimed to fulfill the prophecies of the Jewish Bible while Muhammad did not make such a claim. The fact that Jesus made this claim, only works against him. Since he did not in fact fulfill the prophecies of the Jewish Bible, his claim only gives him the attribute of fraud.

Brown claims that Jesus is continuously fulfilling provable prophecies. The miracle healings that take place amongst Christians are understood by Brown to be a fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies of Isaiah – 35:1-7, 42:1-7, 49:5-6, 61:1-3. These prophecies speak in the context of Israel’s physical restoration to their land. Wrenching these prophecies out of their scriptural context does not enhance Jesus’ credibility. It is important to note that miracle healings are not the exclusive possession of Evangelical Christians. Many other religious groups experience the same miracles.

### **III. 24. Objection 4.36**

*“Jesus cannot be the Messiah because the Messiah had to rebuild the Temple, yet the Temple was still standing in Jesus’ day.”*

Brown responds to this objection with an attempt to downplay the position of the Temple in the Messianic era. Maimonides teaching that part of the Messiah’s role is to rebuild the Temple is erroneous according to Brown. Brown accuses Maimonides of “*painting a picture of the Messiah that 1) would be in agreement with rabbinic Judaism, 2) would rule out Yeshua as a candidate.*” (Page 178). Brown assures us that Maimonides opinion has no Biblical basis.

This is one of the more preposterous of Brown’s arguments. Let us see what the Bible teaches about the Temple in the Messianic era. Isaiah mentions the Temple four times in his vision of the future. “And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord’s house will be established on top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and the nations of the world shall flow unto it” (2:2). “And I shall bring them to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer, their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted on My altar, for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people” (56:7). “All the flocks of Kedar will be gathered unto you, the rams of Nebaioth will serve you; they will be brought up with favor upon My Altar, and I will glorify the House of My Splendor” (60:7). “The glory of Lebanon will come to you – cypress, fir, and box tree together – to glorify the place of My Sanctuary; and I will bring honor to the place of My feet” (60:13). Jeremiah speaks of the bringing of thanksgiving offerings in the House of the Lord in the context of a Messianic prophecy (33:11). In the

same passage Jeremiah assures us that the priests will be bringing various types of offerings (33:18). Joel tells us that a spring will flow forth from the House of the Lord in the Messianic age (Joel 4:18). Micha assures us that the House of the Lord will be exalted in the Messianic era (4:1). Zechariah speaks of the temple in the context of the Messianic era as well (14:20,21). All of these prophecies explicitly mention the Temple. There are many other prophecies which speak of Zion or Jerusalem in a manner that gives us to understand that they are talking of a rebuilt Temple. We also haven't mentioned Ezekiel's prophecies on the subject. Ezekiel devotes several chapters to a description of the Temple in the Messianic era (40 – 47). Furthermore, Ezekiel tells us that one of the great accomplishments of the Messianic era will be: "Then the nations shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel when My Sanctuary shall be amongst them forever" (37:28).

This is part of what the Bible teaches us about the Temple in the Messianic age. What does Brown tell us about the Temple in the Messianic age?

The first thing Brown does is that he puts the Jewish argument into a straightjacket. He deals with this issue as if the only question is; Will the Messiah personally rebuild the Temple? When Maimonides says that the Messiah will rebuild the Temple he is not restricting it to the Messiah personally building the building. He is talking of a rebuilding of the Temple in the Messiah's time. It is obvious that the issue is not if the Messiah will personally rebuild the temple. The issue is how central is the Temple to the Messianic vision. According to Judaism the Temple is central to the Messianic hope, while according to Christianity it is certainly not a central factor. Brown himself is not even sure if there is going to be any physical Temple at all in the Messianic era. After explaining how the Church is some sort of spiritual Temple, Brown graciously offers; *"Having said all this, there is still a third possibility that our Messiah will rebuild a physical Temple in Jerusalem ..."* (Page 178).

This is amazing. There are more verses in scripture that explicitly speak about the Temple in the Messianic era than there are verses that are manipulated by Dr. Brown to teach about all of the Christian conjectures about the Messiah combined. And here we have Brown accusing Maimonides of failing to pay heed to the Biblical script!

### **III. 25. Page 172**

Brown further tries to downplay the significance of the Temple by telling us that the only prophet that mentions anything that could be read as the Messiah building the Temple is Zechariah. According to Dr. Brown it would seem that if a prophecy is mentioned only once, it should not be taken too seriously. The amazing thing is that this very prophecy of Zechariah is entitled by Brown "the most overt passage in the Bible where a human being is explicitly identified with a Messianic figure" (The Case for the Real Jesus, Strobel, page 199). When it fits Brown's agenda, the prophecy is the most important teaching of the Bible. When it doesn't fit his agenda, the same prophecy becomes a lonely prophecy that has no significance. In this same book (page 144) Brown highlights this passage in Zechariah in order to "prove" that the Messiah is to die for the expiation of sin – a concept that is stated nowhere in the passage. Brown takes Rashi to task for failing to see the Messianic implications of this passage (page 145). Yet when it comes to the rebuilding of the Temple – a concept that is explicitly stated in the text of this same passage – Brown

readily quotes the very same statement from Rashi (that rejects the Messianic interpretation of the passage) to support his argument that the Messiah does not need to rebuild the Temple.

### III. 26. Page 186

Brown talks of a “rapidly growing underground movement of Orthodox and Hasidic Jews” who believe in Jesus. Of-course since this imaginary movement is “underground”, Brown will not be able to supply us with names and addresses. He expects his readers to take his word for it.

### III. 27. Page 189

*“Messianic prophecies are not clearly identified as such.”*

This is amazing. Brown believes that the main purpose of the Jewish Bible is to predict the advent of the Messiah, yet the prophecies are not clearly identified?! And on what basis can he make such a preposterous statement? The prophets gave us a clear hope for Israel’s future. There are many prophecies in the Jewish Bible which clearly talk of the Messianic era, and of the Messiah. These include but are not limited to Numbers 24:14-19, Deuteronomy 4:30, 30:1-10, 32:43, Jeremiah 3:14-18, 16:14,15,19, 23:3-5, 30:3,7-11,16-25, 31:1-39, 32:37-44, 33:6-26, 46:27,28,50:4,5,19,20, Ezekiel 11;17-20, 17:22-24, 20:40-44, 28:24-26, 34:9-16,22-31, 36:6-16,22-38,37:1-28,38:1-48:35, Isaiah 1:26, 2:2-4, 4:2-6, 10:33-12:6, 24:21-25:9, 30:26, 34:1, 40:1-11,41:10-20, 43:5-10, 44:1-5 49:8-26, 51:11,22-52:12, 54:1-55:5, 56:7, 60:1-63:9, 65:17-25, 66:10-24, Hosea 2:1-3,16-25, Joel 3;1-5, 4:1-21, Amos 9:11-15, Obadiah 1;17-21, Micha 4:1-7, 5:1-13, 7:8-20, Zephaniah 3;9-20, Zechariah 2:9, 8:2-8, 14:3-21, Malachi 3:4,16-24, Psalms 51:20,21, 69:36,37, 98:1-3, 102:14-23, 126:1-6, Daniel 2;44, 7:18,22,27, 12:2,3, Can anyone question the fact that these prophecies are the hope and promise of Israel’s glorious future? How can Brown say that messianic prophecies are not clearly identified? More important is the question; **Why** does Brown say that the messianic prophecies are not clearly identified? The obvious answer to this question is that Brown never seems to have approached scripture with an open mind. It seems that he never asked himself; What would a Jew before Jesus’ times have believed about the Messianic era? What would scripture have taught him about the Messiah? Who and what does God encourage us to hope for? Had Brown asked himself these basic questions, he would have realized that the scriptures are very clear on these issues. The problem is that Brown started the other way. He first came to believe in Jesus. He then looked back into the Jewish scriptures and tried to understand Jesus’ claim that the prophets predicted his coming. Things tend to get quite murky if you read the book that way. When Brown tells us that Messianic prophecies are not clearly identified as such, he is admitting that the preconceived notions of Christianity cannot be readily seen in the Bible.

## VOLUME IV

### IV. 1. *Objections 5.1 thru 5.5*

In these pages Brown attempts to explain the usage of the Jewish scriptures by the authors of the Christian Scriptures. In many cases these authors seem to be misquoting or misinterpreting the text of the Jewish Bible. The thrust of Brown's response is that the authors of the Christian scriptures were using the midrashic method of interpreting scripture. Brown points out that: *"Jewish interpretation and use of scripture in the first five-plus centuries of this era was much more free-flowing than our contemporary, historical-grammatical approach"*. In other words, the authors of the Christian scriptures were not limited by grammar or context in their interpretations. They felt free to read the text according to their own spiritual insight, regardless of textual context. Brown feels that this is justified because the Rabbis do this too.

The fallacy of Brown's argument is readily apparent. By using such "free-flowing" interpretation of scripture, anyone can "prove" anything. One can utilize the midrashic method by taking all the negative characters in the Jewish scriptures, and demonstrate how they "foreshadowed" the advent of Jesus. The midrashic method of reading scripture is only meaningful within a specific social context. Before I can accept anyone's midrashic interpretations, I must be sure that these people embody the spirit of the scriptures. Before I accept anyone's spiritual insights, I must be first assured that these men are holy and pure, and that their concept of spirituality is in line with the God of Israel. One cannot use the midrashic method of interpreting scripture in order to establish his or her own spiritual credibility. Anyone can do that. One's spiritual credibility must be well established before he can expect anyone hear his midrashic discourses.

The fact that the authors of the Christian scriptures expected their free-flowing interpretations to serve as "proof" for their beliefs utterly discredits them. These authors condemned to eternal hell-fire, anyone who does not accept their imaginative renditions of scriptures. This alone is more than enough evidence to establish the fact that these people had no connection with the spirit of the Jewish prophets.

### IV. 2. *Objection 5.9*

Brown addresses the question of the "virgin birth" of Jesus. How could anyone know if this event ever happened? Aside from Mary herself, no one could verify this event. This fundamental of the Christian faith stands of the testimony of one woman who has every reason in the world to lie – if she ever actually claimed a "virgin birth".

### IV. 3. *Objection 5.11*

Brown discusses the Jewish objection that argues that if Joseph was not Jesus' biological father, then Jesus was not a descendant of David on his father's side. This tells us that Jesus could not be the Jewish Messiah. According to the Jewish Scriptures, the Messiah must be a descendant of David from his father's side.

Brown responds on behalf of Christianity: *"Obviously, you don't believe in the virgin birth, otherwise you would not be raising this objection."*

Here Brown tries to obfuscate the issue with irrelevant witticism. Of-course we do not believe in the virgin birth, but how does this relate to the objection at hand? Christians acknowledge that Jesus' mother did not claim that her son's father was a descendant of David. This simple fact disqualifies him from being the Jewish Messiah. The fact that Mary gave us a fantastic story concerning her son's conception does nothing to change this basic fact. Unless a woman points to a man who is a descendant of Judah as her son's father, then by Torah law, this child does not belong to the tribe of Judah. If no man from the House of David steps forth and claims to be the father of a given child, then this child has no claim to the Davidic throne.

#### **IV. 4. Page 88**

Brown argues that Jesus was a descendant of David from his mother's side. He goes on to argue that when there are no male descendants, a female has the right of inheritance. We shall shortly demonstrate that the right of inheritance has no relationship to genealogy, but for now we will point out that his argument is utterly irrelevant. Who ever made the claim that Mary had no brothers? Furthermore, even if Mary had no brothers, it would still not give Jesus the claim to David's throne because David had many male descendants. So Brown's argument is not relevant to the case at hand.

In any case, the Biblical passage that Brown quotes to prove his point actually works against him. The passage in Numbers quoted by Brown (36:1-12) makes clear that even in a situation of a female inheritor, the genealogy follows the father. The entire thrust of the passage is that female inheritors must marry into their own tribe in order to keep the inheritance within the tribal possession. If the female inheritors would be able to pass their genealogical attributes to their children this would not be an issue. It is clear from this passage that although inheritance may sometimes go to a female descendant, tribal genealogy remains exclusively in the male line. (See Contra Brown for further information on this subject.)

#### **IV. 5. Objection 5.15**

Brown presents an objection to Christianity:

*“When Jesus failed to fulfill the prophecies, his followers invented the myth of his substitutionary death, his resurrection, and finally his second coming, which, of course, they completely expected in his lifetime.”*

Brown responds on behalf of Christianity:

*“In order to make this claim, you virtually have to rewrite the entire New Testament, since a central theme of those writings, from their earliest strata on, is that Jesus had to go to the cross and suffer and die and then rise from the dead.”*

Brown's response does not begin to address the objection. The New Testament was written after the disappointed followers of Jesus had already developed a semi-coherent theology to explain the death of their leader. No one claims that any part of the New Testament was written while Jesus was alive. The fact that the New Testament claims that Jesus preached about his death is to be expected. At the same time, the authors of the



New Testament admit that the disciples of Jesus did not expect him to die, and that they originally saw his death as a refutation to his Messianic claim (Luke 24:21).

Brown himself admits that the disciples of Jesus only understood his death as part of his Messianic mission after the crucifixion (page 107). So there is no question that Jesus did not teach about his death in a clear and explicit way. It was only after his death and after rumors of his resurrection began to circulate that his disciples came up with the story that he had already taught about his death during his lifetime, but that they had not properly understood his teaching at the time.

Brown goes on to argue: *“Since this objection has no historical or textual support...”* How audacious! The Christian Scriptures provide all the necessary textual support for this objection. (The argument that there is no historical support for the objection is irrelevant. There is little if any historical support for the existence of Jesus. The entire point of the objection is that the Christian Scriptures themselves testify against the claims of Christianity.)

Let us summarize what the Christian Scriptures tell us about the progression of events in the community of Jesus’ disciples.

A) – While Jesus was alive, his disciples believed he was the Messiah, but did not expect him to die.

What we learn from this is that Jesus did not teach his disciples the Christian doctrine of the substitutionary death of the Messiah. If we assume that the disciples of Jesus were familiar with the Jewish Scriptures, then this fact teaches us that the disciples of Jesus read the entirety of the Jewish Scriptures, including Isaiah 53, Daniel 9, and Psalm 22 without seeing the concept of the substitutionary death of the Messiah. They obviously had a different interpretation of these passages. An interesting question to ponder is: On what basis did they understand that Jesus is the Messiah? This was before the crucifixion, so they didn’t have Isaiah 53, they didn’t have Daniel 9 or Psalm 22. They believed he was some type of divine being – but on what basis? And if these people were so credulous so as to accept these claims without a Biblical basis, then why should we trust anything these people tell us?

If we accept the alternative scenario; that the disciples of Jesus were ignorant of the Jewish Scriptures, then the fact that they accepted Jesus as the Messiah is meaningless. Their opinion would be worthless.

B) – At the point of the crucifixion, the disciples despaired of Jesus being the Messiah.

C) – At some point in time after the crucifixion, the disciples “came to understand” that this was the role of the Messiah all along.

This means that the crucifixion of their beloved leader caused them to reinterpret the Jewish Scriptures in a manner that they had not understood them until now. Not only were they reinterpreting the Jewish Scriptures, but they were also reinterpreting the message of Jesus. These were the people who were with Jesus throughout his entire teaching career – and they had never heard of the concept of the “substitutionary death of the Messiah”.

In analyzing this situation we are left with two options: 1) – Jesus really did teach about his substitutionary death, and the Jewish Scriptures are also quite clear on this subject – but for some odd reason – although the disciples had the evidence staring them in the face – they couldn’t understand this most foundational teaching of their beloved teacher. This begs the question: what other teachings of Jesus did his disciples misunderstand or simply “not get”?

Option 2) – Jesus never taught about the substitutionary death of the Messiah, and the Jewish Scriptures do not present any clear teaching on this matter – but with the unexpected death of their beloved leader – the disciples could not admit that their leader was a fraud – so their internal mental defense mechanism slowly came up with the theology of the substitutionary death of the Messiah – including some imaginative readings of both the Jewish Scriptures and of the teachings of their leader.

To help you with this analysis – please consider the following: From a historical perspective – how many followers of charismatic leaders had the courage and honesty to admit that the devotion they felt towards their leader was wrong when the facts didn’t turn out as expected?

Brown puts down 6 points that the proponents of this objection (that the theology of the Messiah’s death was invented as a result of Jesus’ death) must believe – and Brown takes the pains to point out how ludicrous he considers each of these 6 points to be.

The first point that Brown brings out, is that those who present this objection must posit that there are no biblical prophecies that point to the “Messiah’s suffering”. Brown argues that this would contradict the objection that some people raise against Christianity which posits that the disciples reconstructed Jesus’ life to fit those prophecies.

The flaws in Brown’s argument are readily apparent. Brown himself admits that while Jesus was alive, the disciples did not find any prophecies in the Jewish Bible that speak of the Messiah’s suffering. Brown acknowledges that it was only after Jesus’ death that the disciples “discovered” these “prophecies”. This means that one could read the Jewish Bible without an “anti-Jesus” bias and still fail to see anything about a suffering Messiah. It is only when one reads the Bible with a “pro-post-crucifixion-Jesus” bias that he or she will “see” the concept of a suffering Messiah. After the disciples began reconstructing their concept of the Messiah, it is entirely reasonable to assume that the same imaginations that saw a suffering Messiah where there was none to be seen, also wished events into existence in order to fit their new theology.

The second point that Brown makes in defense of Christianity is that the proponents of this objection (that the disciples invented the concept of the Messiah's death out of thin air) would have to believe that Jesus never taught this foundational Christian doctrine. Brown considers this to be untenable because the gospels do record such teachings of Jesus.

Brown fails to consider the fact that all of the people that were with Jesus throughout his entire teaching career did not expect him to die. This tells us that Jesus did NOT teach about his suffering and death. He certainly didn't teach it in an open and unambiguous way. After the disciples invented this myth and retrojected this concept into the mouth of Jesus, we are not surprised to find that the gospels report that Jesus taught this concept. But the disciple's confusion at the time clearly indicates that Jesus did NOT teach his disciples about the supposed suffering of the Messiah.

The third argument that Brown advances focuses on the last supper. Brown points out that if the disciples invented the concept of the Messiah's death, this would then mean that the last supper never took place, and that Jesus never spoke of his blood being shed to inaugurate a new covenant. Brown sees this as an impossible proposition because of the fact that the followers of Jesus had been practicing this ritual since his death.

The question that we must ask here is: at what point in time did the disciples come to understand that the last supper was a "foreshadowing" of Jesus' death? According to the Christian's own gospels, the disciples were in a state of confusion even after the crucifixion. They did not understand how their beloved leader could die. If, as Brown argues, Jesus had clearly taught about his impending redemptive death, then why would the disciples despair? Why the confusion? It is clear that Jesus did not provide his disciples with any clear teaching about his impending death. It was only with the passing of time that his disciples came to reinterpret his death and his last supper in a manner that would allow them to maintain their belief in their beloved leader.

Another detail worthy of consideration in relation to this argument is the fact that Paul claims that the concept of the last supper had been revealed to him personally by the dead Jesus (1Corinthians 11:23). This would seem to indicate that until Paul had received this "revelation", the last supper was not "properly" understood by the followers of Jesus. The Christian Scriptures tell us that it was Paul, and not Jesus, who gave "prophetic" significance to the ritual of the last supper.

The fourth argument that Brown presents as a refutation to this objection (that the concept of the death of the Messiah was a myth invented by the disciples after the death of Jesus) only serves to accentuate the lack of logical cohesion that permeates Brown's arguments. Brown argues that if the objection is correct in its basic supposition that the disciples invented the theology of the suffering and death of the Messiah, then we would also have to accept the supposition that the resurrection never happened. That is like saying that if we are to accept the supposition that a specific person is guilty, we must be aware that we will also have to assume that he is not innocent.

The proponents of the argument that Jesus' disciples concocted the concept of a suffering Messiah will certainly also believe that the resurrection never happened.

Brown explains to his readers why it is that he finds the belief that the resurrection never happened to be so preposterous. He claims that those who believe that the resurrection never happened will have to accept that: *“the books of the New Testament... are 100 percent wrong 100 percent of the time about the most foundational element of their faith.”*

This argument is fallacious from several angles. First and most obviously is that those who reject Islam or Judaism have to live with the fact that they believe that the books of these two world religions are 100 percent wrong 100 percent of the time about the most foundational elements of their faith. This is no problem for people who do not attribute too much validity to the foundational texts of these religions to begin with. But Christianity claims to accept the Jewish Bible. The Jewish Bible teaches that the foundational event of the belief system; the Sinai revelation, taught the Jewish people that to attribute deity to any inhabitant of heaven or earth is a violation of our relationship with God. Christianity rejects this teaching. This means that Christians have to accept that the Jewish Bible is 100 percent wrong 100 percent of the time about the most foundational element of the faith. Christianity does this at the same time that it pays lip-service to its reverence of the Jewish Bible.

A second point that we ought to consider is the question: who says that the alleged resurrection of Jesus was the most foundational element of the faith of Jesus' disciples? Let us remember, these disciples were totally devoted to faith in Jesus long before the crucifixion. They were not even expecting him to die and be resurrected. So how can the resurrection have been so foundational to their faith?

The fifth argument that Brown advances against the objection that proposes that the disciples made up the theology of the suffering of Messiah after the death of Jesus focuses on the disciples activities after the death of Jesus. Proponents of the objection, argues Brown, will have to accept that: *“Within days, all the disciples, without breaking ranks, overcame the shock and trauma of their masters ignominious death; quickly came up with this fabricated account; developed a whole new theology to support it – although until that time they had never once entertained the idea...”*

This argument is just as hollow as the previous arguments. For starters, the fact that Brown finds it incredulous that the disciples had: *“until that time never once entertained the idea”* utterly discredits him. Brown himself acknowledges, and the Christian Scriptures teach, that up until the crucifixion of Jesus the disciples had no clue about the supposed sacrificial death of the Messiah. This sentence has no honest place in Brown's argument.

Furthermore, how does Brown know that it only took days for the disciples to develop this theology together with the supporting mythology? The earliest dating for the Christian Scriptures places them decades after the death of Jesus. History is replete with the followers of failed movements coming up with new theologies and supporting mythical events to support them. A typical historical template would have the disciples sharing their inspired visions of their master, and with time these came to be interpreted as

physical sightings. If there was some confusing physical event that the disciples seized upon in order to overcome their disappointment, this would have only accelerated the process. This could have been a report of a sighting or a report of an empty grave. Neither of these scenarios necessitates belief in an actual resurrection. It is common for people who suddenly lose a loved one to think they see him or her somewhere. The scenario of an empty grave is actually supported by the Christian Scriptures. According to the gospels, Jesus was buried hastily, close to nightfall, with few people attending the burial, and in a grave designated for another person. How difficult would it be to assume that the disciples were mistaken about the location of the grave? How difficult would it be to assume that the rightful owners of the grave removed Jesus' body? In fact John presents this scenario as the first thought that came to Mary's mind when she found an empty grave (John 20:2). Would the devoted followers of a charismatic leader need more "evidence" than that which any of these scenarios provide before believing a resurrection? History testifies that devoted followers of charismatic have a strong tendency to believe the most preposterous things about their leader provided that they support their devotion.

Finally, how does Brown know that there was no "breaking of ranks"? Matthew reports that there was an element of doubt about the resurrection in the mind of some of the disciples. How can Brown be confident that these disciples did not break rank with those who believed the resurrection in a literal sense?

The sixth and last argument presented by Brown points out that the proponents of the objection (that the disciples invented the suffering Messiah concept) would have to believe that: *"On top of all this, they not only created the myth of a second coming but then misunderstood the myth they created, wrongly believing it would happen in their lifetime when, in fact they were fully aware that they made the whole thing up."*

Brown finishes his argument with: *"If you believe this, I have an exclusive contract for you on the Brooklyn Bridge..."*

Brown is in the process of trying to sell his readers the equivalent to a contract on the BrooklynBridge, and he yet accuses his critics of trying to sell the BrooklynBridge!

The disciples understood that Jesus will return in their lifetime based on words that Jesus spoke before the crucifixion. As it is with most Messianic pretenders, Jesus promised his following that they will merit to witness the age of Israel's glory. Before the crucifixion, this was understood by Jesus' followers to mean that he will soon assume the position of Israel's Messiah. After the crucifixion, his disciples reinterpreted his message to mean that he will return from the dead to assume what they considered his rightful position. Is this chain of events so preposterous? It is the common template followed by the disappointed devotees of almost every failed Messiah.

#### **IV. 6. *Objections 5:16 and 5:17***

Here Brown focuses on some of the misquotations and contradictions that are to be found in the Christian Scriptures. Brown's responds by demonstrating that the Jewish Scriptures and the Jewish Rabbinic writings also contain discrepancies and seeming contradictions. Brown argues that whatever methods that the adherents of Judaism

utilize to resolve the contradictions found in their sacred texts should be allowed for the resolution of the discrepancies found in the Christian texts.

Brown has failed to grasp the vast difference between the respective faith structures of Judaism and Christianity.

Judaism affirms that God established the basic foundations of Judaism in the hearts of the Jewish people. The Exodus and the Sinai revelation which were experienced by the nation as a collective unit, served to establish the basic truths of Judaism in the hearts and minds of the nation. The sacred books were presented to the nation in order that their message be assimilated by the people who will read these books in light of the foundational experiences.

As it is with any written work, and especially one as lengthy as the Jewish Scriptures, there will be questions and confusion. Judaism maintains that the Divine intent was that the judges of the Jewish people arbitrate in all situations where the Scriptural guidance is not clear. The foundational concepts of Judaism will never be affected by the intricacies of the text because they are not dependant on the text. They were established in the hearts of the people independent of any text.

Protestant Christianity, on the other hand prides itself that it does not rely upon humans for the foundation or for the transmission of their belief system. Protestants point to the texts of Scripture and declares that they only rely upon the word of God.

Without getting into the question as to who decided that these texts are indeed the word of God and upon what authority is this decision based, there are serious problems with the Protestant position. If indeed these texts are to serve as the foundation of the religion, and these texts are not meant for any specific audience (as opposed to the texts of Judaism which are meant for a specific target audience) – then who is to arbitrate when confusion arises? These confusions are not limited to peripheral issues in the Christian faith. The texts are unclear about some of the most essential issues of Christianity. This problem is severe enough when we limit our focus to the Christian Scriptures alone. But the confusions are multiplied exponentially when we throw the Jewish Scriptures into the mix.

The sacred texts of Christianity do not give clear direction on issues such as the alleged divinity of Jesus, on the position of the Law of Moses after the advent of Jesus, on the role of the Jewish people in the Messianic age and on many such issues that have divided the Protestant Church since its inception.

Since Protestant Christianity does not attribute any authority to a body of human judges, there is no way that these conflicts can be effectively resolved except on a person by person basis. Each reader could resolve the confusions as he or she sees fit. This leaves Christianity with the unhappy proposition of having as many Christianity's as there are adherents.

This is only where Christianity's problems begin. When we consider the question of the trustworthiness or lack thereof of the sacred texts of Christianity the Protestant Christian can only point to the texts themselves. As opposed to Judaism where the testimony of the living nation augments the testimony of the texts and the testimony of the texts augments the testimony of the living people – Protestant Christianity only has a set of books upon which they could place their trust. How can we know if these texts were written by honest people? On what basis can we accept that the books of the Christian Scripture were authored by people who lived up to a high ethical and moral standard? Why should we judge the authors of the gospels in a favorable light if there is no outside evidence to support the thesis that these were honest and ethical people?

In the case of Judaism, we have the testimony of the nation concerning the moral and spiritual character of the Biblical authors. These men and women established their credentials in the hearts, minds, and memories of a nation appointed by God as His witnesses. If we find confusion in their writings, we have the testimony of the nation amongst whom these writers lived to reassure us that these authors were holy and trustworthy. The confirmation of a nation serves to counteract any questions that would arise from the body of the texts.

In the case of Christianity, on the other hand, the exact opposite is true. The Jewish people amongst whom these authors lived remember them in a negative light. Why should we trust these people? What is the justification to exert ourselves to straighten out the confusion that abounds in their writings? Where is the witness that will stand to counterbalance the contradictions found in the gospels?

#### **IV. 7. *Objection 5.18***

In this objection Brown focuses on Matthew's fantastic story of many dead people rising from their graves on the occasion of Jesus' crucifixion and alleged resurrection. Brown addresses those who do not believe this account and responds by pointing to miracles recorded in the Jewish Scriptures and other sacred writings. Brown argues that no miracle is too difficult for an omnipotent God. The only question is: is if Matthew is a trustworthy reporter or not.

As we pointed out in the previous section, there is no reason to believe that Matthew was a trustworthy person. Furthermore, the fact that the other gospel writers said nothing of this extraordinary occurrence should raise some questions even for a Christian. But I think that there is a deeper question that Matthew's account brings to light.

The entire faith of Christianity (I should say: post-crucifixion Christianity) is built upon the alleged resurrection of Jesus. The claim of Jesus' resurrection is pointed to as a unique and unparalleled occurrence in the history of mankind. But according to Matthew, a resurrection is no big deal. Matthew claims that many people were resurrected. How then does Matthew know which of these resurrections was the central event and which served as backdrops? It is only the human interpretation of the events that separates one resurrection from the other. Matthew's incredible account devaluates the resurrection

claim. According to Matthew, the resurrection of the dead is not the unique occurrence that the Christian apologists assert it to be.

#### **IV. 8. *Objection 5.20***

Here Brown revisits the charge that the Christian Scriptures are an anti-Semitic document. In response to this charge, he provides us with a synopsis of his arguments recorded in Volume 1. I have responded at length to his points in my critique of volume 1, I refer the reader to that article. I will however take this opportunity to reiterate one of the salient points.

Brown compares the Christian Scripture's criticism of the Jewish people to the criticism uttered by the prophets in the Jewish Scriptures. This comparison reveals the moral bankruptcy of Brown's belief system.

The criticism recorded in the Jewish Scriptures is internally directed. These books were written for the very people at whom the criticism was directed. These books were treasured and preserved by the very people who were criticized and castigated by the authors of these books. The Jewish people read these criticisms as words of rebuke and correction directed at them.

The criticism recorded in the Christian Scriptures is the moral opposite of the criticism recorded in the Jewish Scriptures. The Christian Scriptures direct their criticism at a people who stand outside the sphere of their readership. The intended audience of the Christian Scriptures, the followers of Jesus, read these harsh words as a character assassination of their theological opponents. Historically, the Christian Scriptures "taught" mankind that the Jewish people are the devil incarnate and that Judaism is the religion of the devil. This concept is the invention of the Christian Scriptures. Even today, when this concept is losing popularity, still, the criticisms of the Pharisees recorded in the Christian Scriptures are utilized by Church theologians to paint a negative picture of Jews and Judaism.

#### **IV. 9. *Page 153-154***

Brown addresses the objection that Jesus falsely predicted his return in the lifetime of his disciples. Interestingly, Brown fails to mention a key text that bears directly upon this discussion, namely: John 21:23. In that text we learn that the very first generation of Jesus' followers expected Jesus' ultimate return in the lifetime of John and were subsequently disappointed when this "prediction" failed to materialize. Instead of criticizing his readers for not seeing the "obvious" meaning of Jesus' words the redactor of the Gospel of John tells us that the precise wording of Jesus' prediction was misunderstood by Jesus' own disciples. This is not an accusation invented by the counter-missionaries in a biased effort to discredit Jesus, but rather Jesus' own devoted followers were faced with this problem. It is not as Brown would have his readers believe that Jesus' never predicted his immediate return and that it is only a gross misunderstanding of his words that would lead one to such a conclusion. In this text from the Book of John we see that this accusation surfaced in that first generation of Jesus' followers. All we have as a



response is the word of the anonymous redactor of the Book of John. His weak response is that Jesus did not mean what his followers thought he meant. It seems that they did not “discover” their mistake until the “prophecy” actually failed to materialize. This is the typical pattern of the false prophets. The predictions do not come true, but for the devotees – the gates of excuses never close.

Brown puts forth another argument in his attempt to defend Jesus against the charge of false prophecy. Brown argues that if Jesus really did present a prophecy that failed to materialize then why did the gospel writers preserve his mistake for posterity? (Brown actually uses this hollow argument to deflect several of the objections that are based on the Christian Scriptures.)

What Brown fails to realize is that even a liar cannot simply ignore the truth. When the facts are well known to the intended audience, the liar will have to acknowledge something of the truth or else he will have no credibility in the eyes of his audience. This text in John serves as a perfect example. The redactor of John would have much rather that no-one hear of this indictment against the credibility of Jesus. It is only because it was a well known fact to his audience that he found it necessary to present a response to the allegation.

#### **IV. 10. Page 158**

Brown makes the claim that it was only Jesus who predicted the destruction of the Second Temple. Brown fails to tell his readers that this prediction was proclaimed by Daniel (9:26) several centuries before Jesus. This was recognized by the Jewish leaders of the generations preceding the destruction as recorded in the Talmud (B. Yoma 39b, Nazir 32b).

#### **IV. 11. Objection 5.26**

Here Brown attempts to address the argument that it was Paul who invented Christianity as it is known today and not Jesus. Brown responds with the claim that Paul’s teachings are in complete harmony with the teachings of Jesus. Brown states: *“The consistent testimony of the New Testament ... affirms this point”*. This statement is incredible.

A simple reading of Paul’s words reveals that Paul himself claimed to be the inventor of Christianity. Christians who want to believe that there was a smooth progression from the Jewish following of Jesus to the gentile following of Paul will find that there is no basis to their belief.

Let us allow Paul to speak for himself. “For I make known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but [it came to me] through revelation of Jesus Christ.”(Galatians 1:11,12). Paul is telling us that the gospel that he preached was not taught to him by the disciples of Jesus. Paul is admitting that his gospel was revealed to him in a vision by the deceased Jesus. Paul takes his point a step further. “But from those who were reputed to be somewhat (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth not man`s person)– they, I say, who were of repute imparted nothing to me:

but contrariwise, when they saw that I had been intrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, even as Peter with [the gospel] of the circumcision (for he that wrought for Peter unto the apostleship of the circumcision wrought for me also unto the Gentiles); and when they perceived the grace that was given unto me, James and Cephas and John, they who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go unto the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision; only [they would] that we should remember the poor; which very thing I was also zealous to do. But when Cephas came to Antioch, I resisted him to the face, because he stood condemned. For before that certain came from James, he ate with the Gentiles; but when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing them that were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that even Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation.” (Galatians 2:6-13).

Let us understand what Paul is saying here. He is telling us that “those of repute” imparted nothing to him. Who are these people “of repute”? Paul tells us in verse 9 that these people of repute were James, Peter (Cephas) and John. In other words the disciples of Jesus taught Paul nothing.

Paul takes this a step further by drawing a distinct boundary between himself and the Jewish disciples of Jesus. He tells us that he and they were charged with two different missions. They (the Jewish disciples) were charged to minister to the Jewish people (“unto the circumcision”), while he (Paul) was charged to minister to the gentiles. This means that the teaching that Jesus imparted to his Jewish disciples in his lifetime was meant for the Jewish people, while the teaching that the deceased Jesus imparted to Paul was meant for the gentiles. What this implies is that the disciples of Jesus could teach Paul nothing because they were entrusted with a mission that was apart from his own.

Paul claims that the Jewish disciples of Jesus acknowledged this division in the gospel. He then criticizes Peter and the Jewish followers of Jesus for violating this accepted boundary. He tells us that Peter and other believers from Jerusalem were trying to influence the gentiles to follow the teachings that were meant for the Jews.

We can now understand the opening verses in the book of Galatians. “Paul, an apostle (not from men, neither through man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead), and all the brethren that are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: Grace to you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us out of this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father: to whom [be] the glory for ever and ever. Amen. I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another [gospel] only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, if any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema.” (Galatians 1:1-9).

Paul is surprised that the gentile church of Galatia has so quickly abandoned his teachings. He is informing them that no man or angel has a right to disagree with him because his is the true teaching. Now who were these people that were trying to influence the people in Galatia to disobey Paul? It is clear that these would have been the Jewish disciples of Jesus, whom Paul accuses of duplicity (again – Paul claims that to his face they acknowledged that he had been appointed by the dead Jesus as an emissary to the gentiles, but behind his back they tried to influence the gentiles to follow their own version of the gospel. Remember, Paul accuses Peter; “...how compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?” Galatians 2:14). Paul does not hide the fact that his teachings were considered false by people who were very influential in the early Church (1Corinthians 9:2, 2Corinthians 11:13).

It should be noted that the writings of the Christian scriptures as we have them today were redacted by the gentile followers of Paul. The original Hebrew (or Aramaic) version of Matthew was destroyed by the gentile followers of Paul. Still, even the Pauline redactors had a difficult job attributing Pauline Christianity to Jesus. In the three Synoptic Gospels there is perhaps one statement attributed to Jesus that is a clear Pauline teaching (Matthew 26:28, Mark 14:24, Luke 22:20). The origin of this statement is highly questionable. The last supper of Jesus is the one area where Paul comments on Jesus' lifetime activities. Paul explicitly states that he received this teaching directly from the dead Jesus (1Corinthians 11:23). The Pauline redactors of the gospels had what they considered a “reliable” source for this story. There is no reason to assume that there was any other source for this story. When this story is removed from the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus is no longer a Christian.

The book of Acts was written by a follower of Paul. It is clear that he was motivated to present a picture in which Paul and the Jewish followers of Jesus agreed on the fundamental issues. The story that the book of Acts relates is quite different than Paul's version of the events.

When Paul speaks of his own conversion, he finds it important to tell us that “straightway I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before me: but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and tarried with him fifteen days” (Galatians 1:16,17,18).

But when the book of Acts describes the same events we get an entirely different picture. No word is mentioned of a trip to Arabia. Paul spends time with the disciples in Damascus, then he preaches in Damascus. It is then told that he arrives in Jerusalem where the Christians were not convinced of the sincerity of Paul's conversion to the degree that they were afraid of him. (This gives the impression that it was much less than three years between Paul's conversion and his arrival in Jerusalem.) But Barnabas reassures the apostles and Paul was “with them going in and going out at Jerusalem” (Acts 9:28).

I am well aware that all of these contradictions can be reconciled by agile minds. But there is a deeper question to be asked. Why the differences? Why does Paul consider it of utmost importance to tell us of his trip to Arabia, of the three-year period that elapses before he comes to Jerusalem, and of the fact that he saw none of the apostles aside from Peter and James? Why does Paul start out his post-conversion story by telling us that “he conferred not with flesh and blood”? And why does the author of Acts regard these same facts to be so insignificant that the picture he paints leaves us with the opposite impression?

It is clear that the author of the book of Acts was motivated to present Paul’s preaching as a smooth progression from the preaching of the other apostles. Paul, on the other hand, was motivated to show that his preaching is from a source that is superior to the preaching of the other apostles. It was not important to Paul to show a smooth progression. It was enough for Paul to tell us of a begrudging acknowledgment of his preaching by the apostles who saw the live Jesus.

The story that Paul tells us in Galatians 2:7-9 is also roundly contradicted by the author of Acts. Paul claims that the leaders of the Jerusalem Church “saw that I had been intrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, even as Peter with [the gospel] of the circumcision”. Paul is claiming that these men recognized that the dead Jesus had spoken to him and authorized him to teach just as the live Jesus had spoken to Peter and authorized Peter to preach in his name.

The book of Acts tells us that no such acknowledgment ever took place. In chapter 15 of the book of Acts we are told that when a question arose concerning gentile observance of the Law, Peter and James speak and present their understanding of the matter. If, as Paul claimed, Peter and James truly acknowledged Paul’s apostleship, they should have simply said; Jesus appointed Paul as an apostle to the gentiles, let us obey him. According to the book of Acts, they did nothing of the sort. Furthermore, the book of Acts describes the last meeting between James and Paul, and again the issue of gentile observance comes up, and again James makes reference to the previous decision of the Jerusalem Church and says not a word about Paul’s apostleship (Acts 21:25).

Another revealing episode is described in chapter 21 of the book of Acts. Paul arrives in Jerusalem and is informed by James that “Thou seest, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of them that have believed; and they are all zealous for the law. and they have been informed concerning thee, that thou teachest all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children neither to walk after the customs. What is it therefore? They will certainly hear that thou art come.” (Acts 21:20-22).

According to James, all the Jewish Christians are zealous for the law. The word that James uses (zealous), implies ardor, enthusiasm, passion and excitement. Is this Pauline Christianity? Which Christian denomination encourages Jewish people to be “zealous for the law”?

According to James, it is not the Jerusalem Church that oversteps its boundaries by trying to influence the gentiles (as per Galatians 2:14), but it is Paul who is overstepping his boundaries in trying to influence the Jews. The author of the book of Acts gives us the impression that this was a false accusation that was not accepted by James, but he does acknowledge that all the Jewish believers believed this accusation.

The author of the book of Acts does not explicitly tell us how the members of the Jerusalem Church felt about this accusation. But from the little he says, we can understand that this was no friendly misunderstanding. The words “they will certainly hear that thou art come”, imply that the mere fact of Paul’s arrival in Jerusalem will stir up agitation amongst the Jewish Christians. This agitation was not something that could have been settled by James reassuring his following that this was an innocent misunderstanding, and that Paul was truly loyal to the law. The conflict was so deep that a verbal explanation on Paul’s part would also not put the issue to rest. It is clear that the Jewish Christians did not trust Paul’s words.

The only way James could end the conflict was by telling Paul; “Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men that have a vow on them; these take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges for them, that they may shave their heads: and all shall know that there is no truth in the things whereof they have been informed concerning thee; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, keeping the law.” (Acts 21:23,24).

The author of the book of Acts would have us believe that this action on Paul’s part would serve as a declaration of Paul’s true beliefs. Paul’s participation in the Temple rites, would demonstrate to one and all that he was truly loyal to the law of Moses. This explanation fits with the inclination of the author of Acts to minimize the conflict between Paul and the Jerusalem Church. But this explanation is highly unlikely. If this conflict could not be settled through a verbal declaration on Paul’s part, why would a public performance put the accusations to rest? If the Jewish Christians suspected Paul of lying with his mouth, why would they be so naive to think that he could he not lie with his actions?

The more likely explanation is that the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem could not care less what it was that Paul believed in his heart. What they wanted with this public demonstration was an act of repudiation of his teaching. They wanted to make clear, that in the presence of the disciples of Jesus, Paul did not have the backbone to stand for his own principles. This was not to be a demonstration of loyalty, it was to stand as a public renunciation of Pauline Christianity.

Whether you believe that this activity on the part of Paul was to serve as a demonstration of loyalty, or you feel as I do, that this was a forced retraction, there are several questions that the author of Acts leaves unanswered. Of all the activities proscribed by the law of Moses, why did James choose a Temple rite for this public presentation? If the only purpose of this demonstration was to reassure the Jewish Christians that Paul was loyal to the law, a public act of observance of any point in the law would have served. Furthermore, we must ask ourselves, why was this particular Temple rite chosen by

James? Why did it have to be a Nazirite offering? Why would a simple burnt offering not have served the same purpose? It is clear that nothing less than a Nazirite offering on the part of Paul would satisfy the Jerusalem Christians. Why not?

The answer is staring us in the face. A Nazirite offering includes a sacrifice that is offered for the explicit purpose of the expiation of sin (Numbers 6:14). Paul's central teaching is that the only valid method of expiating sin is through the blood of Jesus. The Jewish Christians did not accept this teaching. They believed that the Law of Moses provided for the expiation of sin through various methods including the offering of animals in the Temple for this purpose. When Paul would participate in this rite, he would be publicly repudiating his own teaching on the matter.

Some Christians have argued that these offerings on the part of the Jewish Christians would not serve as a repudiation of Pauline Christianity. These offerings were understood to be pointing back to the sacrifice of Jesus. This explanation fails for several reasons. First, the offerings were to be processed by the non-Christian Temple establishment. The priests who processed the offerings would have understood them as Moses explains: that these offerings themselves atoned for sin. The concept that the sacrifices no longer atoned stands as a polar opposite of the soul and spirit of the Temple establishment. The idea of handing offerings to these people as an expression of loyalty to Christian doctrine is flatly ridiculous.

The second reason that this Christian explanation does not work is because this act was meant as a public demonstration. Paul was not given an opportunity to explain his actions. He was simply to go into the Temple and participate in this offering for the expiation of sin. James trusted that the onlookers would fully understand the message that is inherent in these actions. How would the Jerusalem crowds have understood this message? There is no question that these people would have read the message of Paul's actions as an affirmation of the efficacy of the Temple sacrifices. No one ever taught these people a different understanding of the sacrifices. The entire concept of "sacrifices pointing back to Jesus" was invented recently under polemical pressure. This concept is not mentioned anywhere in the Christian scriptures or in the writings of any Christian theologian until recently. We can be sure that this concept was not popular currency in the Jerusalem Church of James.

Finally, this explanation (the sacrifices pointed back to Jesus) fails to explain why the members of the Jerusalem Church saw in this act of Paul a declaration of loyalty to the principles they held so dear. Why would this act stand as a symbol of their zeal for the Law?

Let us summarize what we have learned. Paul claimed that no living person taught him anything. He claimed that the teachings that Jesus imparted during his lifetime were meant for the Jews, while the teachings that Paul learned in his visions were meant for the gentiles. Paul accuses the Jewish followers of Jesus for failing to respect this division and attempting to influence the gentiles. Paul tells us that there were people who were

very influential in the Church who preached a different gospel than his own. Despite the fact that Paul's disciples redacted the synoptic gospels, it is still difficult to find a clear Pauline statement attributed to Jesus in these books. The book of Acts makes clear that the Jerusalem Church never acknowledged Paul's claim to prophecy. The book of Acts also makes clear that there were deep differences between Paul and the members of the Jerusalem Church. (There is more to discuss here, such as the tone and the emphasis of the book of James, the fact that the Jewish disciples of Jesus were shocked by his death, and the fact that the Church of James was allowed to flourish in Pharisaic Jerusalem, but the discussion has already become too lengthy.)

We have an abundance of evidence that Paul, and not Jesus, was the inventor of Christianity. How does Brown deal with this accusation? In the thirteen pages that Brown devoted to this subject, there are only a few sentences that deal with the issues we raised here. On page 201 Brown tells us that Paul was "*recognized as a key player by the other key leaders in Acts 15*". Brown does not explain how the description of the author of Acts contradicts Paul's own version of the event. Brown also does not tell us that the episode as described in Acts makes clear that the leaders of the Jerusalem Church did NOT accept Paul's claim to prophecy.

Brown tells us that Paul "*dispelled any doubts about his teachings and personal practices in Acts 21*" (page 201). This is quite a bizarre statement. The story in Acts 21 reveals the deep friction that existed between all of the Jewish believers and Paul. The Jerusalem Church saw the core of their differences in the Temple offerings. And Brown is satisfied with the pat assurance that Paul "dispelled any doubts"?! Why was there this deep distrust between Paul and the Jerusalem Church? Why were the members of the Jerusalem Church busy with Temple offerings after the crucifixion of Jesus? Why could Paul not reassure the Jewish believers with a simple speech? Why did James and Peter not reassure their own followers? Why did Paul have to do it? Why were the members of the Jerusalem Church so zealous for the Law of Moses? Brown does not seem to have answers for these questions.

Brown tells us that Paul "*passed on what he received*". Brown does not make clear to his readership that when Paul says the word "received" he does not mean that he received the teaching from the Jewish disciples of Jesus, but rather, that he personally received these teachings in visions from the dead Jesus.

Brown tells us that "*with the exception of some heretical groups (like the Ebionites), Paul's teachings were received by the second generation of believers, including men who were disciples of the original apostles (such as Polycarp)*." I find this sentence quite astounding. Brown tells us nothing about the deep opposition to Paul from within the Church in his own lifetime. This opposition came straight from Jerusalem, the place where Jesus lived and taught. Instead Brown is satisfied to pass on to his readers a piece of Christian mythology. None of the original Hebrew and Aramaic writings of the Jewish disciples of Jesus and their subsequent followings survived the blind fury of the Pauline Church. All of the writings we have from the early Christians were either written or redacted by the gentile followers of Paul. The writings of the early Church fathers tell us precious little about the life and teachings of the Jewish disciples of Jesus. There is one association that Brown and other fundamentalist Christians seize upon. Polycarp! It is claimed that Polycarp was a disciple of John. Polycarp died approximately in the year 160 C.E. If he ever saw John, it could only have been at a time that he was a small boy and

John was an old man. Polycarp does not quote John. He does not tell us anything about the life and teachings of John. The entire claim of Polycarp's discipleship of John, is at best, an exaggeration of a brief sighting in his youth.

If you are a Christian, I beg of you, please absorb what you have just read. The accusation that Paul invented Christianity has deep foundations in the Christian scriptures and in the history of the early Church. Dr. Brown, who is a very capable person (and I do not mean this sarcastically), could not provide a defense against this accusation aside from four hollow sentences. So what is the basis of your faith?

#### **IV. 12. *Objection 5.28***

The four word objection: "Jesus abolished the Law", is the subject of this 32 page dissertation by Brown. After the lengthy dissertation, Brown himself still does not observe the Law. Many Jewish followers of Jesus do not even pretend to observe the Law. The doublespeak of a politician may confuse some people while he is on the campaign trail. But after the politician has been in office for 2000 years, his performance or lack thereof will speak louder than a 32 page dissertation. The fact remains that for the past 2000 years, the vast majority of Jews who followed Jesus abandoned their obedience to the Law. This fact cannot be explained away.

#### **IV. 13. *Page 205***

Brown quotes Jesus as saying: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets".

What the historical Jesus said or meant is not the subject of this discussion. What interests us here is the Jesus that lives in the minds and hearts of Christians. Perhaps the historical Jesus intended that his followers remain loyal to the Law. It is also entirely possible that the first several generations of his Jewish followers were indeed obedient to the Law. But the fact remains that over the centuries, Jews who joined Jesus gave up their observance of the Law of Moses. So the historical Jesus may not have meant to abolish the Law, but the Jesus of Christianity certainly did.

On the basis of Jesus' statement quoted above, Brown comes to the conclusion (page 206) that: "any interpretation of his (Jesus') words that effectively abolishes the Torah must be rejected".

My question to Brown is: how do you measure or define the concept: "effectively abolish the Torah"? Is non-observance not enough? Do YOU advocate that Jews observe the Mosaic Law?

#### **IV. 14. *Page 207***

Brown argues that Jesus presents himself – as the sole authoritative interpreter of the Jewish Scriptures.



One question that this strange statement brings to mind is: Who is the authoritative interpreter of Jesus' words and teachings? On whose authority should we accept this interpretation of his words?

Another question that comes to mind is: who was interpreting the Torah before Jesus arrived on the scene? By what authority were these people interpreting the Torah? And who took this authority away from the Judges of Israel authorized by the Law of Moses as interpreters? And if this is not an effective abolishment of the Law then what is? Imagine if one were to present themselves up as the sole interpreter of the Constitution of the United States, ignoring the Supreme Court. Would this not be an effective abolishment of the Constitution?

#### **IV. 15. Page 209**

Brown tells us that the disciples of Jesus found strength in the loss of the Temple rather than weakness. He goes on to say that the followers of Jesus have no spiritual lack with the destruction of the Temple and actually come to a richer spiritual experience without the Temple.

I find this statement quite revealing. The God of Israel dwelt in that Temple. He promised that when He returns, He will take His residence up in that same Temple (Ezekiel 37:28). If someone finds "strength" in the Temple's absence, and comes into a "richer spiritual experience" without the dwelling place of God – we can be sure that this "spiritual experience" has nothing to do with the God of Israel.

In the context of this particular discussion ("did Jesus abolish the Law?"), Brown could not have made a stronger point for the position he is trying to refute. One of the premises that stands behind so much of Scripture's Law, narratives, and prophecies is the concept: that through the Temple, Israel and the world come into a richer spiritual experience. To state that the loss of the Temple brought strength while at the same time contending that Jesus did not abolish the Law, is the epitome of self-contradiction.

#### **IV. 16. Page 209**

Brown tells us that those Jews who did not follow Jesus were terribly traumatized with the destruction of the Temple. According to Brown, the disciples of Jesus were better equipped to handle the Temple's destruction because Jesus had predicted this destruction and because they already had a replacement for the Temple in Jesus – a replacement that according to Brown actually surpasses the Temple.

Brown does not seem to notice that those Jews who did not follow Jesus were better equipped to handle Jesus' death. They were not traumatized by that event at all. The event of Jesus death did not require them to invent an entirely new theology that was unknown to them up until that point. But those who chose to follow Jesus were terribly traumatized by the death of their leader. That event was so traumatic that they were forced to redefine their concept of Messiah in ways that they had never dreamed possible.

In any case, as traumatic as the loss of the Temple was for the Jewish people who did not follow Jesus but remained loyal to the God who dwelled in that Temple – they never had to change their theology. First of all, contrary to Brown’s assertions, God had warned them about this impending destruction (Daniel 9:26). Second, this was not the first time that such an event had struck Israel. After the destruction of the First Temple, God promised His people that while they are in exile, He Himself will serve as their miniature sanctuary (Ezekiel 11:16). And finally, God promised us that He will rebuild the Temple and dwell amongst His people again (Ezekiel 37:28). This hope in God’s word has kept us going through these dark centuries, and gave us the strength to resist those who claim to offer us a “better path”.

#### **IV. 17. Page 210**

Brown reminds his readers of the Christological interpretation of the Jewish holidays that he presented in Volume 1. I refer the readers to my comments on this interpretation in my critique of Vol. 1. I will add here that it is obvious that Brown does not take these Biblical holidays too seriously. He incorrectly calls the second day of Passover by the name “Firstfruits”. The name “Firstfruits” is one of the Biblical names of Pentecost (Numbers 28:26). The offering presented on the second day of Passover was indeed a “firstfruits” offering, but the DAY is never referred to as “Firstfruits”. If Brown would indeed care about God’s festivals, he would get their names straight.

#### **IV. 18. Page 210**

Brown argues here that the Rabbis also changed the Law. Based on changing circumstances, the Law had to be applied differently in every generation.

How is does this constitute a change in the Law? If the original Law contained a method through which the judges of each generation could apply the Law to their particular situation, then the original Law never changed. We still follow the directives of the original Law which provide us with a methodology to deal with ever-changing circumstances.

But nowhere does the original Law provide for the “revisions” introduced by Christianity. Nowhere does the Law state that when the Messiah comes the Law will take on a different meaning and a different focus. No-one ever made a claim that these were provisions of the original Law that was handed by Moses to the Jewish people.

#### **IV. 19. Page 211**

Brown talks of the rabbinic additions to the Law in the form of rabbinical institutions. What Brown fails to tell his readers is that the concept of rabbinic institutions has its roots in the Bible. The prophets tell us that the religious leadership introduced a series of fasts as well as the holiday of Purim as an addition to the Law of Moses (Zechariah 8:19, Esther 9:31).

#### **IV. 20. Page 212**

Brown “explains” to his readers how the rabbis “changed” the Biblical commandment of fringes/tassels (“tzitzis” – Numbers 15:38, Deuteronomy 22:12). Brown describes the style of ancient garments and that the tassel that was to be affixed to the garment was to be a certain shade of blue. Brown then points out that over time the style of the garments has changed and that this particular blue is no longer obtainable. Jews today wear a “tallit” with white tassels in fulfillment of this Biblical injunction. In addition Rabbinic tradition dictates that the tassels be affixed to the garment with a series of knots that is not mentioned in the Scripture at all.

Brown then presents a hypothetical Jew who rediscovers the ancient style of garment together with the specific shade of blue and recreates the original fringes worn by Moses’ contemporaries. Without the knots as dictated by Rabbinic tradition and without the white tassels. Brown charges that contemporary Rabbinic Judaism would condemn this Jew for violating the Torah. Thus Brown charges that Rabbinic Judaism has effectively changed the Law of Moses.

Brown’s presentation is seriously flawed. First of all, the Torah does not specify that a specific garment be worn. Any garment that consists of four ends (Deuteronomy 22:12) would be required to have tassels affixed to them. Whether a person wears an ancient style garment or a more conventional “tallit”, he has fulfilled the Biblical injunction when he affixes tassels to the four corners of the garment.

Second, the blue thread that Brown speaks of was a requirement in addition to another thread (not necessarily white – but not necessarily blue either). The commandment in Deuteronomy says nothing about a blue thread and the passage in Numbers tells us to place the blue thread in addition to, or on top of the original fringes. It is obvious that the commandment includes a tassel of unspecified color plus a blue thread. So when the particular blue became unavailable, the Jewish people continued wearing the white threads in fulfillment of the basic injunction. In modern times Jewish scholars are attempting to rediscover the original blue so that they can fulfill all aspects of the commandment. But in the meantime we fulfill those aspects that are possible for us to fulfill.

Brown’s discussion about the knots is also off the mark. The rabbis recognize that the Torah does not say anything about knots. It is for this reason that the specific number of knots is not considered a Torah law (Biblical) but rather a custom. As long as the fringes are firmly affixed to the garment and they consist of a “braided” section (as per Deuteronomy 22:12) and a tassel section (as per Numbers 15:38), then the basic Biblical commandment has been fulfilled. An individual who fulfills the basic requirements of the Biblical commandment without conforming to the customs related to the commandment has fulfilled the commandment. But by neglecting the custom, this individual stands apart from the larger Jewish community. He has not fulfilled the commandment as a member of Eternal Israel but rather as a lone individual. If this individual was unable to fulfill the customs associated with the commandment, then his actions will not be seen by the Jewish community in a negative light. But if this individual openly chooses to disregard

the national custom, he will be seen as one who does not recognize the sanctity of the community and as one who fails to see the spiritual advantage of standing together as a part of the Eternal community of Israel.

**IV. 21. Page 214**

Brown condemns the decision of the rabbis to discontinue the capital punishments dictated by the Bible once crime became rampant. It is interesting to note that the spiritual reasoning behind this decision is echoed in the Christian Scriptures (John 8:7). In that case, I am sure that Brown is bowled over by the depth of the spiritual insight “revealed” by Jesus, but when the rabbis say the same thing, Brown sees a misapplication of Scripture.

There are two fundamental differences between the statement of Jesus and the position of the rabbis. First of all, Jesus had no authority as a judge of God’s Law. The community of Eternal Israel does not recognize Jesus as any authority for the Law that was entrusted to them (Deuteronomy 33:4). The rabbis on the other hand were and are the judges recognized by the chosen people to arbitrate and to apply God’s Law.

The second difference between the position of the rabbis and that of Jesus, relates to their attitude towards the Law of Moses. The Christian Scriptures make a point of presenting the Law of Moses as simplistic and inadequate (Matthew 5:21). Jesus is portrayed as the one who presents the sophisticated and refined Law. The rabbis on the other hand highlighted the perfection of God’s Law. They were careful to demonstrate how their spiritual insight was drawn from the Scriptures, and that all they were doing was to apply God’s perfect Law as was their responsibility.

**IV. 22. Page 214**

Brown cites the example of the “prozbul” through which the rabbis circumvent the law of annulment of debts in the sabbatical year. Brown quotes a critique of this rabbinical institution from Gruber.

Had Brown bothered to research the sources that Gruber quotes, he would have found that the rabbis were not “circumventing” a Torah Law. In fact the Talmud (b. Gittin 36a) presents this very question: “How can a rabbinical institution counteract a Biblical Law?” The answer provided by the Talmud makes it clear that the rabbis did not “simply annul” the Torah Law as Brown and Gruber charge. The institution of the “prozbul” actually annulled another rabbinic institution. Brown may disagree with the reasoning of the rabbis, but to portray the rabbis as if they consciously annulled a Torah Law is simple slander with no basis in fact.

**IV. 23. Page 215**

Brown acknowledges that the written Torah standing on its own is inadequate to sustain the ongoing life of a people. The question that must then be asked is: How then did God, who presented the Law to Israel, expect it to be observed by all generations of Jews? (Numbers 15:37-41). If His Law is perfect, as Scripture attests (Psalm 19:8), then He

would have had to provide, as an integral component of the original Law, some method of dealing with the ever-changing life of a nation. The only viable claim to possession of such a method is the claim of Rabbinic Judaism. There is no competing claim.

#### **IV. 24. Page 215**

Brown claims that Yeshua presented a “better way”, a method of observing God’s Law that is superior to the method presented by Rabbinic Judaism.

The test of history invalidates Brown’s claim. Yeshua’s way brought the Crusades, Inquisition and the perpetration of the holocaust unto his followers. Is this the “better way”?

Brown argues that “real” Christians love Jews, and I do not doubt that many Christians today sincerely do love the Jewish people. My question is as follows: Do the Christians today love the Jews more than Jesus and his apostles?

Most Christians would argue that Jesus was the epitome of love, and that their own love is only a mirror of Jesus’ love for Israel. If this premise is true (and I highly doubt it) then how can modern Christians be sure that their own grandchildren will not be killing Jews? If Jesus and Paul, who loved Israel more than modern Christians, and presumably who could see into the future with greater prophetic clarity than modern Christians, could not ensure that such atrocities will not be committed in their name – how then could modern day Christians be guaranteed that their own descendants will not commit atrocities in their name? And if you tell me that precautions are being taken that these atrocities not be repeated, then why could Jesus and Paul not take these same precautions?

#### **IV. 25. Page 216**

In this section Brown takes a page out of Jesus’ book, and besmirches Judaism and her teachers.

When Jesus presented his moral teachings to his audience, it was not enough for him to encourage his followers to aim for a higher moral standard. It was important for him to claim that his teaching was original, and that the teachers who preceded him failed to understand some basic moral insights. By doing so, Matthew’s Jesus set the stage for the subsequent teaching of John’s Jesus that the Jews are children of the devil. Eventually, the European people came to believe that the Jewish people are so intimately connected with evil that they fail to appreciate some of the most basic principles of morality.

Brown too is not satisfied to present Jesus’ moral teachings. He finds the need to paint a fictitious portrait of Judaism as a legalistic belief system with only the dimmest understanding of morality.

Brown points to Jesus teaching against anger as a “deeper” understanding of the Law. The fact is that Jesus taught the Jewish people nothing that they did not already know. The

rabbis taught against anger, making sure to point to the Scriptural source for their teaching (b. Nedarim 22b, based on Ecclesiastes 7:9).

Brown points to Jesus' teaching against lustful thoughts as another example of an "exclusive" moral insight of Jesus. The Rabbis also taught against lustful thoughts, making sure to attribute the moral insight to Scripture (b. Eruvin 18b, based on Proverbs 11:21, see also Job 31:1).

Jesus' teaching "let your "yes" be "yes" and your "no" be "no", is also cited by Brown as an example of Jesus' moral superiority over the teachers of Rabbinic Judaism. The problem with Brown's assertion is that the Talmud records precisely the same teaching, again pointing to a Scriptural source for this concept (b. Bava Metzia 49a, based on Leviticus 19:36, see also Leviticus 19:11, Proverbs 12:22).

The famous teaching of "turning the other cheek", which Brown interprets as "not seeking retaliation", is explicitly stated in the Torah – Leviticus 19:18.

The philosophy of "loving your enemies", is also echoed in Rabbinic literature (b. Bava Metzia 32b, based on Exodus 23:5, see also Leviticus 19:17).

Brown speaks of Jesus' advice to perform acts of righteousness in secret as another example of Jesus' "original" insights. Again, this is a well known Rabbinic teaching based on Scripture (b. Succah 49b, based on Micah 6:8).

The teaching "forgive others so that we may be forgiven" is also not a "Jesus original" as Brown seems to assume. The Talmud presents the same teaching (b. Rosh Hashana 17a, based on Micah 7:18).

Jesus' warning not to store up treasures on earth is found in the Talmud as well (b. Bava Batra 11a, with various Scriptural quotations including Isaiah 3:10).

The warnings against greed and love of money are also found in the Rabbinic writings (Avot 4:21, Kohelet Raba 1), and these concepts are found in the books of Scripture especially in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes (e.g. Proverbs 15:27, Ecclesiastes 2:11).

The concept of trusting on our Father's goodness is a prevalent theme in both the Rabbinic writings and in the Jewish Scriptures (e.g. Jeremiah 17:7, Psalm 55:23).

Jesus' teaching against being judgmental, and his encouragement for self-examination are also paralleled in the Rabbinic sources (b. Bava Kama 93a, Bava Batra 60b based on Zephaniah 2:1).

(At this point, one might ask: How did Jesus provide an example for self-examination? By teaching that he could do no wrong, his followers could not fathom why he died such

an ignominious death. In sharp contrast to Jesus, when two of the Pharisee leaders were being executed by the Romans they provided an incredible example for self-examination. One said to the other: “in an instant you will be together with the righteous, why then do you cry?” The response was: “I am crying because we are dying like those who have murdered and violated the Sabbath.” The former comforted his companion: “perhaps you were eating or sleeping and a woman came to ask you a question concerning the Law and your students turned her away. Does not the verse say “if you oppress them (the widow and the orphan) I will smite you by the sword?” It is these people who Jesus slandered when he taught the world that the Pharisees ignore the commandment of caring for the widow and the orphan (Matthew 23:14.)

Brown concludes that traditional Jews might find these concepts: “*profound but vague*”. Brown warns that traditional Jews will need “*some level of reorientation*” to implement these moral teachings (*page 217*). I find this simply amazing. Brown seems to be under the impression that no traditional Jew ever heard of these concepts. Just to get an idea as to how skewed Brown’s view of reality actually is, please consider the following. A Messianic teacher decided to try to implement Jesus’ moral teachings. He created a website that focuses on the ethical and moral teachings of Jesus and he elaborates and expands on each one. He draws most of his sources from rabbinic literature! (Here is the link to his site – <http://rivertonmussar.org/>)

Brown seems to be locked into an “either or” world view. Either one follows a religious legal code, or one follows a moral code. The Scriptures teach and the respective histories of the Church and the Synagogue confirm that it is “both or neither”.

#### **IV. 26. Pages 218-226**

Here Brown takes a swipe at the Rabbinic understanding of the Sabbath. Brown supplies his readers with a sampling of the complexity of the Rabbinic understanding of the Sabbath laws. He quotes from Rabbinical sources which state that proper observance of the Sabbath will not be possible without a dedication to studying the laws pertaining to the Sabbath. He then concludes this segment of his presentation with the words: “*Yeshua’s way is better! No wonder the prophet Isaiah declared that “the coastlands shall await his teaching”.*”

Again, Brown’s is out of touch with both Scriptural truth and with historical reality. God promised that the Sabbath will stand as an eternal sign between Himself and the Jewish people, a sign that will endure for all generations (Exodus 31:12-17). No community aside from the rabbinic community has been continuously observing the Sabbath since Sinai. The Christian community was not satisfied with their non-observance of God’s holy day, they went ahead and developed a hatred for the Sabbath, and this aversion to the Sabbath abides until today in some Christian circles and is reflected in some Christian writings. God’s sign does not seem to talk to these Christians.

In contrast to the burdensome and frustrating observance described by Brown, observance of the Rabbinical Sabbath is one of the most spiritually exhilarating experiences. Brown himself has gone on record warning Jewish Christians not to join Rabbinical Jews for the Sabbath because it might lure them away from belief in Jesus. One second! Isn’t the Rabbinical Sabbath supposed to be an oppressive experience? Why

doesn't Brown encourage these doubters to try the Jewish Sabbath and see that Yeshua's way is the "better way"?

God never said that observing His holy law will require no exertion. Yes, you must dedicate yourself to study and to observance, but through this dedication, and only through this dedication, will you experience the sanctification that God granted His holy nation.

In conclusion, I will share a childhood memory. A certain elderly man was a frequent guest at my parent's Sabbath table. I recall walking home from the Friday night services together with this elderly Jew and my father. This old man talked with my father about his youth. He was from Poland. His parents or grandparents had left Judaism back in Europe and he had grown up as a secular Jew without much knowledge of Judaism. It was only in his old age that he returned to His Father and began observing His Law. He told my father that now that he has come to know Judaism, he has a problem understanding his parents and grandparents. "How did they throw away the Sabbath?" he asked. He could not fathom how one would part with the blessed peacefulness and the holy rest of God's Sabbath as observed in Rabbinic Judaism.

#### **IV. 27. Pages 218-230**

Throughout Brown's attack on the Rabbinic understanding of the Sabbath the recurring refrain is: "*is this what the Lord intended?*" Brown expects his readers to come to the conclusion that the Rabbinic observance of the Sabbath is not the observance that God intended when He presented this commandment to His people.

If one's understanding of spirituality in general and of the Sabbath in particular has been acquired from the literature and the general milieu of the modern Western world, then Brown's argument will find a listening ear. But if one's understanding of spirituality and of Sabbath is rooted in the Jewish Bible and in the environment of ancient Israel, then Brown's argument is meaningless.

The Western world does not consider a procedure, in which people follow a detailed set of physical instructions, to be a rich spiritual experience. But the Jewish Scriptures teach us otherwise. Some of the pivotal narratives in Scripture teach us that man's obedience to a series of detailed physical instructions bring man into a closer relationship with God. This is a feature in the episode of Noah's ark. One of the central lessons integral to that account is the fact that God chose to renew life on this planet through Noah's ark; an ark that was built according to a specific set of instructions. The entire Tabernacle narrative has the Jewish nation obediently following a detailed set of instructions and that this obedience was favored by God to the degree that He came to dwell amongst this nation. Scripture makes it clear that man's obedience to intricate instructions is an important feature of the relationship between man and His Creator.

The historical record clearly indicates that every community of Jews in ancient Israel understood that the work that God prohibited on the Sabbath consists of a set of prohibitions that proscribe many minor physical activities. Some of these communities



(such as the Qumran community represented in the Dead Sea Scroll literature) actually took a stricter view than Rabbinical Judaism in this area. The concept of Sabbath espoused by Protestant Christians, which is limited and confined to an indistinct “spiritual rest”, was unknown in ancient Israel. In ancient Israel the Sabbath was understood to be a spiritual rest that is amplified and supported by a defined set of rules prohibiting certain actions.

The Christian Scriptures themselves confirm the truth that the Biblical prohibition from work on the Sabbath applies to minor physical activities. Brown himself half-heartedly acknowledges this point when he tells us: *“Now, it is more than likely, that Yeshua himself lived within the framework of SOME of these laws...”* (page 226). In other words, Brown recognizes that Jesus himself observed the Sabbath according to the Rabbinic understanding of God’s holy day. Brown attempts to modify his admission with the argument that it was only “some” of the laws that Jesus observed, and with the myth the Rabbinic understanding of the Sabbath was not yet fully developed. But after everything is said and done, Brown is admitting that Jesus observed the Sabbath by refraining from minor physical activities.

The authors of the Christian Scripture clearly acknowledge this. In all of the Sabbath controversies that Jesus has with his opponents, not once does he disagree with the definition of “prohibited work” that his opponents espoused. His argument with them is that for the purpose of healing the Law of Sabbath is moved aside. But never does he argue that his opponent’s understanding of the Sabbath law is erroneous.

This means that mixing dirt and spittle is prohibited on the Sabbath (John 9:14), carrying a mat is prohibited in the Sabbath (John 5:10), and picking kernels of grain is prohibited on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:1). These minor physical activities would hardly constitute a violation of the Sabbath according to the philosophy espoused by Brown. Yet Jesus never denies that these activities ought to be prohibited on the Sabbath, barring extenuating circumstances.

The Christian Scriptures actually take this one step further. They have Jesus quoting a detail of Rabbinic Sabbath law to prove a point. In John 7:22 Jesus bases his argument on the Rabbinic law which would generally prohibit an incision to the flesh on the Sabbath, yet permits it in the situation of circumcision. According to Brown’s understanding, why should a cut to the flesh be prohibited to begin with? And once it is determined that it is indeed prohibited, how can we know that for the sake of circumcision it is permitted?

It is clear from the Christian Scriptures that the Rabbinic understanding of the Sabbath was common knowledge in Jesus’ days, and that Jesus never disputed this conception of the Sabbath. Brown’s attack on the Rabbinical Sabbath is but a poor attempt to rewrite history.

#### **IV. 28. Pages 226 – 229**

Brown is in his lecturing mode again. He sets forth some of the “*key teachings and principles*” of the Sabbath as “revealed” by Jesus. These are presented as original teachings of Jesus that are unknown in Rabbinical Judaism. (Brown describes these principles as a “*clear contrast*” to the Rabbinical understanding of the Sabbath.)

Brown tells us that the Sabbath was meant to be a day of liberation from bondage. Brown points to the Sabbath healings of Jesus as an example of the Sabbath liberation, because they provided deliverance for people who were in critical need. He contrasts these healings with the complex and rigid observance of the Sabbath that is found in Rabbinic Judaism. The impression that the authors of the Christians Scriptures give us of the Rabbinic Sabbath is one in which the pressing needs of individuals, specifically the weakest in society, are not met. Brown echoes this slanderous description.

Let us turn the camera to the Rabbinic Sabbath so maligned and denigrated by the followers of Jesus. We will begin with the matter of healing the sick.

A child growing up observing the Sabbath in a Rabbinical community will know that the Sabbath means so much to his or her parents and teachers. All work is set aside, no business is transacted, no matter what financial loss might be incurred. Stories abound about Jews who made great sacrifices in order to be able to keep God’s Sabbath. The atmosphere is one in which it is unthinkable to answer a telephone, to use an electronic device, or to drive a car. Imagine a child who grew up with this concept of Sabbath as a part of the very fabric of his or her life. This child is now in the synagogue where everyone is silently and solemnly listening to the reading of the Torah. Suddenly a telephone rings. One of the honored members of the congregation answers the phone as he quickly makes his way to the door. He hops into his car and zooms off, siren blaring. What happened! Someone’s life was in danger – and this volunteer medic was responding to the emergency.

Could you think of a better way to inculcate a child with the value of a human life? Is it a coincidence that it is precisely the communities of Rabbinic Jews who form their own volunteer ambulance teams because they find the response time of the general ambulance squads to be inadequate in light of their understanding of the value of the human life?

As much as we value the Sabbath, and we value it tremendously, we still recognize that human life is greater. When a religious Christian community goes further than the Rabbinic community to instill in their children a value for human life, we will be ready to hear a lecture from Jesus and from Brown on this subject.

In the sense of tending to the needs of the weakest in society, the Rabbinic Sabbath is a shining light. As a general rule, the officers of Rabbinical communities, be they synagogue administrators, community volunteers or religious leaders, make it their business to ensure that every Jew has a place to eat for the Sabbath. Many families will consider their Sabbath table incomplete if there is no guest present with whom to share their home. This goes much further than providing an indigent individual or a stranger with some food. By

participating in a family meal, the outsider is given the opportunity to share their heart with those present at the table. It is through the Rabbinical observance of the Sabbath that the Jewish Community learns of the concerns of her most needy. Not in official bureaucratic reports. But in heart to heart talks that involve every member of the community including the little children. It is not merely a matter of discovering the concerns of these people, but that these people become a participating part of the community at the level of the community's most important unit; the family.

For Brown to echo the slander of the Christian Scriptures in accusing the Rabbinic community of disregarding those in critical need in the context of observance of the Sabbath, is to ignore 2000 years of the history of the Jewish community.

Let us also address the issue of "*liberation from bondage*". Brown declares that the Sabbath that Jesus offers his followers liberates from bondage in "*clear contrast*" to the Sabbath observed by the Rabbinical community.

Those who observe God's Sabbath in the context of Rabbinic Judaism will have a hard time identifying with Brown's sentiment. Could there be a greater liberation from bondage than a day in which the work-week is not allowed to intrude? No telephone, no computer, no mail, no boss, no business, no store, no employees, no buying, no selling, no radio or television – a complete disengagement from anything and everything that pulls one away from the true purpose of life. The Sabbath is a day for interacting with God, with His holy Torah, and with His chosen people. The sense of freedom generated by the observance of the Sabbath touches and envelops every member of the community, from the small child, to the laborer, to the merchant, to the down-and-out and to the homemaker. Pontificating about the Sabbath is one thing. Living it is quite another.

#### **IV. 29. Page 228**

Another Spiritual principle that Brown finds in the Sabbath set forth by Jesus, is the concept that Sabbath is "*a time of true spiritual rest*". Brown goes on to explain that through Jesus "*the burden of sin is lifted from our shoulder, the sense of guilt removed, the need to strive to somehow be accepted by the Father*". This concept is presented as a "*clear contrast*" to the Sabbath of Rabbinical Judaism.

In clear contrast to Brown's depiction of Rabbinical Judaism, Jews who believe in God and believe in His Torah as preserved through His chosen nation, do not walk around with a "*burden of sin*" or with a "*sense of guilt*". God promised us that He forgives us when we repent (Isaiah 55:7, Ezekiel 33:11) and we take God on His word. Both the Scriptures and the Rabbinic traditions associate observance of the Sabbath with the repentance process and with a right relationship with God (Isaiah 56:2, 58:13, b. Shabbat 119b).

Brown speaks of a "*need to strive to somehow be accepted by the Father*". This concept too has no place in Judaism. Our relationship with God is as children to a Father (Deuteronomy 14:1). Children are always accepted by their Father. Our striving before our Father is not for the sake of "*somehow being accepted*", but rather, by obeying God's instructions we partake of His holy goodness. The Jewish Bible never speaks of observance of God's Law as a burden. The fact that God gives us the opportunity to observe His Law is a sign of our closeness to Him and of His love for us (Deuteronomy 26:18). The Sabbath is not a time to put aside observance of God's commandments. The

exact opposite is true. The Sabbath is a time when we have time to enhance our relationship with God by allowing the holiness of His Law and of His commandments to permeate our beings.

Yes, the Sabbath is a time of true spiritual rest. It is a time when our spiritual side is not burdened with combating the negative influences that attempt to lure us away from a real relationship with God. The Sabbath is a time when we could devote our energies to that which our spirits yearn for – a taste of God’s holiness (Exodus 31:13).

#### **IV. 30. Page 229**

Yet another “spiritual” principle propounded by Brown is that: *“The Son of Man (meaning the Messiah) is Lord of the Sabbath.”*

Here, Brown sees Jesus’ pronouncement that places his own person above God’s holy Law as a *“deep spiritual principle”* that was revealed by Jesus.

God’s Torah teaches us the exact opposite. The Law includes a set of instructions as to how to deal with a claimant to prophecy (Deuteronomy 13:2-6, 18:18-22). This clearly implies that God’s Law, as applied by the judges authorized by God to adjudicate His Law, stands above any claim to prophecy. God demands that we place our obedience to Him through the Law above any obedience demanded by a claimant to prophecy. No miracle should turn us from obedience to God’s Law.

#### **IV. 31. Page 229**

Brown concludes his dissertation on the spiritual principles of the Sabbath with: *“these are just some of the Sabbath principles presented by Yeshua, the main point being: The approach that is based on human tradition and endless legal expansion does NOT define the real meaning of the Sabbath and is NOT what God intended. Rather. Following the Torah principles set forth by the Messiah brings full meaning to the day...”*

If we focus on what God teaches us about the Sabbath in the Jewish Scriptures it will become obvious that not only did the followers of Jesus do away with God’s Sabbath (something that they never tried to hide), but that the belief system built around Jesus is the very antithesis of God’s Sabbath. It was through the Sabbath that God empowered and encourages the Jewish people to reject the claims of this self-proclaimed god-man.

The Sabbath is the sign that God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh (Genesis 2:1-3, Exodus 20:8-11, 31:12-17).

The one truth that is the underlying principle of the Jewish Scriptures is the fact that God is God and everything else are but His creations. This truth is stated explicitly in the first verse of the Bible, and is the implicit message of every verse that follows. This foundational truth: that God is the One Master of all, was made known to the Jewish people through the miracles of the exodus and through the Sinai revelation (Deuteronomy 4:35). God’s absolute sovereignty is brought home to the hearts of the Jewish people through the observance of Sabbath, and the Jewish people testify this truth to the world through the observance of Sabbath.

The heart of the Jew's calling before God is that we stand as witnesses to the ultimate truth: the fact that God alone is Lord (Isaiah 44:8), and it is through observance of the Sabbath that the Jew dispenses his calling before God. It is for this reason that the Sabbath is the covenantal sign between God and His people, and it is for this reason that commandment to observe the Sabbath is situated together with the commandment against idolatry and the injunction to honor our parents (Exodus 20:1-12, Leviticus 19:3-4).

The commandment against idolatry is based on our understanding that God is the only one deserving of our devotion to the exclusion of everyone and everything else. The commandment to honor our parents reminds us, as does the Sabbath, that our own existence is not an intrinsic truth but rather a gift that God chose to grant us through the medium of our parents.

God granted man control of all of creation (Genesis 1:28, Psalm 8:7). With the mastery of the earth placed in his hands, it is very easy for man to forget that he is a servant and fall into the illusion of thinking that he is master. By relinquishing control of the world once a week, the Jew reminds himself and testifies to all who care to hear, that we are not the masters, but rather, that we are all servants of the One Master.

Observance of the Sabbath gave the Jew an unambiguous and explicit perspective of reality. When the Jew encounters a rock, a plant an animal, a fellow human or an angel – the Sabbath tells the Jew – this form of existence is not your master – it is a creation of your God just as you are. While the populations around them were enslaved to the beliefs that they are subservient to forces of nature or to people who were born into a higher station in life – the Sabbath set the Jew free. The truth of the Sabbath gave the Jew the clarity to see through the intimidating posture of those who claimed to be the masters of men. The Sabbath reminded the Jew that there is but One Master, and that all are equally subservient to Him.

When the Christian missionaries presented Jesus as “*man's lord*” (page 229), the nations who did not know the message of the Sabbath were taken in. They accepted this false teaching and believed themselves to be under the mastery of this Jesus.

The Jew, however, who had absorbed the message of Sabbath was enabled by the Sabbath to identify this teaching for what it is – a call to idolatry. The Sabbath taught the Jew that no-one but the One Creator of heaven and earth can lay claim to the title of: “Master”. When any one inhabitant of God's creation claims to be the master – the Sabbath tells us – he is but a servant like ourselves.

The Sabbath is the very antithesis of Christianity. It is no wonder then that the followers of Jesus developed such a hatred and scorn for God's holy day. As for us, we will walk in the light of God's holy Sabbath until the darkness of Christianity is dispelled and all flesh will recognize that God alone is king (Zechariah 14:9).

#### **IV. 32. Pages 230-236**

Brown argues that the Law must have changed. He points to the fact that many of the commandments cannot be observed while Israel is in exile. Many of these commandments that cannot be observed in our exiled state are set forth as observances that apply forever, for all generations. Brown's argument then is that something must have changed. According to Brown, Rabbinic Judaism was also forced to institute changes to the Law because of our inability to perform all of the commandments. He claims that Rabbinic Judaism has changed the Law through the Talmud and the ensuing works of rabbinic scholarship.

The fact is that every commandment of the Law stands forever (Numbers 15:37-41). The fact that the circumstances change do not affect the eternal nature of the Law. The original Law provides direction on how to deal with changing circumstances. But the Law itself never changes.

Rabbinic Judaism treasures every one of God's holy laws. Those which we are able to keep in our present exiled state together with those that we look forward to observing when the ultimate redemption comes. We study the intricate details of all of the laws and we are influenced by the Godly wisdom inherent in every nuance of God's commandments.

The basic answer that Brown has provided for the original objection: "*Jesus abolished the Law*", is: "You (Rabbinic Judaism) also changed the Law". This answer is simply false.

#### **IV. 33. Page 267**

Brown reviews his arguments from volume 2 against one of the primary Jewish objections. The Jewish objection runs as follows: "*According to the Law (Deuteronomy 13,) Jesus was a false prophet, because he taught us to follow other gods (namely, the trinity, including the god Jesus), gods our fathers have never known or worshipped. This makes all his miracles utterly meaningless.*"

Brown responds to this objection with the claim that everything that Jesus did was for the glory of the Father. Brown argues that Jesus points people to the God of Israel.

If this were true, then Brown and other Christian missionaries would not attempt to convert Jews to their faith. If the entire goal of Jesus is to point people to the God of Israel, then people who already worship the God of Israel do not need him. Brown and the Christian missionaries are not happy with a heart that is completely and totally devoted to the God of Israel. They want the adoration, love and reverence that is devoted to the God of Israel to be redirected towards Jesus.

Jesus does not point people TO the God of Israel. Jesus points people AWAY from the God of Israel.

#### **IV. 34. Page 268**

Brown claims that Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 61:1-3.

I find this statement mind-boggling.

Let us examine the verses.

“The spirit of the Master the God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring tidings to the humbled, He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for captives and release from bondage for the imprisoned. To proclaim a year of favor unto the Lord and a day of revenge for our God, to comfort all mourners. To bring about for the mourners of Zion, to give them splendor instead of ashes, oil of joy in stead of mourning, a cloak of praise instead of a dim spirit, they will be called “elms of righteousness, the planting of the Lord in which to glory” (Isaiah 61:1-3).”

We will note that only a few verses before these, Isaiah promised the Jewish people: “Never again will your sun set, and your moon will not be withdrawn, for the Lord will be unto you an eternal light, and the days of your mourning will be ended. Your nation will be all righteous, they will inherit the land forever, a shoot of my planting, My handiwork in which to glory (Isaiah 60:20,21)”.

It is clear beyond doubt that the planting of the Lord in which to glory of 60:21 is the same planting of 61:3. It is also clear beyond doubt that the mourners that are comforted in 61:2 are the mourners of 60:20. These are those who mourn for Zion. May I please remind you that Brown exults in the fact that the followers of Jesus came into a “*richer spiritual experience*” with the destruction of Zion (*page 209*). These people are NOT the mourners of Zion. To exult with the destruction of Zion and to then turn around and seek compensation as the “mourners of Zion” is asking a bit too much – even for Brown.

#### **IV. 35. Pages 268-269**

Brown besmirches Judaism again. He “informs” his readers about “*the great contrast between Rabbinic Judaism and the New Covenant Faith*”. Brown points to the closing verses in Deuteronomy which speak of Moses unsurpassed greatness. He then contrasts the Christian reading of these verses with what he presents as the Rabbinical reading of these verses. Brown claims that in light of Jesus alleged miracles, Christians are entitled to believe that Jesus was greater than Moses. We will deal with this nonscriptural assertion shortly. For now we will move on to Brown’s presentation of the Rabbinic reading of these verses in Deuteronomy.

I quote; “*What does Rabbinic Judaism say about these verses in Deuteronomy 34? Remarkably, there is a saying that goes, “From Moses to Moses there was none like Moses” – referring to none other than Moses Maimonides...*”

I find this argument incredible. For starters, Maimonides himself, gave expression to one of the foundations of the Jewish faith by stating that Moses is the greatest prophet, greater than all who preceded him and greater than all who will follow him. No Jew ever believed that Maimonides was greater than or even equal in stature to Moses. The saying: “From Moses to Moses there arose none like Moses” was never presented as an interpretation of the passage in Deuteronomy, or of any other Scriptural passage for that matter. The saying originates from the period of mourning that followed the passing of Maimonides

as an exaggeration generated by the grief of the moment that was never meant in a literal sense, and until Brown put this saying in his book, was never understood in a literal sense. In “*great contrast*” to Judaism, Christianity completely fails to appreciate the greatness of Moses, and believes that Jesus was greater than him. Christianity’s failure to understand Moses’ stature is not a peripheral mistake. It is not simply a matter of misunderstanding these verses in Deuteronomy. It is a failure to understand the foundations of the faith structure of the Jewish Scriptures.

The faith of the Jewish Scriptures stands on one concept: honesty and credibility. The more credible the concept, the more weight it is given in the theology of Judaism.

All of the miracles of the exodus, the miracles of the wilderness, and the Sinai revelation established the credibility of the two foundational concepts in Judaism: that God is the only true power, and that Moses is His prophet. These miracles are so great because they are so credible, because they go so far in satisfying our sensitivity to truth, our sense of honesty. These were events that were collectively experienced. These events had a tremendous practical impact on the lives of two great nations.

The concept of credibility is the very thrust of these verses in Deuteronomy. The Scripture emphasize that the miracles that were performed through Moses impacted Pharaoh and ALL of his servants and ALL of his land. The Scripture emphasizes that the miracles were done to the eyes of ALL of Israel.

How could these miracles compare to the faith healings of Jesus that only impacted the lives of individuals, were only witnessed by individuals, and were only worked with people who already believed in him (Matthew 13:58)? When we consider the credibility of Jesus’ miracles and/or the lack thereof, Jesus doesn’t even remotely approach Joshua, let alone Moses.

Brown’s pointing to these verses in Deuteronomy as an example of Christianity’s faithfulness to the spirit of Scripture is the height of insolence. The fact that this is coming from a Jew who has been denied his rightful heritage, is heartbreaking.

#### IV. 36. *Objection 5.32*

*“Observance of the Sabbath has been the hallmark of the Jewish people, separating us from other nations and identifying us with the covenant of God. Since Christianity changed the Sabbath, Christianity is obviously not for the Jewish people.”*

Brown responds to this Jewish objection by pointing out that the gentile Church, who changed the day of rest from Saturday to Sunday, was not following Jesus. Jesus himself did not teach that the day of rest be changed. Brown therefore argues that one can believe in Jesus and still observe the Sabbath.

The question that Brown does not address is: Why did the later Church change the day of rest? Why did the gentile Church develop such a negative view of this covenantal sign? Is it merely a coincidence that those who deified a human chose to abandon the



commandment that serves as a reminder that everything, including Jesus, are but God's creations?

There is another message of the Sabbath that is antithetical to Christianity. The Sabbath serves as a testimony that God sanctifies Israel (Exodus 31:13). The Sabbath confirms that Israel was chosen by God to serve as His witness nation. Their role is to testify to the world that everything that exists is but a creation of God.

Christianity rejects this message of the Sabbath as well. Christianity denies Israel's role as God's witnesses. If they would have any respect for the message of the Sabbath they would pay heed to the witnesses that the Sabbath authenticates.

If a Jew accepts the doctrines of Christianity, he or she will have to turn their backs on the Sabbath. Yes, they can continue observing the Sabbath, but it will be a dead observance.

#### **IV. 37. Objection 5.33**

*"Jesus abolished the dietary laws."*

In the course of his response to this Jewish objection, Brown contends that *"no food can make you spiritually impure"*. God disagrees. The Jewish Bible makes it quite clear that certain forbidden foods DO have the power to defile a person (Leviticus 11:43,44, 20:25).

#### **IV. 38. Page 273**

Brown tells us that the Jewish disciples of Jesus generally did obey the dietary laws, but he adds the following modifying statement: *"However, because they understood the spiritual principles the Messiah was teaching, they would be willing to live in an environment where they ate nonkosher food in order to teach Gentiles about the One true God. Doesn't this seem right to you?"*

There are several problems with this statement. First of all, why would one have to eat nonkosher food in order to teach Gentiles? Second, if they preached the trinity, they were not teaching about the One true God. Third, why the appeal to the audience? As one who believes in the Bible, Brown should point to the Bible for moral guidance, and not to public opinion.

In any case, if this was the calculation of Jesus' Jewish disciples, they were wrong. Perhaps it was difficult for them to see their mistake 2000 years ago, but what amazes me is that Brown still doesn't see their mistake.

By putting their mission to encourage belief in Jesus above the Law of God, they effectively cut themselves off from the covenant community. In a few generations the Jewish disciples of Jesus disappeared as a distinct community. They brought no blessing to the Gentiles either. Christianity brought the Gentile world an intense hatred of the Jewish people and a corrupt theology, even according to Brown's understanding of the Bible. If the Gentile nations would not have encountered Jesus' disciples they would never have committed the crimes of the Crusades, the Inquisition or the holocaust

The moral of the story is that there can be no spiritual gain by violating God's Law.

#### **IV. 39. Page 282**

Brown quotes various rabbinical sources that seem to indicate that the commandments, specifically the dietary commandments, will not be relevant in the "age to come". Brown would have his readers believe that these rabbis believed that the dietary laws will be abolished in the Messianic age.

It is in place to note that the community that accepts these sources as authoritative do not understand these sources in the way that Brown is interpreting them. The rabbis understood that as long as we are on this physical earth, God's commandments are all relevant.

Furthermore, the Bible makes it clear that the commandments will be observed during the Messianic age (Deuteronomy 30:8, Ezekiel 37:24). Brown does not quote any Biblical source to support his contention (that the Law is abrogated in the Messianic era). Instead he points to the words of men who considered Brown's belief system to be idolatry. In the beginning of Volume 1 of this series Brown states that: *"The real question is: What do the Hebrew Scriptures teach?"* We encourage Dr. Brown to stick to the standard that he has set for himself.

#### **IV. 40. Objection 5.34**

*"If the death of Jesus really inaugurated the new covenant spoken of by Jeremiah the prophet, then why hasn't it been fulfilled?"*

Brown summarizes his response with the following words: *"In short, the new covenant was established two thousand years ago in incipient form and it continues to advance to its ultimate fulfillment."*

Brown bases his reasoning on the fact that a simple reading of Jeremiah (as well as some of the other prophecies in the Jewish Bible) would seem to indicate that the return from the Babylonian exile would usher in the ultimate Messianic era. Since this did not happen, Brown contends that there was a partial fulfillment with the return from Babylon while the full fulfillment is yet to come.

To quote Brown again: *"Jeremiah (much like Ezekiel) expected that the return of the exiles from Babylon would be so glorious that it would be followed by the transformation of the nation – through the inauguration of the new covenant (see also Ezekiel 36:24-32) and the reign of the Messiah – leading ultimately to the transformation of the world. Were Jeremiah and Ezekiel false prophets? God forbid! Rather, what they prophesied did happen only not in the expected measure or scope. In other words, in the same way that the return of the exiles did happen, but not in the expected measure or scope, and in the same way the prophesied rebuilding of the Temple did take place, but not with the expected glory (see esp. Ezekiel 40-48, and cf. vol.2, 3.17), in the very same way the Messiah did come and inaugurate the new covenant – just as was prophesied! – but not with the expected glory or scope."*

There are three critical flaws in Brown's interpretation of the new covenant spoken of by Jeremiah.

The first flaw is that the Scriptural problem that Brown addresses with his interpretation was already addressed in the book of Daniel (ch. 9). Daniel expected that all of the prophecies of comfort will come to fruition at the close of the Babylonian exile. God sent an angel to inform him that this was not to be. The nation will have to undergo a preliminary purging process of 490 years before the final purging process can begin. Only with the close of the 490 years, the destruction of the city and the Temple and a lengthy refining process will it be time for the final redemption (Daniel 9:24-27, 11:31-35, 12:1-3). Daniel uses the exact same phraseology that Jeremiah uses to introduce the new covenant prophecies to let us know that he is talking of the same end-time event (Daniel 12:1 – Jeremiah 30:7).

According to the simple reading of Scripture, any prophecies of comfort that are not explicitly associated with the return from the Babylonian exile, do not apply to that return, but rather to the future, final return, as explained in the book of Daniel.

The second flaw with Brown's interpretation is internal inconsistency. There are many features of the new covenant prophecies, and if we accept the interpretation that requires a partial fulfillment with the return of the Babylonian exile, we will realize that all of these were fulfilled soon after the return, and in direct relation to the return. Why then should we assume that the new covenant aspect of the prophecy is separated from the rest of the predictions by several centuries, and unrelated to the return in any way? How would this comfort those who returned from the exile?

For the record: The new covenant prophecy of Jeremiah 31 is also described in Deuteronomy 30:1-10, Jeremiah 3:14-18, 32:36-44, 33:1-26, Ezekiel 11:17-20, 34:20-31, 36:1-38, 37:15-28, (see also Hosea 2:16-22, Jeremiah 50:4,5).

Some of the central features of these prophecies are:

Return of the exiles – Jeremiah 31:7,22 – Deuteronomy 30:3, Jeremiah 3:14, 32:37, 33:7, Ezekiel 11:17, 34:13, 36:24, 37:21.

The planting of Israel in their land – Jeremiah 31:26 – 32:41, Ezekiel 34:29.

A great blessing of abundance – Jeremiah 31:11,24 – Deuteronomy 30:9, Jeremiah 33:9, Ezekiel 34:27, 36:35.

The joy of God in bestowing the blessing – Jeremiah 31:27 – Deuteronomy 30:9, Jeremiah 32:41.

Affirmation of the unique position of Israel as God's nation – Jeremiah 31:35 – Jeremiah 3:17, 32:38, Ezekiel 34:30, 36:28, 37:28,

Unity amongst the tribes of Israel – Jeremiah 31:30 – Jeremiah 32:39, 33:7, Ezekiel 34:23, 37:15-20.

The beauty and glory of Israel and her land – Jeremiah 33:9, Ezekiel 37:36.

Peace and security – Jeremiah 31:39 – Jeremiah 32:37, 33:6, Ezekiel 34:25, 37:26.

Israel's repentance – Jeremiah 31:18 – Deuteronomy 30:2, Jeremiah 3:14.

All of these are directly related to the return from Babylon (if we are to assume a partial fulfillment). So why should we assume that the new covenant stands as an unrelated event? The fact is that the Scripture itself describes a partial fulfillment of the new covenant at the time of the return from Babylon. In Haggai 2:5, God declares that His spirit stands in our midst (compare with Ezekiel 26:27). This declaration was proclaimed to the generation that returned from the Babylonian captivity, centuries before the inception of Christianity.

The Talmud relates that the urge to worship idols was purged from Israel during that generation. In fact, in the prophetic books (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Ezra, Nehemiah) that address the generation who returned from Babylon we find no criticism of Israel for worshipping idols. This stands in stark contrast to the generations which preceded the return from Babylon. Since the return from Babylon, idolatry has not been a Jewish vice. If there had to be a partial fulfillment of the new covenant with the return from Babylon, this would be the Scriptural explanation.

The third critical flaw with Brown's interpretation is that he turned the new covenant on its ear. The prophet describes the new covenant as something that is unique to the Jewish people. It will set them apart from other nations (Jeremiah 31:32 – and THEY shall be to Me for a nation). According to Brown, the new covenant joins the Gentiles with the Jewish people. The prophets describe the new covenant as a positive development in the history of Israel. Brown's version of the new covenant ushered in a period of darkness for Israel (in the sense of persecution), and for the Gentiles (in the sense of crooked theology, and the guilt of persecution). The prophets describe the new covenant as something that is impossible to disobey. Brown's version of the new covenant is easily disobeyed. (Those Christians who claim that followers of Jesus who leave the following: "never really believed", just reveal their own pettiness. While these followers were part of the following, no one identified any fault in their loyalty.) Finally, the prophets describe the new covenant as a time when it will no longer be necessary to teach the knowledge of God amongst the people of Israel. According to Brown, the new covenant launched the most intense missionary campaign that the world has ever seen.

A straightforward reading of the new covenant prophecies in context reveals that the advent of Christianity is the polar opposite of the new covenant promised by the Jewish prophets.

## Volume V

### V. 1. Introduction

In this fifth volume of his series, Brown attacks the authenticity of the oral traditions of the Jewish people. As in my critiques of Brown's previous volumes, each point begins with an excerpt from Brown's work and is followed by my criticism of his arguments. In this critique of his fifth volume I am forced to present my first criticism without any associated quotation from Brown's book. One of the most telling flaws in Brown's book is found not in what he wrote, but rather in what he omitted.

Before we begin this discussion, it would be worthwhile to understand what it is that we mean when we speak of the "oral traditions", or the "Oral Law". In this introduction I aim to present the concept of the oral traditions, the basic arguments that are used for authenticating these traditions, and the dearth of Brown's responses to these methods of authentication.

Judaism claims that it possesses an authentic understanding of the Biblical laws that goes beyond the words that are written in the Bible. According to Judaism, when God taught Moses each of the laws, He did not just recite to Moses the words that were subsequently recorded in the Bible. God presented Moses with the complete spiritual concept of each one of the Biblical laws.

When Moses taught the people, he too, did not limit his teaching to the recitation of words. Moses gave over the understanding that he was granted by God pertaining to each of the commandments. When the Jewish people passed the Law on to their children, they did not limit the communication to the recital of words or to the delivery of a book. The children absorb how their parents live the Law, how their parents sense the Law and the spiritual concepts that stand behind each of the laws.

The Jewish people accept the Law of Moses together with the understanding that they received from the Jews who walked before them. Judaism recognizes that not every concept that their parents teach them originates with Moses. Many customs and practices accumulated over the generations and the Jewish people keep record of the origin of each practice and custom. But the core spiritual concept that stands behind each of the commandments goes back to Moses.

There are seven basic lines of reasoning through which we can establish the veracity of the Oral Law. (Six of these apply to the Law in general and one pertains specifically to the law prohibiting idolatry.) I present here a summary of these seven lines of reasoning, and of Brown's responses or non-responses to each of these arguments.

# 1 – The first line of reasoning through which we can establish the authenticity of the Oral Law is the same line of reasoning that we use to establish the authenticity of the Jewish Scriptures. Both Jews and Christians agree that the Jewish Scriptures were provided by God to give guidance to His people. It follows therefore, that God would put in place some method of validation through which subsequent generations can be

confident that these books are truly His word.

The method of validation that God utilized in order to ratify His word throughout history is the living testimony of the Jewish people. The process is briefly described in the opening phrases of Psalm 78. “That which we have heard and know and our fathers have told us. We shall not withhold from their sons, recounting unto the final generation the praises of the Lord, His might, and His wonders that He has wrought. He established a testimony in Jacob and set down a Torah (- teaching/guidance) in Israel, which He commanded our fathers to make known to their sons. So that the final generation may know; children yet to be born will arise and tell their own children, so that they may place their trust in God, and not forget the works of God, and they will safeguard His commandments” (Psalm 78:3-7).

The method that God used to confirm His Law to the final generation is the living testimony of His chosen witness nation. These witnesses ratify both the Written Torah and the Oral Law. If we cannot trust the witness for one, we cannot trust the same witness for the other.

This argument touches upon the very foundation of Biblical faith. I plan to clarify and to amplify the full scope of this argument below (point # 16). It is interesting to note that this argument, which is the oldest recorded line of reasoning ever used to affirm the authenticity of the Oral Law, is not addressed by Brown in the main body of his book. Brown devotes a one-paragraph endnote (# 131) in an attempt to counter this argument. We will address his comment below (point # 16).

# 2 – The second line of reasoning through which we can establish the veracity of the Oral Law is closely related to the first argument. This line of reasoning focuses on the testimonial observances.

The Bible clearly tells us that God designated various testimonial observances as a means to preserve His truth amongst the Jewish people. The living observances of circumcision, Passover, redemption of the firstborn, the Sabbath, and Tabernacles were all appointed by God as a means of passing various truths from one generation to the next (Genesis 17:11-13, Exodus 12:25-27, 13:8, 11-16, 31:12-17, Leviticus 23:42-43, Deuteronomy 16:3). These observances play a vital role in the preservation of God’s truth amongst His people. The miraculous events of the exodus and Israel’s subsequent sojourn through the wilderness served as the hammer-blows through which God formed this nation for Himself (1Samuel 12:22, 2Samuel 7:24, Isaiah 43:21, 44:21, 1Chronicles 17:21). Scripture attests to the foundational nature of the exodus events by repeatedly making reference to the exodus in the most central settings (Exodus 20:2, 29:46, Leviticus 11:45, 22:33, 25:38, Deuteronomy 6:21, 8:14, 29:1-8, Joshua 24:17, Judges 2:12, 2Samuel 7:23, 2Kings 17:7, Jeremiah 2:6, Hosea 13:4, Micah 6:4, Psalm 81:11). And Scripture explicitly points to the testimonial observances as the means through which the impression of this pivotal event is to be preserved.

Circumcision and the Sabbath are the witnesses that God appointed to teach the future generations of the irrevocable nature of God's covenant with Israel. The Sabbath was designated by God to ensure that every generation of Jews will know the sanctity that God grants Israel (Exodus 31:13). The election of Israel (1Samuel 12:22, 2Samuel 7:24, Isaiah 43:21, 44:21, 1Chronicles 17:21) and God's sanctification of Israel (Exodus 19:6, Leviticus 11:45, 20:26, Deuteronomy 7:6, 26:19, Jeremiah 2:3, Ezekiel 37:28) are central components of the theology of Scripture. God recognized that the full impact of these critical truths cannot be preserved solely through the written word. God designed the testimonial commandments so that each generation of Jews could learn to appreciate the significance of Israel's election and her sanctification by God.

The Biblical texts that describe the testimonial observances make clear that God expected the latter generations of Jews to look at the living observances of their parents, and see in them a repository of God's holy truth. These texts make clear that God recognized that the written word alone is not a sufficient means of preserving the full impact of His truth without being enhanced by the living observances.

Brown does not address these testimonial observances in his work.

# 3 – The third line of reasoning through which we can establish the veracity of the Oral Law focuses on God's preservation of Rabbinic Judaism. The Bible makes it clear that God planned to preserve His people to the end of history. It is also clear from the Bible that God planned to preserve the Law of Moses so that every generation of Jews will be able to observe it (Deuteronomy 30:2, Malachi 3:22). Throughout the history of the Jewish people, various factions of Jews have advocated different approaches to the Law of Moses. The Sadducees had their method of observing the Law, the Essenes insisted on their own discipline, the Nazarenes and the Sabbateans each presented their own variations of implementing the Law. But God did not see fit to preserve the practices of these sectarian groups. The only approach to the Law that has any claim for historical continuity is the approach of the Pharisees; those who followed the Oral Law. The one system of practicing and applying the Law of Moses that God preserved is the system that approaches the Written Torah through the understanding of the Oral Law.

This argument is underscored when we focus on the Sabbath. God declares that the observance of Sabbath stands as an eternal sign of the divine sanctification of the Jewish people (Exodus 31:12-17). Throughout the annals of Jewish history there have been various approaches to observance of the Sabbath. But the only observance that could claim historical continuity since the times of Moses is the observance of Rabbinic Judaism. It is through the rabbinic observance of the Sabbath that God's covenantal sign is preserved.

The miracle of Judaism's survival can only be attributed to the power of God's promise. God told us that His spirit is amongst us (Haggai 2:5), and that it will never depart (Isaiah 59:21). God promised that He will be our sanctuary in this bitter exile (Ezekiel 11:16), and that His Sabbath will stand as an eternal testimony to the sanctification that He continuously grants His people (Exodus 31:13). It is clear that the survival of Rabbinic

Judaism is an expression of God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Brown does not begin to address this line of reasoning in his book. He speaks of the preservation of the Jewish people (see below point # 60), but he fails to speak of the continuous observance of the Sabbath, and of the last generation's ability to observe the Law.

# 4 – The fourth line of reasoning through which we can establish the veracity of the Oral Law points to the complexity of the Law. The five books of Moses present a law that is quite complicated. This Law is to be observed by a nation in unanimity. Judges, priests and arbitrators of the Law are to administrate and apply this complex law system for a diverse nation. This Law is to be observed throughout the annals of Jewish history in whichever far-flung locale that Jewish people find themselves. There is no way that this could happen with any semblance of coordination if there is no recognized, authoritative interpretation of the Law.

If the only authority is the written word, as Brown posits, then any individual or any group of individuals can offer their own interpretation of the Law. How could the judges prosecute a Sabbath violator on the basis of the written word alone? The accused could always offer his own interpretation of the Law which would render him or her innocent. Whose interpretation of the Law would be binding on such a large community of people? The history of the Protestant Church serves to illustrate this point. No one accused Martin Luther of being stupid and no one accused him of a lack of belief in the principle; "sola scriptura" – Scripture alone. Yet today many Protestants recognize that Luther was not reading "Scripture alone" and that he was heavily influenced by his own Catholic background. It did not occur to Luther to question the replacement theology that was accepted at the time, yet today many Protestants recognize that this teaching is not rooted in Scripture.

It is obvious that different people, from different cultural and religious environments will read the same book and see different messages. How then can we be confident that any given understanding of Scripture is more valid than another? The principle "sola scriptura" opens the door for a inundation of interpretations. This may be harmless in the realm of abstract study, but in a situation of a nation trying to unanimously live by the laws presented in Scripture, this is not an option.

When God presented the Law to Israel, it was immediately applied to the life of that society. That society recognized that the judges and arbitrators of the Law (over 60,000 of them – Exodus 18:21) possessed an understanding of the Law that was binding on everyone. There was a system of living arbitrators who carried in their hearts and minds an authoritative understanding of the practical application of the Law. And there is no way that the Law could be observed as a nation without a binding authoritative understanding of the Law.



Brown touches up on this argument in Objection 6.3, but he does not acknowledge the full weight of the question nor does he supply an answer. (See points # 36-40)

# 5 – The fifth line of reasoning through which we can verify the authenticity of the Oral Law focuses on the concept of a target audience.

The purpose of communication is to transport the thoughts of the communicator over to his or her intended audience. A wise communicator will determine the means of communication that he or she will use according to the abilities and the mind-set of the audience he or she is trying to influence. The choice of words exercised by the communicator will be calibrated according to the particular understanding of the target audience. In order to properly understand a given communication one must first determine to whom it is that the communicator is directing his or her words.

The communication we are discussing here is the Jewish Bible. Who is God's target audience? To whom is God addressing these words?

In order to begin to comprehend scripture, one must have a working knowledge of the language of Scripture. We must appreciate that language is more than a collection of words. Language in general, and the language of Scripture in particular, will take an abstract and intangible concept and express it in a single word. A necessary prerequisite to comprehension of scripture is the understanding of concepts such as: God, Israel, holiness, prayer, commandment, Temple, law, prophecy, and much more. We all acquire our perception of these concepts through interaction with fellow man. The man or woman who will read scripture without previously possessing an understanding of these concepts, has yet to be born.

Each individual society has its own perspective, and its distinct understanding of the concepts; God, holiness, law and prophecy. These words have one meaning for the Jew, another meaning for the Christian, and yet a different connotation for the Moslem. Each society will read scripture using their own particular dictionary. So the question remains; who is God's target audience?

There are three different methods that can be utilized to determine the intended audience of a written communication. The document may explicitly specify the intended recipient by name. Alternatively the document may implicitly identify the one to whom the writer directs his words. And finally, the agent that the writer entrusted with the delivery of his message may tell us to whom it is that he was appointed to deliver the message.

In the case of the Jewish Scriptures we can employ all of the three possible methods in order to discover the intended audience of Jewish Scripture. Psalm 147:19,20 explicitly tell us that God imparted His words to Israel, to the exclusion of every other national entity. The Scriptures implicitly identify Israel as the object of her words. The word "you" as it is used in the Jewish Scriptures almost always refers to the nation of Israel. The agent designated by God to deliver this book is none other than the people of Israel. They affirm the basic truth, that the book of the Jewish Scriptures is intended for the national entity

of Israel.

God presented the Jewish Scriptures to the Jewish society. In these books God directly addresses the Jewish nation. All others who read this holy book must bear this simple fact in mind. Any non-Jew reading the Jewish Scriptures is reading a record of God's directives to the Jewish nation. The only dictionary to be used when reading this book is that of the society to whom the book is addressed - the Jewish people. The true language of Scripture is the language of the Jewish people. When Scripture says the word "God", it is referring to the Jewish concept of God. When Scripture makes reference to concepts such as holiness, Temple, prayer, or Sabbath, these abstract ideas must be understood in a Jewish context. The Scriptures are directed at the Jewish people; it was obviously written in their language.

The Oral Law preserves the only true context of Scripture. According to those who reject the Oral Law, the Jew and the Gentile are equally authorized to apply their interpretations of the Law. In light of God's declaration in Deuteronomy 33:4 this cannot be. This line of reasoning did not merit Brown's attention.

# 6 – The sixth line of reasoning through which we can establish the veracity of the Oral Law is through some basic historical research.

The Scriptures testify that the Jewish people had a coherent and unified spiritual leadership in the early years of the Second Temple. Ezra, who was a recognized leader of the Babylonian Jewish community, was granted the power to enforce and to promulgate the teachings of Judaism under the rule of the Persian kings (Ezra 7:25,26). Ezra, Haggai, Zechariah and Nehemiah worked together to establish the spiritual roots of the community in the Land of Israel (Ezra 5:1, Nehemiah 10:30). It is only under a unified leadership commanding widespread respect that the establishment of a new holiday could take root amongst the Jewish community that was scattered throughout the Persian empire (Esther 9:27,28 - compare 2Chronicles 30:10).

Anyone who accepts the validity of the Jewish Scriptures must accept that the spiritual leadership of the Jewish people in the beginning of the Second Temple era possessed the authentic understanding of the Law of Moses. The only question that can be asked is; which of the later Second Temple communities are the true heirs of Ezra and Nehemiah? Was it the Pharisees, the Sadducees, or the Essenes? Only one of these groups could be the true inheritor of Ezra and Nehemiah while the other two must be schismatics, who broke off from the main body of the nation.

We have learned from the Scriptures that in the early days of the Second Temple, the Jewish people possessed a unified spiritual leadership. This leadership was respected throughout the far reaches of the diaspora. This is only possible if these scattered communities shared a common understanding of the Law. They must have possessed a strong network of coordinated leadership that held sway throughout the provinces of the Persian Empire and beyond.

The historical records of the later Second Temple era reveal that the Sadducee and the Essene communities were limited to the Land of Israel. There is no record of any Sadducee or Essene presence in Babylon or Rome, both of which possessed large Jewish communities. There is nothing to indicate that the Sadducees or Essenes possessed anything that resembled a network of leadership with international influence. The Pharisees on the other hand possessed a highly coordinated network of leadership that was respected throughout the entire Roman Empire and beyond.

The Pharisees relied on this network of leadership to apply their calendric decisions. The calendar of the Pharisees was based on monthly and yearly decisions of the central body of leadership. The respect that this body of leadership commanded enabled the international Jewish communities to celebrate the Biblical holidays in unison. The respect commanded by the central Pharisaic body of leadership was not limited to the Jewish community. A large number of Pre-Nicean Christians also followed the calendric decisions of the spiritual leadership of the Pharisees. This phenomenon was so widespread in the Christian world that the Nicean council found it necessary to prohibit this practice.

There can be no question that the Pharisees were the true heirs of Ezra. The far-reaching extent of Pharisee influence can only be understood if we accept that the common root of all the scattered Jewish communities was Pharisaic. The Sadducees and the Essenes were obviously newcomers to the scene who only impacted the immediate area in which they originated.

This line of reasoning is also not addressed by Brown in his book.

# 7 – The seventh line of reasoning relates to the prohibition against idolatry.

As a general rule, the argument about the authenticity of the traditions of Judaism is not very relevant to the debate between Judaism and Christianity. It is not necessary to believe in the traditions in order to reject the doctrines of the Church. The Bible itself provides more than enough evidence to refute the claims of Christianity. Historically, Jews who rejected the traditions of their fathers, (known as Karaites), were amongst the most vociferous opponents to Christianity. Conversely, there are Christians who accept the authenticity of many of the traditions and still believe in Jesus. It is clear that the traditions are not a central factor in the debate between Judaism and Christianity.

There is however one exception to this rule, and that is the tradition that defines the prohibition against idolatry. This tradition has been the central focus in the debate between Judaism and Christianity for the past 2000 years. When Jews chose death over Christianity, and tens of thousands made this choice, it was because they accepted the Jewish definition of the prohibition against idolatry. Amazingly, Brown never addresses this particular tradition in this book! The one detail of the traditions that plays such a critical role in the debate between Judaism and Christianity is not mentioned in this volume that purports to defend the Church against Jewish objections to Christianity that are based on the traditions!

This is all the more surprising in light of a communication that took place between Dr. Brown and myself ten years ago.

I presented the following challenge to Brown in August of 2001. (At that point in time, his projection for this series was that it would only contain three volumes, and it was the third volume that would include his arguments against the traditions, hence the reference to the third volume as opposed to the fifth.)

*I will present you with a challenge. You are presently preparing the third volume of your book for publication. I did not see it, but I can tell you what it does not contain. I will list three objections to the Christian belief system which you were not planning to mention. Two of these objections lie at the heart of the Jewish resistance to any belief system aside from their own. Here they are.*

*1) The medium through which we learned that scripture is authentic is the testimony of our parents. These same people testified to us that there is a body of unwritten Mosaic law which is crucial in understanding how God wants us to live. If they lied about these unwritten traditions then why should we believe their testimony about scripture. (The Ibn Ezra articulates this argument in several places)*

*2) The one item which the Torah itself is most explicit and clear that we are to follow the testimony of our fathers, is the issue of “who are we to worship”. Scripture tells the witnesses of Sinai, “you should make it known to your children and children’s children”. It is obvious that God considered this a valid medium of transmitting information, that is the chain of parent to child. Once God explicitly designated a medium of transmitting information, we can be sure that He will ensure its preservation. Until today Jews testify that God revealed Himself at Sinai as an absolute unity. All those who deviated from this tradition never claimed that with their worship they follow a tradition which goes back to Sinai. (This is the main point of the Jewish insistence on clinging to their belief system)*

*3) An honest reading of the NT will reveal that Jesus and his followers believed in, and observed the unwritten traditions which the Jews accepted as God-given. (I hope to substantiate this at length later in this letter)*

At the time, Brown responded by accepting the challenge and assuring me that he will address these arguments in his upcoming volume. But he did not. He devotes one paragraph, in an end-note (#131) to the first objection (- see our response below in point #16). He touches upon one limited aspect of the third of the three Jewish objections in the main body of the book (6.15 – see our response in point #69), but he completely ignored the second objection.

## **V. 2. Page x of the Preface**

Brown explains to his readers why it is that he found the need to include an attack on the Oral traditions of Israel in this series that is meant to defend Christianity. He presents a three point answer to this question. I quote: “As Jewish believers in Jesus, we are

*frequently told by traditional Jewish Rabbis that they alone have the true interpretation of the Scriptures, one that was passed on from generation to generation all the way back to Sinai. Our interpretation of the Biblical text, we are therefore told, is invalid.”*

The second reason why Brown found it necessary to focus on the Jewish traditions is because: *“We are also told that our forefathers, who were the transmitters of this tradition, rejected Jesus as the Messiah and so we have no business differing with their verdict.”*

Finally Brown argues: *“And we are told that without this chain of tradition, it would have been impossible for our ancestors to understand or follow the Torah, offering a further (alleged) proof that we cannot possibly claim to be faithful to God and His Law without accepting this tradition.”*

These three reasons bring more questions to mind than the answer they are supposed to provide. As a “traditional Jewish Rabbi” I do not find it necessary to invalidate the Christian interpretations of Scripture on the basis of the traditions. The Scriptures themselves, independent of any traditions, invalidate the Christian interpretations. Even if I would want to resort to the traditions, it would be difficult for me to do so in an argument with a Christian. The traditions are generally limited to matters of Law. The argument between Judaism and Christianity does not focus on the legal aspects of the Bible. There is no particular tradition on the correct interpretation of most of the passages that have been the center of the debate for the past 2000 years. Being that these passages do not affect the practical day to day life of the nation, very few authoritative traditions have been preserved concerning these Biblical texts. To highlight the irrelevance of a discussion about the traditions to the debate between Judaism and Christianity, I will point to the fact that there are some Christians who believe in the validity of the traditions. These Christians recognize that Jesus himself accepted the Pharisaic interpretation of the Law of Moses in his own practical observance of the Law and they try to walk in his footsteps.

However, there is one critical area in which there is a direct conflict between the traditions of Judaism and Christianity, and that is in the area of idolatry. This is the one practical legal issue which brings Judaism into conflict with Christianity. Here too, the Bible itself, independent of the traditions, is clearly on the side of Judaism. But one of the methods that the Bible utilizes to communicate God’s truth is by pointing to the living tradition of the Jewish people. This is the one area where the Bible explicitly refers to extra-Scriptural revelation as an authoritative source from where the Jewish people can find the truth. In the book of Deuteronomy (4:32-35) Moses reminds us about the miracles of the exodus and about the Sinai revelation. Moses tells us that these served as a lesson, unparalleled in the history of mankind, teaching us about the absolute sovereignty of God. Earlier on in that same chapter Moses tells us how this lesson will be preserved for the future generations. He tells us that we will teach it to our children and children’s children (4:9). He speaks of a chain of living teachers; not of the handing over of a book. When it comes to the issue of idolatry, the Bible explicitly points us towards our national heritage. And it is precisely in this area that all Trinitarian Christians reject the national traditions of the Jewish people.

The first reason that Brown presented as the motivation for this volume is that traditional Jewish Rabbis point to the traditions to invalidate the Christian interpretation of Scripture. The one area where this reason is actually relevant, the area of idolatry, is not addressed by Brown in this lengthy book.

The second reason that Brown offers as a purpose for writing this volume is also not addressed in this book. Brown tells us of the Jewish argument which charges that the transmitters of the tradition rejected Jesus, so we have no business differing from their verdict. Brown does not directly address this Jewish argument in this volume, but perhaps he feels that if the traditions are invalid (as he proposes), then there is no need to refute this argument.

But the fact of the matter is that Brown does not share with his readers the full weight of this argument. The books of Scripture are only accepted by the Jewish people because the bearers of the traditions accepted their respective claims to prophecy. Had the bearers of the traditions rejected their claims to prophecy and Divine inspiration, we would not have the books of Scripture today. If, as Brown argues, that the traditions and her bearers carry no spiritual weight then why should we accept their Scriptural canon? Accepting the Jewish Scriptural canon and accepting Jesus is a contradiction in terms. The same spiritual authority that canonized the Jewish Bible rejected Jesus. Either these people were authorized by God to render these spiritual decisions or they were not. You cannot have it both ways.

When we consider Brown's third motivation for this volume; the Jewish argument that contends that it is impossible to observe the Law without the traditions, we are also confronted with some obvious questions. For someone like Brown, who does not observe the Law, why is this a relevant argument? And when it comes to the Law that prohibits idolatry, how indeed could you manage without the traditions? If we put the Jewish traditions aside and accept the Christian arguments that justify devotion to Jesus, then the prohibition becomes meaningless. Where does it stop? If there could be a trinity, then why can there not be any multiplicity of deities? What prevents any idolater from claiming that his or her object of devotion is "one and the same" with the God of the Jewish Bible? So if these are not Brown's motives for the writing of his book, what are his motives? As a human being it is not for me to judge what goes on in another person's heart. There is no way I can know Brown's motives for writing this book.

As one who is active in the counter-missionary field I can say what advantage is gained by the Christian missionary campaign from the publication of this book. I am not saying that these are Brown's motives for writing the book. As I said, only God can judge a person's heart. I am simply presenting the possible effects such a book could have on the ongoing battle for the Jewish soul.

Throughout Church history, Christendom has contrasted its own doctrine up and against the Law of Moses. The traditional claim put forward by the Church has been that the Law of Moses is imperfect and impossible and that it has been replaced by the doctrines of Christianity. From a 21<sup>st</sup> century perspective, this Christian claim is laughable. The doctrines of the Church have spawned 2000 years of deep hatred against the Jewish

people, countless intra-Christian wars, and so many more crimes against humanity. Many Christians in the modern era, including Dr. Brown, look back at the blood-soaked pages of Church history, and declare: “Those weren’t real Christians”. So for centuries upon centuries, despite the spread of Christianity, there were few if any “real Christians”. Judaism, however, has for these same 2000 years remained a beacon of moral truth for its own adherents and for the world despite facing every disadvantage that Christendom threw in their way. Discrediting Judaism’s moral leaders, and discrediting Judaism’s observance of the Law of Moses benefits the Christian missionary campaign in much the same way that an empty political campaign gains from speaking ill of its opponent.

Another benefit gained by the Christian missionary campaign by a book that discredits Israel’s observance of the Law is that it discredits the competition. Many Jews that have strayed far from the roots of Judaism are searching for spiritual truth. This segment of society is the primary target audience of the Christian missionary. These Jews, who have no prior understanding of their own glorious heritage, are often swayed by the arguments of the missionary. At the same time, there is a resurgence of traditional Judaism and a reconnecting to Jewish roots taking place amongst this same segment of society. By discrediting traditional Judaism, the Christian missionary campaign benefits in much the same way that a business benefits by discrediting its chief competitor.

Finally, we come to the issue of “son-ship”. The entire debate between Judaism and Christianity boils down to the question: “Who is the real son of God?”. According to Christianity, it is Jesus who is the real son of God, while according to the Jewish Bible it is the people of Israel who are the real son of God. One of the key features of being God’s son is the fact that the Jewish Scriptures as a whole are to be read as a personal letter from the Divine Father to His only son. By discrediting the oral traditions of Judaism, the Christian missionary campaign proposes that the people of Israel have no advantage over anyone else in reading the Jewish Scriptures. By discrediting the oral traditions of Judaism, the Christian missionary makes the Jew equal to the Gentile when it comes to understanding God’s directive; the Jewish Scripture. This is an effort to annul the clear Scriptural statements in Deuteronomy 33:4 and Psalm 147:19 which clearly declare that the Scriptures are the inheritance of the Jew. The Christian missionary campaign is highly motivated to reject Israel’s claim to being God’s firstborn son (Exodus 4:22, Jeremiah 31:8), and even when they pay lip-service to the concept, they would like to eviscerate it from all meaning. By discrediting the oral traditions of Judaism, the Christian missionary campaign denies Israel’s legitimate claim to “son-ship” of God.

To reiterate, I am not saying that these are Brown’s motives for writing this book. What I am saying is that Christian missionaries throughout the world will applaud this book because of these three reasons.

### **V. 3. Page xi**

Brown talks of his intense discussions with rabbis. He tells us that these interactions have only served to strengthen his faith in Jesus. The critique that you are presently reading contains many of the arguments that I presented to him in my correspondence with him (which consists of more than 300 pages of e-mail interaction). Brown did not respond to

these arguments in the course of our correspondence or in any of his subsequent writings. A large part of our interaction focused on the Oral Law, the subject of this fifth volume. I published a lengthy article, entitled “The Council of My Nation” (available at [yourphariseefriend.wordpress.com](https://yourphariseefriend.wordpress.com) ) incorporating many of my responses to Brown’s arguments against the validity of the Oral Law. This paper was posted before Brown’s fifth volume was printed, and the reasoning I present in the paper was in Brown’s possession years before volume 5 went to print. (Brown actually quotes from this article in end-note #22.) If our interaction truly encourages faith in Jesus, as Brown insists, then why does he not respond to my arguments?

“The Council of My Nation” is not the only article of mine that Brown is disregarding. By the time this volume (5) went to print, my article; “Contra-Brown” had already been publicized. I have since written several other critiques of his work, many of which can be found on my blog: <https://yourphariseefriend.wordpress.com>. I encourage the reader to study these critiques and see for themselves if my interaction with Dr. Brown encourages faith in Jesus.

#### **V. 4. *Objection 6.1***

Here Brown argues that the Jewish claim for an Oral Tradition going back to Moses is a myth. We will address this accusation head-on in the following sections. At this point I would like to bring to light that the same accusation that Brown brings against Judaism is relevant to Christianity, except that the accusation against Christianity comes with all of the evidence necessary to support it. When we contrast the respective accusations; the Christian accusation against Judaism, and the Jewish accusation against Christianity, it becomes clear who is innocent and who is guilty.

I enclose here the last section of my booklet; “You Are My Witnesses” published in January of 2000. The booklet is available through Jews for Judaism. For further information on this subject, I refer the reader to point #11 of my critique of Brown’s volume 4, available at <https://yourphariseefriend.wordpress.com>.

#### **THE TESTIMONY OF CHRISTIANITY**

The formational era of the Christian belief system, was the time that Jesus revealed his teachings to his disciples. The fact that the disciples understood that Jesus fulfilled certain prophecies of the Jewish scriptures, and the miracles that Jesus allegedly performed, established his credibility in the eyes of his followers. Once his credibility was established, his disciples accepted his teachings. The entire Christian belief system should be contained within the teachings of Jesus.



Judaism rejects the Christian belief system at its foundation. According to the Jewish belief system, the disciples of Jesus were mistaken. Christianity claims that Jesus taught that he is god. The disciples should never have accepted this claim. Both, the national testimony of the Jewish people, and the human conscience, equate worship of a human being with idolatry. All the miracles that the disciples believed that Jesus performed, and all the prophecies that the disciples thought that Jesus fulfilled, cannot justify idolatry. Judaism does not recognize the authority of the founders of Christianity, to establish the type of belief system which is credited to them.

The formational era of the Jewish belief system, was the time that the Jewish nation were in the desert, on their way from Egypt to the land of Israel. The national revelation at Sinai, and the teachings of Moses, form the basis of the Jewish belief system. Christianity recognizes the authority of the founders of Judaism. Christianity acknowledges that whatever God revealed to the Jewish nation, and that whatever Moses taught, is absolutely true. Christianity does not reject Judaism at its foundation. Christianity rejects Judaism, because it questions the integrity of the transmission of the Jewish belief system. Christianity accuses Judaism of distorting the original teachings of their founders. Christianity makes this accusation despite the fact that;

a) it was God Himself who established the method through which the Jewish belief system should be transmitted to all generations,

b) from its inception, the Jewish belief system was in the hands of a nation,

c) there is only one belief system which claims a direct line of tradition which goes back to Moses,

d) the Christian accusation is self-contradictory, (Christianity accepts the Jewish scriptures, while rejecting the testimony of the Jewish nation which is the only basis for accepting the veracity of the Jewish scriptures)

e) the scriptural evidence presented to substantiate this accusation is practically, nonexistent,

f) there is no historical evidence to substantiate the accusation. (there is no point in Jewish history which Christians can point to and say “here is where the Jewish method of transmission went wrong”)

In spite of all this, Christianity places its full faith in this accusation. If this accusation is false, and the Jewish nation truly managed to preserve the original message of their founders, then Christianity is the greatest fraud perpetrated upon mankind. Christianity admits to this. Still, they are fully confident that Judaism is a distortion of the teachings of its original founders.

We will now turn our focus upon the Christian method of transmission. Which method does Christianity rely on, in order to transmit its message throughout the ages? How does Christianity attempt to preserve the original teachings of Jesus? The Evangelical Christian will answer these questions by pointing to the books of the Christian scriptures. According to Evangelical Christianity, these books should have accurately preserved the message of the founders of Christianity. We will note that;

a) Jesus, the god of Christianity did not write any of these books. Neither did he specify that any of these books be written. In fact Jesus did not authorize anyone to teach in his name except for his immediate disciples. Jesus expected to return in the lifetime of his immediate disciples, so he saw no necessity in establishing a chain of tradition.

b) The entire Christian tradition is founded upon the testimony of individuals.

c) There were many groups in the early years of Christianity, each claiming a direct tradition which goes back to the disciples of Jesus. Each of these groups had a distinctly different belief system. Some of these groups had their own version of the Christian scriptures.

In spite of all this, Evangelical Christianity places its full faith in these books of Christian scripture. Evangelical Christianity is totally confident that these books represent the original teachings of Jesus.

An unbiased reading of the Christian scriptures will reveal that this confidence is misplaced. Not only do the Christian scriptures reveal that Jesus did not teach Evangelical Christianity, but these books provide the historical evidence necessary to substantiate the accusation that the Church distorted the original teachings of Jesus.

In order to make this accusation against Christianity, it is not necessary to grant that the Christian scriptures are anything more than the words of men. We recognize that the Christian scriptures were written in the later half of the first century of the common era. These books were written by men who believed a certain way, and we expect these books to reflect their beliefs. We do not read these books in order to discover any truth. We can only hope to gain an understanding as to how the writers of these books viewed the world. And more importantly, we will discover how these writers wanted the world to view them.

The authors of the Christian scriptures describe the development of the early church in the following manner. Jesus was a Jewish man, who lived in the land of Israel. When he was about thirty years old, he began to travel throughout the country. For about three years, Jesus traveled and taught. By the time Jesus died, he had created a small following. All of his followers were Jews. Prominent among Jesus's followers were his twelve disciples. These disciples formed a community with its center in Jerusalem. The community of Jesus's followers were lead by James, a brother of Jesus. This community is referred to as the "JerusalemChurch". In the years following Jesus's death, the

Jerusalem Church grew in size. At one point, the authors of Christian scriptures claim that they numbered several thousand. But the members of this church were all Jews.

Christianity reached the non-Jewish world through the person of Paul. Paul traveled the length and breadth of the Mediterranean, teaching the gentile world about Jesus. Paul founded many churches throughout the Roman Empire. The churches which Paul established were predominantly gentile.

The Christian scriptures end their narrative at this point. They leave the reader at the historical point where there are two churches; the Jewish church of James, and the gentile church of Paul.

History tells us that the Jewish church of James did not survive as a separate entity. By the time Christianity became the established religion of the Roman Empire, there were almost no Jewish Christians left. The few Jewish Christians which still existed, were persecuted as heretics, by the gentile church. All of Christianity as it exists today, was transmitted through the body of the gentile church. The books of Christian scripture were products of the gentile church. They may have included in these books, material which came from the Jewish Christians. But the gentile church was the editor of this material. It was the gentile church who determined the contents of the Christian scriptures, and who transmitted these texts to the future generations.

In order to be convinced that the gentile church is truly transmitting the original message of Jesus, one must determine that Paul's teachings conformed with the teachings of Jesus. The gentile church only learned of Jesus through the teachings of Paul. If Paul's teachings were not synonymous with the teachings of Jesus, then the gentile church does not possess the original message of Jesus.

To determine Paul's connection to Jesus, we will turn to the books of Christian scripture. It is clear that the editors of these books were strongly motivated to present Paul as one who is faithfully transmitting the original message of Jesus. Yet even these biased writers, were not able to do so.

The Christian scriptures describe the basis of Paul's mission in the following manner. Paul never saw Jesus in real life. Neither did Paul learn of Jesus's teachings through the disciples of Jesus. Paul emphatically states (in the 1st and 2nd chapters of Galatians) that no living person was involved in transmitting Jesus's message to him. Paul only learned of the teachings of Jesus through a series of visions. In these visions, Jesus appeared to him and imparted his teachings. Paul's entire message was the product of these visions.

The only way we can verify the truth of Paul's claim, is by determining the reaction of Jesus's disciples to Paul's message. These men who lived with Jesus and heard him teach, could compare the teachings that they heard, to the prophecy of Paul. How did the Jewish following of James react to Paul's claim to prophecy?

Paul makes the claim (Galatians 2:9) that the leaders of the Jerusalem Church acknowledged the fact that he was appointed (by the dead Jesus) as a messenger to the gentiles. But Paul was lying. James and the Jerusalem Church never acknowledged the validity of Paul's visions. It is the Christian scriptures themselves who contradict Paul's claim.

The 15th chapter of the book of Acts, describes how the leadership of the Jerusalem Church disregarded Paul's claim to prophecy. Paul had come to Jerusalem. He had been preaching to gentiles that they are not required to practice the law of Moses. Some members of the Jerusalem Church disagreed with Paul. They felt that in order for a gentile to join their following, he should be required to keep the law of Moses. This question was brought before the leadership of the Jerusalem Church. The elders of the church discussed the question, and James handed down his decision. His judgement was that gentiles are not obligated to observe the entirety of the law of Moses as a prerequisite to joining the Christian community. But he stipulated that the gentiles were obligated to observe certain dietary laws, and to avoid immorality.

If Paul was telling us the truth when he claimed that the leadership of the Jerusalem Church acknowledged him as a true prophet, then this story makes no sense. Here we have Paul, who was personally appointed by the dead Jesus as his emissary to the gentile world. Whatever Paul taught was personally revealed to him in these prophetic visions. One of the central teachings of Paul was that the gentile world is not bound by the law of Moses. Yet when the leaders of the Jerusalem Church are in doubt as to what Jesus would have said concerning the gentiles, they discuss the question, and look to James for guidance. If, there was any truth to Paul's claim, that these leaders acknowledged the truth of his prophecy, then they should have simply asked him "what did Jesus tell you?" The fact that they considered the question, and the method that they used to resolve the question, clearly tells us that these men did not believe that Jesus had ever spoken to Paul. The author of the book of Acts, his bias notwithstanding, could not hide this simple fact.

The difference between the gentile church founded by Paul, and the Jerusalem Church founded by Jesus, was not limited to the question of the authenticity of Paul's prophecy. These two institutions espoused two totally different philosophies. The central teaching of Pauline Christianity is, that faith in the redeeming sacrifice of Jesus, is the only valid method through which atonement for sin can be achieved. The entire philosophy of Paul, revolves around this one teaching. Evangelical Christianity is founded upon this basic teaching of Paul. If you were to ask an Evangelical Christian to sum up his belief system in one sentence, he would respond with this point. That faith in Jesus is the only redemption from sin. In fact the entire concept of the messiah-ship of Jesus is basically limited to this one point. Jesus is the messiah of Evangelical Christians, only because they believe that his death provided atonement for sin.

But the Jerusalem Church which was established by Jesus, and which was guided by his disciples, did not believe in this teaching of Paul. They did not believe that faith in Jesus could effectively atone for their sins. This is demonstrated by the testimony of the Christian scriptures. The 21st chapter in the book of Acts reports that the normal

activities of the members of the Jerusalem Church included the offering of animals for the explicit purpose of the expiation of sin. The book of Acts describes how four members of the Jerusalem Church had taken a Nazirite vow. This means that they had voluntarily brought themselves into a situation where they would be required (by the law of Moses) to bring an animal as a sin offering. It is clear that these people saw in the temple offerings a valid method for the expiation of sin. If they believed as Paul did, that Jesus died for their sins once and for all, then there would be no point in bringing a sin offering in the temple. The fact that the Jerusalem Church still participated in the temple offerings after Jesus had died, tells us that they did not see in Jesus's death an all atoning sacrifice. These people were not Evangelical Christians.

The Christian scriptures provides both the theological and the historical evidence to the accusation that Christianity has failed in the transmission of its own message. The Christian scriptures tell us that the disciples of Jesus never believed the fundamental teaching of Evangelical Christianity. These people who lived with Jesus and heard him preach did not believe, that with the death of Jesus, the world is redeemed of its sins. The Christian scriptures also tell us, at which historical point the break in the transmission occurred. These books tell us that Paul, the father of modern Christianity, had no connection to Jesus. Christianity is an edifice erected upon the testimony of one man. All of Christianity stands upon Paul's word that Jesus appeared to him. The only people that were qualified to verify Paul's claim, contradicted him to his face. This emerges from the pages of the very books which Christianity regards as true witnesses to its claims.

#### **V. 5. *Objection 6.1, page 7***

Brown lists seven arguments against the authenticity of the Jewish traditions. We will address each of these in turn. But first we will make a general statement about the Oral Law.

Brown speaks of the Oral Law as if it were a compendium of information that is parallel to the Written Law, as if the Oral Law were but another book in the Bible. This is an inaccurate understanding of the nature of the Oral Law.

There are different types of information and there are different methods of communicating information. Some methods of communication work better with one type of information, while other methods of communication are more effective with other types of information. The written word is the most effective way to communicate sharply defined, simple mathematical facts. But when it comes to abstract information, such as getting a feel for the spirit behind a religious movement, the written word is decidedly inadequate. It is only through interaction with people who live with this spirit that the message behind the religious movement can be effectively and accurately communicated. The commandments of the Torah are not simple mathematical facts. Each of the commandments standing alone embodies a profound spirit of holiness and connection to God, and the commandments working together as a whole make up the soul and heart of what it means to be a Jew. The names of each of the commandments are duly recorded in

the Torah. But God entrusted the communication of the spirit and the life of each the commandments to the living witness of the nation.

With this understanding in mind we will approach each of Brown's seven arguments against the validity of Israel's living witness. Throughout his dissertation, Brown keeps on mixing the questions. For example, while discussing the first question (on page 10) He makes sure that his readers did not forget the 3rd question. For the sake of clarity, I plan to address each question separately.

*"1) The Scriptures indicate clearly that God's covenant with Israel was based on the written word and on the written word alone."*

This first argument of Brown is both erroneous and irrelevant.

Brown's argument is erroneous because he has forgotten Deuteronomy 4:23. As we have already mentioned, the foundational commandment that prohibits idolatry was presented by God directly to the nation of Israel. God did not use the medium of a prophet, nor did He use the medium of the written word. God spoke directly to the nation as a whole and God commissioned the living nation to preserve this primary aspect of His covenant with the future generations (Deuteronomy 4:9). The Scriptures are absolutely clear that this aspect of the covenant was based on a living presentation and that it is to be preserved through the living activity of parents teaching their children.

Brown's argument is erroneous from another perspective as well. God's covenant with Israel is predicated on the events of the exodus from Egypt (Leviticus 26:45, Deuteronomy 29:24, Jeremiah 11:3,4, 34:13). The Bible clearly states that the memory of the exodus is to be preserved through the living observance of the nation (Exodus 12:25-27, 13:8, 11-16, Leviticus 23:42-43, Deuteronomy 16:3).

Furthermore, God designates specific observances to perpetuate some of the key elements of His covenant with Israel, namely: the observances of circumcision and Sabbath (Genesis 17:11-13, Exodus 31:12-17).

The Bible makes it abundantly clear that although the Written Torah is an important witness for the covenant between God and Israel, it is certainly not the only witness. And while the Written Torah is one of the methods of communication that God utilizes for the preservation of His covenant, it is not the only one. The Scriptures plainly point to the living observances of the nation as valid repositories for the truth of God's covenant with Israel. Reading the Written Torah while ignoring the living testimony of the nation is to read the Torah outside of the context intended by the Giver of the Torah.

Brown's argument is irrelevant because no one ever proposed that the Written Torah is not complete in what it is meant to preserve. When God says: "Observe everything that is written in this Book of the Law (Joshua 1:8)", He is not excluding the Oral Law. Every commandment is written in the Five Books of Moses and we must indeed observe every

one of them. The Oral Law does not present a new set of commandments. The Oral Law identifies the nature of each of the commandments so that we can truly know them.

This could be compared to a list of people. Imagine the following scenario. You are presented with a list of people; Joe, Tony, Jane and Carol. You are told to invite these people to your house. But you don't know who these people are. You will need to interact with living people in order to correctly identify the people mentioned in the list. Perhaps these people will introduce themselves to you; "I am Joe, I am Carol" etc. Perhaps you will ask other people; "could you please identify Joe and Tony for me?" But without interaction with living people you will never figure out who these people are.

The same applies to the commandments. The Torah records the commandment to observe the Sabbath. But what is the Sabbath? Is it the Sunday of the Catholic Church? The Sunday of the Puritans? The Friday of Islam? The Sabbath of the Sadducees? Or the Sabbath of the Orthodox Jew? Although they all go by the same name, but each of these is a completely different spiritual entity. Which spiritual entity was the Torah referring to? The only way we can discover the answer to this question is by consulting with living people. This does not make the Torah incomplete. The Torah recorded all that could be recorded in writing. But we still need the testimony of living people to make the spiritual identifications necessary for observance of the Law.

#### **V.6. Page 10**

Brown asks his readers: *"Would you go to contract on a house without written documents? Of course not. And would you accept binding but unwritten explanations of those documents? Obviously not."*

The first of these two questions is obviously irrelevant, because no one ever claimed that there is no Written Torah. But the second question seems to be valid. We would not accept an unwritten binding explanation of a legal contract for the sale of a house, why should we assume that God imposed such an unwritten binding explanation upon us in regard to the contract that we share; the Written Torah?

The fact of the matter is that every legal document comes along with an unwritten explanation that is absolutely binding. Try taking a legal document from fifth century China and transposing it to 21<sup>st</sup> century America. Do you think that it will be immediately understood by the modern readers? Without attempting to reconstruct the usage of language, and without trying to reconstruct the cultural and legalistic setting for the document, we will never understand the full implications of the document.

The first and foremost area in which writers of legal documents depend upon an "oral law" is the identification of the parties involved in the transaction. There is only so much description that you can put into writing to help identify an individual. In the end, you will need living people to make the positive identification.

In the case of the Jewish Scriptures, this issue is highlighted by the history of Christianity. The Jewish Scriptures is a document between God and the people of Israel. These two

words; “God” and “the people of Israel” mean one thing to a Jew, another thing to a Mormon, yet another thing to a Lutheran or Catholic who lived in the sixteenth century, and yet something else to a modern-day Southern Baptist. It is obvious that the text alone cannot adequately provide a positive identification of individuals – certainly not an identification that will last through the centuries and the millenniums, and that will span the globe.

Furthermore, the text does not attempt to provide identification. The audience that this text was intended for, identifies these parties by their names. The Jewish people know who they are, and God identified Himself to them long before He gave them a book. The Divine Author of the book clearly expected His intended audience to read the book with a positive and clear identification of these entities already firmly planted in their minds. This holds true not only for the identification of the God and of Israel. This applies to the identification of many of the commandments as well. God presented the Sabbath to the Jewish people before He gave them the book (Exodus 16:29). When the book mentions the Sabbath, it is obviously referring to the entity that goes by that name in the mind of the intended audience. Sabbath is not the only commandment that was introduced to the people before they were handed the book. Every single commandment was taught to the people by Moses before he handed them the book (Exodus 18:16, 20, Deuteronomy 1:18, 4:5). It is important to remember that the book of the Law was only presented to Israel shortly before Moses passed away (Deuteronomy 31:24). Up until that point, all the people had to go with were the oral explanations that Moses presented to them. When they read the book, they read it in light of the teachings that Moses imparted to them up until that point in time.

#### V. 7. Page 11

Brown points to one of the laws in Exodus 21, and tells his readers: *Detailed, written legislation like this is common in the Law, repeating itself again and again.*”

The truth is quite different than what Brown would have his readers believe. Some of the most common laws are hardly described in the written Torah. Let us take the laws of tithing crops as an example. We must remember that in an agricultural society, such as the society that existed in Israel during Biblical times, these laws were relevant to almost everyone, every year. Yet the written law leaves much unsaid. In Leviticus 27:30 we are told that the tithe of the seed of the land and from the fruit of the tree belongs to God. Two verse later (Leviticus 27:32) teaches that the tithe of the cattle and sheep, all that pass under the staff is sanctified to God. Numbers 18:21,24 tells us that the Levites were granted “all tithes in Israel”. Deuteronomy 14:22-23 tells the Israelite to eat the tithe in the chosen place. In the next paragraph (Deuteronomy 14:28-29) we are told that “At the end of three years you shall bring out all the tithes of your crop in that year and leave it in your gates. Then the Levite can come, for he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the proselyte, the orphan and the widow who are in your gates so they may eat and be satisfied...”



So who gets the tithe? Is it the Levite? Does the farmer eat the tithe in the chosen place? Does it go to the widow and the orphan?

This is a law that is relevant to every farmer, it is relevant to a significant portion of his livelihood, and the instructions are not clear at all.

It is clear that the Author expected His audience to understand and to live by these commandments. There can be no question that He committed some of the concepts of the laws of tithing to another repository of information. There is no viable claim for this repository outside of the Oral Law of Rabbinic Judaism.

#### **V. 8. Pages 11-12**

Brown speaks of the lengthy chapters that describe the building of the Tabernacle. He concludes his description with the words: *“There is no Oral Torah here”*.

It seems that in his zeal to discredit the Oral Torah, he forgot to pay attention to the Written Torah. The Written Torah explicitly refers to a visual representation: “See and make, according to their form that you are shown on the mountain” (Exodus 25:40). The scriptures refer to the visual depiction in relation to the Tabernacle no less than five times (Exodus 25:9,40, 26:30, 27:8, Numbers 8:4).

It is clear that verbal communication alone could not convey all of the information that was necessary for the building of the Tabernacle. The verbal communication had to be supplemented with a visual presentation. This aspect of the communication could only be preserved in the hearts and minds of living people.

#### **V.9. Page 13**

*“The simple fact is that these laws were given in writing, with as much detail and precision as was needed, because everything was based on what was written. This is the consistent and unwavering pattern of the Torah.”*

How exactly would one define the work that is forbidden on the Sabbath based only on what is written? How would one define work forbidden on the holidays; which is described (throughout Leviticus 23 and Numbers 28 and 29) with a different phrase than the one the Torah uses to describe the work forbidden on the Sabbath?

#### **V. 10. Page 14**

*“Every single time the Bible refers to “the law/teaching of Moses (torat mosheh), it is referring to the Written Torah.( See Josh. 8:31-32; 23:6; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 14:6; 23:25; Mal. 3:22; Dan. 9:11;13; Ezra 3:2; 7:6; Neh. 8:1; 2 Chron. 23:18; 30:16; 34:14.) Every single time!”*

Not quite. 2 Kings 23:25 does not necessarily refer to the Written Law alone. Malachi 3:22 speaks of the teaching that God presented Moses at Horeb. At that time, most of the Law was not yet committed to writing.

There are some verses that Brown seems to have forgotten such as Joshua 22:5 which refers to the teaching of Moses without referring to the written scroll. Joshua was talking to people who had heard Moses teach and the implication is that they should do what they heard. 2 Kings 21:8 also refers to the teaching of Moses without mentioning the written scroll.

This is aside from the passages which clearly indicate that the living memory of the people is a part of God's plan in preserving His word. In Isaiah 51:7 God calls Israel: "A nation, My teaching in their hearts". Psalm 78 speaks of the passing of God's teaching from one generation to the next. "That which we heard and know, and our fathers have told us...He established a testimony in Jacob, and set down a teaching in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, to make known to their sons. So that the final generation may know; children yet to be born will arise and tell their own children." It is obvious that God's plan included living communication from one generation to the next as an important part of maintaining the integrity of the spirit of the Torah.

#### V. 11. Page 14

*"Conversely, there is not a single time in the entire Hebrew Bible where someone is rebuked or punished for breaking the "law of Moses" when it does not refer to the Written Torah. Not a single time!"*

Wrong again! Throughout Scripture people are punished for violating God's directives in situations where there was no Written Torah, and for violations that are contrary to the spirit of the Law but are not contrary to any specific Law recorded in the text. In Exodus 16:28 the people are rebuked for violating the Sabbath, although there were no written directives at the time.

In Numbers 15:32 a man was punished for gathering sticks on the Sabbath. How would this case be judged on the basis of the Written Torah alone? The Written Torah says nothing about gathering sticks.

2 Chronicles 16:12 castigates Assa for seeking help from doctors for the ailment that afflicted his legs. Which written directive did he violate by going to a doctor?

2 Kings 20:13-18 records the prophet's rebuke to Hezekiah for showing his treasures to the messengers of the king of Babylon. There is no written law which would prohibit this activity.

It is clear that God expects people to understand that the written laws are only the names of much broader spiritual concepts. The mind and the hearts of those loyal to God and His Law are the repositories for these spiritual truths. Throughout Scripture we find that various people were rebuked or punished for violating concepts that are not explicitly

spelled out in the Written Torah.

**V. 12.** Page 14

*“To put it in the form of a rhetorical question, Why, if the Oral Law was so important, is there not one single explicit appeal to this unwritten law, this oral tradition, this teaching of Moses, anywhere in the entire Tanach, whereas there is constant explicit appeal to what is written in the Torah?...Contrast this with the position of Rabbinic Judaism which makes constant appeal to the Oral Torah.”*

This question only seems valid from the view-point of Brown’s inaccurate understanding of the nature of the Oral Law. Brown sees the Oral Law as an additional set of laws that stands side by side with the Written Law. This is false. The Oral Law is the life and spirit of the Written Torah. When we approach The Jewish Bible and ask ourselves if the Oral Law is authentic or not, the question boils down to: How did God expect the Jewish people to learn His Law? Did He expect them to look into the Written Law alone, and to no other source of information at all? Or did He expect them to learn of God’s Law through the teaching of living people?

Throughout Scripture we find that God addresses the Jewish people and appeals to them on the basis of the Law that He presented to their fathers. (Judges 2:20, 3:4, 1 Kings 8:58, 2 Kings 17:13, 15, Jeremiah 7:23, 11:4, 10, 17:22, Ezekiel 20:11, Psalm 78:5.)

It is clear and obvious that the Jewish people were expected to receive the Law through the medium of their ancestors. They were to look to the Jewish people who were loyal to God and to His Law and learn the Law from them.

Until the Sadducees arose in the days of the Second Temple, no-one imagined looking at the Law in any other way. There was no distinction between an Oral Law and a Written Law. There was one understanding of the Law that was passed from one generation to the next without anyone imagining an alternative approach to understanding the Law.

Brown’s rendering of Rabbinic Judaism as if it makes “constant” appeal to the Oral Law, is also inaccurate. It is certainly true that after people began questioning the authenticity of the Oral Law and proposed an alternative understanding to the Written Torah, that it became necessary to make specific mention of the “Oral Law”, but by no means is this appeal “constant”. For most Rabbinic Jews, the Oral Law and the Written Law are one unit, and throughout the writings of the rabbis, the people are encouraged to observe the Torah, and it is self-evident that the Torah we are talking about is the one we received from our fathers.

**V. 13.** Page 14-15

*“Just do a search of the name “Moses” in the Tanakh, beginning with the book of Joshua until you get to the end of the Hebrew Scriptures, and look up every phrase such as “as the Lord said to Moses”, or, as the Lord commanded Moses”, or, “as Moses commanded”, or, “as Moses said”, or “as Moses assigned.” In every single instance, reference is made*

*to something that is written in the Five Books of Moses, Every single instance. In fact to save you the time, I've done the search for you...*

*Here is the breakdown: as I/he/the Lord command(s/ed) through Moses (Josh.1:3; 9:24; 11:23; 14:2, 5,6,10; 17:4; 20:2; 21:2, 8; Judg. 3:4; 1 Kings 8:53, 56; Mal. 3:22; Neh. 1:7-8; 8:14; 9:14; 1 Chron. 22:13; 2 Chron. 33:8; cf. Also Josh. 22:9; Neh. 10:30; 2 Chron. 35:6); as Moses commanded (Josh. 1:7, 13; 4:10; 8:31, 33 35; 11:12, 15, 20; 2:2, 5; 2 Kings 18:6, 12; 21:8; 1 Chron. 6:34; 15:15; cf also 2 Chron. 8:13); as Moses said (Josh 4:12; Judg. 1:20); as Moses gave/assigned/ apportioned (Josh. 12:6; 13:8, 15, 21, 24, 29, 32-33; 18:7, 22:4, 7).*

Of all of these references, a full third do not support Brown's point. Joshua 1:7, 22:5, Judges 3:4, 2 Kings 18:6, 12, 21:8, Malachi 3:22, Nehemiah 1:7, 9:14, 1 Chronicles 22:13, 2 Chronicles 33:8, all speak of the Law of Moses in a general sense without any specific reference back to one of the Written Laws. Joshua 4:10, would actually imply an unwritten directive. That verse tells us that Joshua spoke to the people while they stood on the dry riverbed of the Jordan "according to everything that Moses commanded Joshua". No such directive is recorded in the Five books of Moses.

#### **V. 14. Pages 15-17**

Brown takes the pains to list all the times that Scripture makes reference to "that which is written" in his effort to deny the need or the validity of a living tradition. What Brown has failed to do is to note how often Scripture speaks of the commandment that was presented to our fathers, without any reference to "that which is written" (Judges 2:20, 3:4, 1 Kings 8:58, 2 Kings 17:13, 15, Jeremiah 7:23, 11:4, 10, 17:22, Ezekiel 20:11, Psalm 78:5.). To conclude his point, Brown states; *"Everything was based on what was written! That is why, in Nehemiah's day, when the people made a solemn oath before God, they put it in writing (see Neh. 9:38).*

If this is proof for the need for a written law, then in the days of Jehoash, when the people made an oath before God, the fact that they did not put this oath in writing should prove that a written law is not necessary (2 Kings 11:17). The same would apply with the oath that the people took in the days of Asa (2 Chronicles 15:12) and in the days of Josiah (2 Kings 23:3).

#### **V. 15. Endnote # 22**

Here Brown refers to my article, "The Council of My Nation": *"In light of the evidence, Rabbi Yisroel C Blumenthal's argument is quite surprising: "The odd thing about this doctrine is that it is non-scriptural. There is no verse in scripture which states that all divine instruction must be contained within scripture to the exclusion of any other source. The principle that these biblicists consider axiomatic – 'sola scriptura' (solely Scripture) has no basis in scripture. On the contrary, the scriptures repeatedly emphasize the need for living teachers" ("The Council of My Nation" 42)."*

Brown responds: *“But not only is this argument surprising, it is both vacuous and irrelevant. It is vacuous because Rabbinic Judaism claims that God gave Moses an authoritative Oral Law on Mount Sinai, which is demonstrably a myth (as seen throughout 6:1); it is irrelevant because living teachers – who have always been part of “Christian” tradition as well – must themselves submit to the authority of the written Word, otherwise they disqualify themselves as false teachers. Hence the constant appeal in the Tanakh and New Covenant Scriptures to “what is written.”*

This is no response. Brown believes that all divine instruction is contained within the pages of Scripture, and that any claim for divine instruction that is not found in Scripture is to be discounted. If this doctrine is true, it should say so in Scripture. Why did it take until the days of Martin Luther for someone to come and “discover” this principle? Until then, everyone who read Scripture, read it through the eyes of the people who passed the Scriptures on to them; the Jews through the eyes of their fathers, and the Catholics through the eyes of their priests. It was obvious to everyone, that if God entrusted these people with the task of telling me that these are His Scriptures, then God also entrusted them with the task of identifying and providing understanding for the concepts of Scripture. It was Martin Luther who came up with the idea; “I will accept your Scripture, but I will not accept your understanding of this book. I will interpret the book the way I understand it without accepting any of your teachings” (addressing the Catholic Church). If God truly expected people to take the books from their parents, but set aside everything that their parents associated with the book, He should have said so in the book. The natural way for people to read the book is through the eyes of the people that taught them that this book is sacred. If God wanted us to oppose the natural flow, He would have told us so.

Brown’s contention that my argument is vacuous because he has “demonstrated” that the Oral Law is a “myth”, has no merit. The very article that he is quoting, “The Council of My Nation”, addresses every major point that he raises in his effort to discredit the oral traditions. It is very easy to “win” an argument when you do not acknowledge that your opponent said anything.

Brown’s assertion that my argument is irrelevant because the teachers *“must themselves submit to the authority of the written Word”*, only reveals the weakness of his position. Where does it say this in the written word? Where does it say that the teachers must submit to the authority of the written word? Whose interpretation of the written word would the teachers be subject to anyway? The fact is that Scripture tells us to submit to the authority of the teachers openly and explicitly (Deuteronomy 17:8-13). Why does it not say a word about having the teachers submit to some committee who will determine if they are faithful to the written word?

I present here the paragraph from my article; “The Council of My Nation”, that follows the paragraph that Brown had quoted.

“When Moses came down from the Mountain of Sinai, he had in his hands the two tablets upon which were inscribed the Ten Commandments (Exodus 34:29), and nothing more. But God had told him much more (Deuteronomy 5:28). The rest of the commandments

were told to the people orally. In fact, the two tablets were not available for public reading. They were stored in the Ark of the Covenant which was kept in the holy of holies - a place which was accessible to no one but the high priest on the Day of Atonement. During the 40 years under Moses' leadership the process of studying the Law was intense. It was necessary to appoint a leader for every ten men in order to guide them in matters of the Law - necessitating more than 60,000 teachers for a nation of 600,000 (Exodus 18:13-26). During these 40 years the scriptures record only two personal violations of the Law (Leviticus 24:11, Numbers 15:32). It is clear that the nation as a whole observed the Law without having seen a written word. The observance of the Law took root amongst the Jewish people through the spoken word. It was only shortly before Moses died that the Five Books of Moses were put into writing (Deuteronomy 30:9). After the Law was put into writing the people still needed living teachers for guidance. The entire tribe of Levi - approx. 4% of the nation - were not given any agricultural lands (Numbers 18:24, Deuteronomy 18:1). They were supported by the tithes of the nation and their role was the teaching of the Law (Leviticus 10:11, Deuteronomy 17:9,18, 21:5, 33:10, 1Chronicles 26:32, 2Chronicles 17:8, 31:4, Nehemiah 8:7). When the nation strayed from God, the scriptures point to the lack of a teacher as one of the factors precipitating this period of disobedience (2Chronicles 14:3). The scripture tells us that the living teachers were influential components in the national waves of repentance (Judges 5:9, 2Chronicles 17:7-9, 31:4, 35:3, Nehemiah 8:7). The Evangelical notion, where the individual turns to his printed KJV bible for guidance and to nowhere else, cannot be supported by the same KJV bible. For scripture is unequivocally clear that the nation requires a class of living teachers in order to guide them in the application of the Law."

#### **V. 16. Page 19**

*"2) There are no explicit or implicit references to the Oral Torah within the Written Torah"*

Brown's argument contains several flaws. The first and most obvious flaw is that his argument is false. The most explicit reference to the Oral Torah is not addressed by Brown in the 14 pages he devoted to this particular argument, and did not even merit a mention in the entirety of his book. As we mentioned earlier, the Scripture explicitly declares that Israel was granted an amplified understanding of the commandment that prohibits idolatry; an understanding that goes beyond the written text (Deuteronomy 4:35), and that this amplified understanding is relevant to every generation (Deuteronomy 4:9). Brown simply ignores this explicit reference to an unwritten teaching despite the fact that I challenged him to address this reference 10 years before he put this volume into writing (see above, point # 1).

The second flaw inherent in Brown's argument is that he misunderstands the structure of the Jewish faith. There is a superficial similarity between Judaism and Christianity in that they both look to a body of sanctified information as an integral aspect of the belief system. The Jewish Bible is a part of this body of recognized information in both belief systems, but that is where the similarity stops. The position that the Scriptures occupy in these respective belief systems is very different.

These two belief systems both embody three levels of passing on authorized communication. The first level is the process of confirming the veracity of the information. The second level consists of a body of accepted information while the third level is the practical teachings that emerge from the recognized body of information.

In Judaism the distinction between these three levels is clear. The first level consists of the unparalleled national claim concerning the miracles of the exodus and the Sinai revelation, which authenticate Israel's status as God's witness. The witness that God appointed confirms the second level of the faith structure which consists of the sanctified body of information, both the Written and Oral Torahs. While the third level involves of the practical doctrines that the Jewish people live by.

Protestant Christianity places a strong emphasis on insisting that the Scriptures alone constitute the second level of the faith structure; i.e. the recognized and accepted body of sanctified information. No practical doctrine (third level of the faith structure) is accepted by Protestant Christians unless they believe that it is corroborated by the Scriptures, which they believe is the complete and exclusive body of sanctified information.

But the Protestant theologians have not provided a clear "first level" for their belief system. They have not provided a solid, Divinely sanctioned, method for authenticating the body of information that they place so much trust in; i.e. the Scriptures. In order to validate the Scriptures, Protestants resort to arguments that focus on the antiquity of the books, fulfilled prophecy and the acceptance of the books by the early believers. But in no way can they claim that this method of corroborating Scripture is the method that was ordained by God in order to verify His word.

Brown is treating the Oral Law as if it were a component of the third level of the faith structure, in other words Brown is seeking corroboration for the Oral Law in the same way that a Protestant Christian would seek corroboration for a practical doctrine – i.e. from the pages of Scripture. But the Oral Law does not look to the Written Law for corroboration any more than the Written Law looks to the Oral Law for corroboration. Both the Written and the Oral Law are corroborated by the first level of the faith structure; the witnesses that God appointed to testify to the truth of these bodies of information.

Yet another failing of Brown's argument is that he treats the Talmud and Rabbinic writings as if they were authored by Fundamentalist Christians, and as if the Talmud was another New Testament. What I mean with this, is that Brown assumes that the authors of the Talmud subscribed to the principle "sola-scriptura" – only Scripture, and as if they believed that any doctrine or teaching that is not rooted in the Scriptures is to be discarded. Thus when the authors of the Talmud or the subsequent Rabbinic authors quote a verse in relation to a given teaching, Brown reads this quote as if the Rabbis were now presenting the only valid "proof" that they had for the teaching that they were presenting.

This is inaccurate. The authors of the Talmud recognized that there are valid repositories of God-given information outside the pages of Scripture. In many cases, when the Talmud quotes a verse in support of a particular teaching, the Rabbis were not doubting the validity of the teaching. The Biblical text is often quoted to demonstrate the connection between the Written and Oral Laws, or as a mnemonic device to aid students in the

memorization of the given teaching.

Brown also reads the Talmud as if it were a book written with the same motives as those which encouraged and guided the authors of the New Testament. What I mean with this is that Brown reads the Talmud as if it were a polemical work aiming to “prove” its points to those who may not believe as they do. In contrast to the New Testament, which contains an abundance of polemical material aimed at convincing those who believe differently than do the authors, the Talmud is decidedly NOT a polemical work. The Talmud was not written to convince anyone of the truth of one teaching or another. The Talmud was written for an audience that already lives and breathes the truths of Judaism, including the truth of the Oral Law. So when we find a piece of Talmud that points to a verse in Scripture as a support for one detail or another of the Oral Law, the Talmud is not stating that this is the only proof it has for this teaching and it is certainly not stating that this is the only proof it has for the concept of an Oral Law. Brown’s focus on these pieces of the Talmud that quote Scripture to support the Oral Law as if these were the only arguments to corroborate the Oral Law, is simply wrong.

The one piece of Talmud that is written in a semi-polemical setting is not addressed by Brown in the main body of his book. In a section of the Talmud that teaches about humility; a story is related about Hillel and is pointed to as an example for this worthy trait (Shabbos 31a).

“There was once a gentile who approached Shammai, he asked him: How many Torahs do you have. Shammai responded: two; one written and one oral. The Gentile responded: I believe you concerning the written but I don’t believe you concerning the oral, convert me on the condition that you teach me the written Torah. Shammai rebuked him and sent him off with a scolding. The Gentile then approached Hillel, who converted him. The first day he taught him: alef bet gimmel dalet (the first four letters of the Hebrew alphabet). The second day he reversed the order of the letters. The Gentile protested: but yesterday you didn’t tell me this! Hillel said: Don’t you have to rely on me? Rely on me for the Oral Torah as well.”

Hillel was pointing out to the Gentile that God did not set the written Torah down in a vacuum. He did not expect people to find the Torah on a desert island or on the dead shelves of a library. A book is dead if there are no living people who live with its language. God presented the Torah to His people in the setting of parents and teachers who live the language and the spirit of Torah. The Torah is introduced to the Jew from within the cultural and religious setting of living Judaism. It is obvious that God expected His people to accept the Written Torah on the basis of the trust and respect that they naturally bear towards those who present them with the Written Torah. If we accept that God trusted these witnesses for the one (the body and the language of the written Torah), then we can be confident that we are not being lead wrong if we trust these God-appointed witnesses for the other (the oral traditions).

This story is the only section of the Talmud which remotely approaches a presentation of proof for the authenticity of the oral traditions (- again, the setting is not polemical, the story is presented as an example for humility). Brown attacks every piece of Talmud that



makes reference to the Oral Law as if it were attempting to authenticate the Oral Law to an audience that does not believe in it, yet the one piece of Talmud which is actually relevant to this discussion is ignored by Brown in the main body of his work.

In an endnote (#131, pg. 290), Brown quotes my challenge to him (without referring to my words as a challenge): *“Rabbi Yisroel Blumenthal, in a private e-mail (Dec. 10, 2008), put forth the traditional argument that “The medium through which we learned that Scripture is authentic is the testimony of our parents. These same people testified to us that there is a body of unwritten Mosaic law which is crucial in understanding how God wants us to live. If they lied about these unwritten traditions why should we believe their testimony about Scripture (The Ibn Ezra articulates this argument in several places).”* The fact of the matter is that this challenge was presented to him in August of 2001. What happened in December of 2008 was that I reminded him of my challenge and of his expressed willingness to take it head on. Why this argument is tucked away in an endnote and is not addressed comprehensively in the main body of the book, is not for me to answer.

Now to Brown’s response.

*“The simple answer is that over a process of a few generations in early Pharisaic history, the traditions of the fathers were retrojected all the way back to Moses, and subsequent generations faithfully (and sincerely) passed this myth on. So, it is not a matter of anyone intentionally lying; it’s a matter of a tradition gradually claiming a more ancient pedigree-which is quite common -in the religious world-after which the notion became a fixed dogma. And as we have noted, in contrast with the oral traditions, which were not accepted by any other ancient Jewish group, the Scriptures were universally accepted, not to mention the fact that the Tanakh has many other methods of internal divine confirmation (such as fulfilled prophecy), which the Oral Law does not.”*

In essence Brown has provided three answers to the Hillel’s argument. His first answer focused on the word “lying” that I used in my challenge to him. Brown argues that in order to invalidate the oral traditions it is not necessary to believe that anyone intentionally lied. This is no answer. Whatever process it is that brought people to sincerely believe in the oral traditions could have likewise happened to the Written Torah. Many secular scholars believe that the Written Torah took root in the minds and in the hearts of the Jewish people in the same way that Brown believes that the Oral Torah came to be accepted by Israel. If it could happen to one it could happen to the other.

Brown’s second answer is that the oral traditions were not universally accepted by the various ancient Jewish sects while the Scriptures were.

This too is no answer. First of all, Brown has his facts wrong. The Samaritans did not accept most of Scripture, and the parts that they did accept (the Five Books of Moses, and the book of Joshua), differ significantly from the versions that we have today. The Qumran group accepted other books that were not accepted by the rest of the Jewish groups. There is a strong argument for the position that the Qumran group did not accept

the book of Esther as a sacred book.

Furthermore, there are many points of the traditions that were unanimously accepted by every single Jewish group that ever existed. These include but are not limited to the idea that attributing deity to a human being violates Israel's core calling as a witness nation before God, the idea that sincere repentance is accepted by God for the expiation of sin, and the idea that tribal lineage must pass through the male line. I need not remind the reader that Brown rejects every last one of these unanimously accepted traditions.

Finally, those sects that did not accept various aspects of the traditions did not reject the concept that God meant that the Written Torah must be read from within the context of the community that lives His Law. No ancient Jewish group ever proposed that Scripture be approached with the unnatural Protestant doctrine of "sola scriptura". Every group acknowledged the need for living teachers and a living community to properly understand and apply God's Law. The argument was: which community is the one that is truly living the spirit of God's Law? The fact that God did not bother to preserve the Sadducees, and the Essenes, while God did go to miraculous lengths to preserve the Pharisee community decisively settles this intra-Jewish argument.

Brown's third answer is also inaccurate and irrelevant. Brown argues that the Written Torah has other methods of confirmation, namely: fulfilled prophecy, which the Oral Law does not.

Again, Brown has his facts wrong. The Oral Law does have fulfilled prophecy. Just look at the Midrashic prediction that the Western Wall will never be destroyed (Bamidbar Rabbah 11:2, Pesikta Rabbati 15:9 – contrast this with Luke 19:44.) Furthermore, many books in the Jewish Scripture such as Ruth, Proverbs, and Esther cannot be validated through "fulfilled prophecy" because they are not prophetic works.

Finally and most importantly; what is the means that God designated to teach future generations that these books are His authentic word? Where does the Bible describe the process? In Psalm 78:3-7 the Scripture clearly says that God relied upon the process of parents testifying to their children in order to teach future generations. If these are the witnesses who God trusted we can be confident that their testimony is true.

#### V. 17. Page 24

In his attempt to discredit the Rabbinic comment on Deuteronomy 12:21, which posits that the Torah uses the words: "as I commanded" to refer to an unwritten command, Brown makes the following argument. "... the phrase "as I/he commanded", occurs seventy times in the Pentateuch, and in every single case, without exception, it refers back to something stated by God, Moses, or another authority in the written word." Brown then supplies the references encouraging his readers to: "check the references for yourself". We did.

In the very first reference, Brown runs into trouble. The first time this phrase occurs in the Five Books is in Genesis 7:9. (There are actually a few very similar phrases earlier in

the book of Genesis, but this one is the first on Brown's list.) This verse speaks of Noah fulfilling God's command to bring the animals in to the ark. The command specified that seven pairs of the pure animals should be brought and of the impure animals, a male and female. The Torah does not tell us how Noah could have known which animals were pure and which were not – a thousand years before this information would be recorded by Moses. It is obvious that Noah had access to information that was not written in the Torah. Thus the phrase "as God commanded Noah" refers to a body of information that is only partially recorded in the text.

Genesis 21:4 refers to circumcision. The text does not fully explain this delicate process. Would you try it on your own child limiting yourself to the instructions that can be found in the Five Books?

Exodus 12:28 tells us that the children of Israel did as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron, which refers to a commandment recorded earlier in the text. But the text gives us to understand that not every detail was recorded. The Scripture gives us a record of what God commanded Moses and Aaron (12:1-20), and then it records what Moses told the elders of Israel (12:21-28). These two accounts do not coincide in every detail. The first paragraph mentions many details that are not mentioned in the second paragraph, while the second paragraph mentions one detail (the recounting to the children) that is not present in the first. It is obvious that the text is not presenting a record of every last detail of information.

Brown supplies fifteen references from Exodus chapters 39 and 40. These verses speak of the building of the Tabernacle. As we demonstrated (point # 8), the instructions for the building of the tabernacle included visual demonstrations to Moses that obviously supply more details than do the instructions written in the text. Thus when it speaks of the people following all that God commanded Moses, it refers to a body of instructions that is only partially recorded in the text.

Leviticus 8:31 has Moses referring to a commandment that he presented in the past. No record of Moses' commandment exists. Exodus 29:31-33 records God's directive to Moses, but Moses' directive to Aaron which Moses speaks of in Leviticus 8:31, is not recorded in Scripture.

Leviticus 9:7, 21, and 10:18 all use the phrase: "like the Lord/I/Moses commanded" to introduce commandments that are not recorded previously.

Numbers 9:1-14 does not appear on Brown's list, but here too we find references to commandments that are not previously recorded. This passage speaks of the Passover that Israel offered in the wilderness. It is clear from the narrative that it was understood that those who had come into contact with a corpse cannot participate in the offering, and that there is some method of purification from this ritual defilement – a concept that is not previously recorded in the Torah. The text also does not specify if this offering was to be brought at the dwelling places of each individual family as in Egypt (Exodus 12:7) or in the central place of worship (as in Deuteronomy 16:2 – which was not presented until the fortieth year of Israel's wandering). Again, it is clear that the text does not attempt to

record every relevant detail.

Numbers 27:19, also does not appear on Brown's list, and also refers to a commandment that is not specified.

Numbers 31:21 is discussed below #19.

Brown quotes Deuteronomy 1:19 which relates to one specific commandment. It seems that Brown has overlooked Deuteronomy 1:18. In that verse we learn that Moses presented all of the commandments to the people without the benefit of a book. This tells us that the Law of Moses was originally presented to Israel as an Oral Law.

Deuteronomy 4:5 and 5:29 do not refer back to any specific commandment. Moses reminds the people that he had already commanded them all that they must know upon entering the land. Many commandments were not yet recorded. It is obvious that the text is referring to commandments that are not to be found in a previous text (see Deuteronomy 5:1 where Moses begins enumerating the commandments – including many that are not previously mentioned in the text).

Deuteronomy 5:12 has Moses telling the people to keep the Sabbath as the Lord commanded them. Moses was recounting to the people what they had heard at the Sinai revelation. Brown argues that the words “as your God commanded you” are Moses' own insertion into the narrative. This is a grammatically acceptable explanation, but by no means is it conclusive. Brown's interpretation does not explain why the two commandments; Sabbath and honoring parents, are singled out in this way. The fact of the matter is that by the time the Ten Commandments were uttered by God at Sinai, Israel had already been commanded about the Sabbath (Exodus 16:29). In the case of the Sabbath commandment, the straightforward understanding would be that Moses is reminding the people that by the time the Ten Commandments were presented to them, they had already been commanded about the Sabbath. It is then entirely plausible that the commandment to honor parents had been included in the unspecified “law and statute” that is mentioned in Exodus 15:25. If this is the case, then the mention of the phrase “as your God has commanded you” of Deuteronomy 5:15 also refers to an unspecified commandment.

Deuteronomy 5:29 and 6:25 refer to the entirety of the Torah. These verses certainly do NOT refer to something specific that is previously stated.

Deuteronomy 24:8 speaks of a commandment that was directly addressed to the priests. No such commandment is recorded in the Torah. (The book of Leviticus contains general directives concerning leprosy, but no commandment is recorded there that is specifically addressed to the priests as the text in Deuteronomy indicates.)

Deuteronomy 26:14 has the farmer declaring before God: “I have done everything you have commanded me to do”. Yet when the farmer lists those obligations that he discharged, he lists laws that are not previously mentioned.

Deuteronomy 34:9 is a general statement about observance of the Law and is not referring to a specific commandment that is previously mentioned.

The lengthy list of Scriptural references that Brown provided to his readers does not support his point.

#### **V. 18.** *Page 27*

Brown quotes an interpretation of Deuteronomy 12:21 from Professor Milgrom. Milgrom proposes that the injunction to slaughter non-consecrated animals “as I have commanded” is to be understood that the animals being slaughtered for food should be slaughtered in the same way that the Temple sacrifices were slaughtered. Brown sees this interpretation as contrary to the teaching of the Rabbis on this verse. The problem is that the Torah never explicitly explains how the sacrificial animals are to be slaughtered. So this interpretation of Professor Milgrom also has the verse pointing back to an Oral Law. In any case, Brown’s entire argument against the rabbinical interpretation of Deuteronomy 12:21 is rooted in a sterile reading of the text. Brown reads the text in Deuteronomy as if it were a linguistic exercise and not as a book of spiritual instruction and connection with God.

Brown should have noticed a serious problem with his interpretation. If verse 21 is simply repeating what has already been stated in verse 15, as Brown contends, so what is the point of verse 21? Why repeat something that has already been clearly stated?

When we step back and see this passage in context, we see that Brown’s interpretation misses a central point of this Scriptural passage.

The passage actually begins in the beginning of the chapter. God instructs the people of Israel to destroy the idols of the nations that they are about to conquer together with the accompanying altars and monuments. The Scripture points out that these idols, altars and monuments are to be found throughout the land, on every hill and under every tree. We are then told that our service towards the God of Israel should be different than the service of these idolaters towards their own gods. The Jewish people must bring their offerings, tithes and the first-born of their animals to one specific chosen place. It is only in this one special place that these offerings to God are appropriate. Verse 15 teaches us that this law which limits the slaughtering of animals to the one chosen spot does not apply to animals that are not presented as offerings to God. Verses 17,18 and 19 continue to exhort the people not to eat their tithes anywhere aside from the chosen place.

Verses 20, and 21 refer back to those animals which will not be eaten as offerings to God. The point of these verses is that although these animals do not have God’s law apply to them in the sense of the limitation as to WHERE they can be slaughtered, but God’s law still applies to them as to HOW they are to be slaughtered.

The entire thrust of this set of passages is that we are to be separate from the practices of the idol-worshippers of Canaan. Those idolaters brought their offerings throughout the land, we are to limit the bringing of offerings exclusively to the chosen place. The entire thrust of verse 21 is that even when it comes to those animals that may be slaughtered

outside of the chosen place, still, we must separate ourselves from the idolaters in the method of our slaughter. This is the spiritual thrust of the passage, and it is precisely this point that Brown missed in his approach to this verse.

**V. 19. Page 27**

Brown quotes the passage in Numbers 31:21 where Elazar the priest commands the people concerning the purification of the vessels. Elazar tells the people that the instructions that he is relating have been commanded by God to Moses, yet there is no previous record of this command. This would be an indication that not every directive of God to Moses was necessarily put into writing.

(As an aside – It is interesting to note that the translation that Brown used for this verse does not have the English word “command” in it. This is inconsistent with Brown’s translation up until here (specifically in his long list of Scriptural references from page 24) where the Hebrew word “tziva” is always translated as “command”.)

In any case, Brown tries to negate the weight of this text. In his struggle with this text, Brown calls in his 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> arguments against the Oral Law, despite the fact that he is supposed to be laying out his second argument. But after everything is said and done we have here a Biblical reference to a unwritten commandment.

In case you are convinced that it is my bias that has me seeing evidence to an Oral Law in this verse, while in fact it is not there – you might be surprised to find that John Sailhamer, an Evangelical scholar – with no predisposition towards the traditions of the rabbis, points to this verse in Numbers as evidence to the concept that not every commandment that God spoke to Moses was actually recorded in the text of the Five Books (The Pentateuch as Narrative, Zondervan 1992, pg. 418).

**V. 20. Page 30**

Brown argues that: *“The only time Rabbinic Judaism can speak of a totally oral tradition is when there is no evidence to support it.”*

Brown is in effect arguing that the claim for an oral tradition is relegated to the mists of the distant past because there is no evidence to support it. As soon as the oral traditions appear on the scene of recorded history, i.e. in the days of the Pharisees – in the second century B.C.E., it had to be recorded within a few generations.

What Brown doesn’t tell his readers is that there is no systematic record of Jewish history before that time period. As soon as recorded history begins describing the Jews, we find them with an oral tradition. It wasn’t until the second century C.E. that the traditions began to be put into writing – hardly a few generations – more like 400 years.

**V. 21. Page 30**

In a crude attempt to poke fun at the traditions Brown provides the following parable: *“It’s like someone claiming, “Thousands of years ago, human beings used to fly in the air, just by flapping their arms. I’ve heard stories about it from my parents, who heard it from their parents. In our day, however, we’ve had to invent planes to get us into the air.” Hardly! Human beings didn’t fly thousands of years ago, and they only fly today with the help of a plane. In the same way the Jewish people did NOT commit to memory vast amounts of oral traditions three thousand years ago, only to have to put them into writing eighteen hundred years ago.”*

He compares the sober claim of a people having memorized an oral tradition to the ludicrous claim that people could fly by flapping their wings.

Here Brown again demonstrates his lack of understanding of the oral traditions. People still memorize vast amounts of information today. I am not talking about scholars and teachers. I am talking of little children and people that are not known for their learning abilities. These people don’t see what they are doing as a something difficult or impossible, they see it as part of everyday life. A child who grows up in a Sabbath observant home will have a grasp of the spirit of the Sabbath and a basic understanding of the laws of the Sabbath that would take volumes to describe to the uninitiated. A simple person who grew up amongst people who live and observe the Law possesses in his or her mind quite a bit of information about the laws that pertain to the daily life of a Jew. In order to put this information in writing it would be necessary to use many books. But for these people it is simply a part of their daily routine, to acquire this understanding and to store it into their memory.

When it comes to scholars and men of learning, this is multiplied many times over. Before the printing press, scholars of every nation and every culture relied on their memories to store vast amounts of information. Even after the printing press was invented, the dearth of books induced students to memorize vast amounts of information. Memorizing information is not quite like flying by flapping your arms.

The purpose of writing the Mishna and the Talmud was not so much to preserve articles of information as it was to preserve the unity of the living discussion. It was the decentralization of Torah scholarship that necessitated the writing of the books, not the inability to retain information.

**V. 22. Page 32**

*3) Throughout biblical history, not only was there no evidence of an authoritative Oral Torah, but at times there was gross ignorance of the Written Torah.*

I responded at length to this objection in my article “The Council of My Nation”. Here is the relevant section.

4. Historical objections - the Torah scroll of Josiah

Another objection put forward by Christians in support of their rejection of the Jewish national legacy relates to the history of our people. Scripture records many instances where the Jews forsook the Law. In the times of the Judges and in the times of the wicked kings of either the Northern or Southern Kingdoms, the nation fell into idolatry. The searing words of rebuke recorded in the scriptures describe a corrupt nation that disregarded the Law. This does not sound like a nation that was meticulously guarding minor details of the complex traditions. In scripture's depiction of the religious revivals that followed some of these periods of disobedience, we learn how the written word was a central factor in getting the people back on track. Under the reign of Josiah, the finding of one scroll of the Law (the Five Books of Moses), triggered a wave of national repentance (2Kings 22:8 - 23:25, 2Chronicles 34:14 - 35:6). The implication seems to be that the nation had lost the Written Law. If the people had forgotten the basic written directives of Moses, how could the same nation have retained a vast and complex body of unwritten teachings of Moses? In the times of Ezra and Nehemiah the people needed to read about the festival of Tabernacles and about the law prohibiting intermarriage in order to learn of their existence (Nehemiah 8:14,13:1). How could this same nation who had forgotten some of the foundational written laws, at the same time have memorized countless details of an oral tradition?

These questions are not new. This criticism was formulated by the Muslims long ago in an attempt to discredit the Scriptures themselves. The responsa of Rabbi Solomon ben Aderet (13th century Rabbi of Barcelona) records this Muslim argument - If the Jewish nation was disloyal to God, how could we trust them to preserve the Scriptures? How can we know that the Torah scroll that Josiah found was truly the scroll that Moses had written?

For those who believe in the divine origin of Scripture, this question is not relevant. If it was important to God to preserve His message, the fallible nature of man will not stand in His way. The Christian who believes in the inspired nature of Scripture, recognizes that God maintained the accuracy of His word, through the medium of the Jewish nation. The question only remains - what is God's word? If God had given Moses directives that were not recorded in the Five Books, and those directives were relevant to the later generations, then we can trust that God protected those directives from corruption.

Those who present this challenge to the authenticity of the Law, be they Muslim imams or Christian missionaries, are missing an important feature of the nature of Scripture. Scripture's objective in recording Israel's past, is not to satisfy the curiosity of the history buff. The purpose of Scripture is to improve our future. We are therefore enjoined to recall our shortcomings (Deuteronomy 9:7) and these are magnified and emphasized with the most forceful words. Before Moses died, he spoke to the people. He did not commend them for all the love that they had poured into the Tabernacle. He did not praise them for following God into the wilderness (Jeremiah 2:2). The Jewish people would have to wait almost 1000 years before hearing this compliment from God. Instead Moses rebuked them for every failing that occurred throughout the 40 years, and described these at length (Deuteronomy 1:26-45, 9:7-24).



The book of Joshua further illustrates this point (7:1). One individual, a man named Achan, had violated the oath that Joshua had declared to the people. The terminology that Scripture uses to describe this incident seems to be way out of proportion to the crime committed. The chapter opens with the words “The Children of Israel trespassed”. The entire nation is declared guilty for the sin of one lone individual. Further on in the chapter we read “Israel sinned, they have also violated My covenant that I have commanded them, they have also stolen and denied” (Joshua 7:11). Not only is the nation being blamed for the sin of one of her members, but the crime itself is magnified in the strongest possible terms. The consequence of this one sin seems exaggerated as well. The nation was punished with a defeat in battle (Joshua 7:5), and God tells Joshua that He will no longer be with the Jewish people. All this for the crime of one individual! This gives us an insight into the standard that God demands of His people. The sin of one man is the sin of the nation, and the repercussions come on a national scale.

With this in mind we can appreciate that the intense words of rebuke that the prophets directed against the nation do not imply that every individual member of the nation was guilty of every trespass that the prophets mention. The prophets looked at the nation as a corporate whole, and the sin of some of the members is attributed to the complete national entity. The divinely inspired authors of scripture were certainly people of great moral caliber, yet they included themselves when they spoke of the nation’s sins. Exodus 16:28 has God accusing Moses together with Israel for refusing to obey His commandments. Isaiah 6:5, 42:24, and 64:8 have Isaiah including himself in confessing the sins of the nation. Jeremiah 14:7,20, Micha 7:9, Psalm 106:6, Lamentations 3:42, Daniel 9:20, Ezra 9:6, and Nehemiah 1:6 all record how the divinely inspired authors recognized the sins of the nation as their own sins.

There can be no question that there were times when a large percentage of the nation was disobedient to God. But even in the lowest times there was a recognizable element that was loyal to God. Not an element that saw themselves as separate from the nation, but an element that saw themselves as part of the nation - and the nation saw this element as a part of them. When the nation recognized that they had strayed and needed to return to God, they knew to whom to turn. God always had representatives amongst His nation, and these representatives were the medium through whom God preserved His Law. These were the people who treasured every word of God’s Law, both written and unwritten and passed them on to the future generations.

This element of Jews who maintained their loyalty to God never lost the written Torah. When the Scriptures tell us that the reading of the Torah taught the people about the holiday of Tabernacles (Nehemiah 8:14), or about the prohibition against intermarriage (Nehemiah 13:1), this refers to the lower elements of the populace. The scripture itself makes the distinction between the two segments of the population - “those who know the laws of your God” and - “those who do not know them” (Ezra 7:25). These people who knew the Law, and certainly Ezra himself and the leadership around him, did not need to read a verse to discover something they never knew. Ezra himself is described as a “scribe of the law of God” (Ezra 7:12). Having copied the Torah we can safely assume that he knew what he had written.

Similarly, we can understand that the scroll that was found in the times of Josiah, was not the last surviving copy of the Five Books of Moses. It would be ludicrous to believe that the recently converted Samaritans only several miles to the North, possessed their own copies of the Law (which differ significantly from the Judean version), while Jeremiah, Hulda the prophetess, and Zephaniah never saw a copy of the book. If every last copy of the Five Books went lost until Josiah found this one scroll, then who preserved the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Isaiah, Hosea, Joel, Jonah, Amos, Micha, Ruth, Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes? The fact that these books are with us today, tells us that in Josiah's generation there must have been someone who was safeguarding them. If there were people who took the pains to preserve the writings of David and Solomon that related to the Temple appointments (2Chronicles 35:4), these same people would certainly recognize the importance of preserving Moses' Five Books. It is only sensible to assume, that God's prophets and those loyal to God were faithfully preserving all of God's word, both written and unwritten.

Jeremiah began prophesying in the 13th year of Josiah's reign, five years before the scroll was found. He criticizes those who "grasp the Torah" for their lack of intimacy with God (Jeremiah 2:8). Jeremiah denounces those who boast in their superficial possession of the Torah (Jeremiah 8:8). These verses clearly imply that even the lesser elements of the population had not lost track of the Torah. They certainly did not comply with her spirit, but the letter of the Law was with them to some degree. It is clear then that when Josiah found the scroll, he was not discovering a book that no one knew about. The scroll did not cause an impact through the information it imparted. The impact of the scroll was inspirational.

We must consider which particular scroll it was that belonged in the Temple in the first place. Deuteronomy 31:9 informs us that Moses himself wrote a scroll of the Law and presented it to the priests and Levites who bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord. The ark had been moved from its rightful place (2Chronicles 35:3) - presumably some time during the reign of Menashe - who had violated the Temple precincts (2Kings 21:7, 2Chronicles 33:7). In the process, this particular Torah scroll disappeared. We can only speculate if it was some righteous priest who hid it from the ravages of the wicked kings, or if God used some other means to protect this holy scroll. What the scripture does tell us is that it had vanished. During the renovations of the Temple that took place under Josiah, this precious scroll was found. When the curses of the covenant were read from this very scroll (2Chronicles 34:24), Josiah was affected to the core of his being. The discovery of the scroll at this juncture in his career, and the words being read - as if Moses himself was commanding him, helped him see that the past ten years of repentance were as shallow as the young Jeremiah had declared them to be.

The word of our God stands forever (Isaiah 40:8). When God promises Israel that His spirit will remain in our midst (Isaiah 59:21), we can be confident that His promise will stand. All the forces that our enemies bring to bear against us will never prevail - be they external enemies or our own fallible nature. When it is time for our nation to return, we will still have the teachings of Moses to guide us on our path back to God (Deuteronomy 30:2).

**V. 23. Page 37**

Brown sets forth the claim that it was because of David's sin that the kingdom of Israel was split in two. This is incorrect. It was because of the sin of Solomon, not David (1Kings 11:11).

**V. 24. Page 45**

*4) Contrary to many rabbinic traditions, Moses did not receive every detail of the Oral Law on Mount Sinai.*

I find it interesting that this argument makes it into Brown's list of seven lines of reasoning to invalidate the Oral Torah.

First of all, not all of the rabbis accept that every detail of the Oral Law was presented at Sinai. Some rabbis accept that Moses received the Law throughout the sojourn of the Israelites in the wilderness (Chagiga 6a). The belief that everything was received at Sinai, although popular, cannot be considered fundamental to Judaism in any way.

Second, the straightforward reading of the texts in Deuteronomy 1:18 and 5:28 supports the opinion that Moses was taught everything at Sinai.

Third, the arguments that Brown brings to disprove this point all support the position that the Written Law itself was not given in its entirety at Sinai. This is not an argument about Written versus Oral Laws. This is an argument about the Law in general: Was it given in its entirety at Sinai or was it given throughout the lifetime of Moses? – an argument that is entirely irrelevant to the discussion at hand.

**V. 25. Page 51**

*5) The rabbinic writings at times completely violate or twist the plain meaning of the Scriptures, making clear that they cannot represent a valid tradition dating back to Moses.*

At one point during his eighteen page dissertation on this objection, Brown exclaims with sarcasm: *"Perhaps none of it is meant to be taken seriously. Perhaps it is all a test of our intellectual ingenuity, and perhaps God will give us a reward for determining that none of the Torah laws are actually to be applied."* (Page 55).

Brown is arguing that by introducing interpretations that "violate" the plain meaning of the text, the Rabbis have rendered the law "useless".

What I find amazing is that Brown and other Jewish Christians have in fact rendered the Law of Moses useless. The basic argument that they use is that God gave us the Law only in order that we should "discover" that it is "impossible" to observe. Yet they have no problem criticizing rabbinic Judaism, which is the community that has the longest history of continuous observance of the law, for violations of the law.

I'm not sure if the word "hypocrisy" does justice to this objection.

**V. 26. Page 52**

Brown goes on to demonstrate that: *"Within the Tanach itself, we have examples of Torah legislation being quoted and applied, indicating clearly that the plain and natural sense of the text was the intended sense. For example, within the Torah itself, there is an example of a man violating a law calling for the death penalty as a result of which he was, in fact, put to death. The meaning of the law was clear and the penalty for violating the law was clear, indicating that it was the plain and obvious sense of the law that was divinely intended."*

Brown is referring to the episode recorded in Numbers 15:32-36.

It is difficult to think of a text that goes further in disproving Brown's premise. First of all, as noted in point # 11, the law is NOT clear concerning this matter. How would one deduce from the text that gathering sticks is prohibited on the Sabbath? Furthermore, the implementation of the death penalty was also unclear. Why else would Moses have to go back to God for further instruction? The text actually says "it had not been clarified what should be done to him" (verse 34). In other words the original commandment was NOT clear. This tells us that every time the Torah speaks of the death penalty without specifying the specific method of execution, additional legislation is required. Since this additional legislation is not present in the text, we can be sure that it would be included in the oral traditions.

This is not the only case of Torah legislation that gives us a clear indication that there is more to it than what meets the eye.

Genesis 7:2,3 record God's directive to Noah to gather the animals to the ark. He was to take seven pairs (14 animals) of each of the kosher animals and two pairs (4 animals) of each of the non-kosher animals. Of the birds, he was to take seven pairs of each species without any distinction specified between kosher and non-kosher. Yet in verse 9, where the Torah describes how Noah fulfilled this directive we are told that two of each species came to Noah – "as God commanded him". No distinction is made between birds and other animals, and no distinction is made between kosher and non-kosher animals. The fulfillment of the commandment does not seem to match the commandment, implying that we need to read between the lines to fully understand this commandment.

In Exodus 12:24 we read how the same law of the Passover that was observed in Egypt should be observed for all generations. The immediate context would imply that this relates to the blood being placed on the doorposts and the lintel of the Jewish homes. Yet in 2 Chronicles 30:16, we find that Hezekiah fulfilled this directive by having the blood sprinkled on the altar in the Temple. There is more to the commandment than what meets the eye.

In Deuteronomy 27 verses 1 thru 26 we are given clear directives about building an altar in the land of Israel on the day that the Jewish people enter the land. In the book of Joshua

(8:30-35) we are told that Joshua fulfilled this directive. But here too, we find seeming discrepancies that demonstrate the need for a deeper reading. First of all, the text seems to indicate that Joshua did not build this altar on the day he entered the land, but rather some time later. The text in Deuteronomy indicates that there were to be two sets of stones, with one serving as an altar and the other is to have the entire Torah written upon it. Joshua wrote the Torah on the same stones of the altar. The wording of the commandment in Deuteronomy requires that the entire Torah be written on the stones, Joshua only wrote the book of Deuteronomy on the stones. And the text in Deuteronomy tell us that the Levites and the priests are to recite a set of curses, while the book of Joshua tells us that Joshua himself read from the scroll of the Torah the blessings and the curse, a detail that is not mentioned in Deuteronomy.

It is clear that a literal contextual reading of the commandments, as important as it is, will still not yield the full scope of each commandment.

#### **V. 27. Page 53**

*“The correct sense of the Torah is its plain, simple, grammatical sense, not an alleged “halachic” sense....And note this well: whenever we have Biblical evidence of how a law was to be interpreted, it is always according to the plain, literal meaning.”*

The same argument can be made in relation to prophecy. Whenever the prophets put forth a prediction, and the Tanach points to its fulfillment, it is ALWAYS in its plain grammatical sense. The point is so obvious that it does not need to be stated but we will still provide some examples.

Abraham was told that he will be granted a child who will be called “Isaac” (Genesis 17:19). This is exactly what happened (Genesis 21:1-3).

1 Kings 12:13 records how a prophet predicted Josiah’s birth and his violation of Jerobaam’s altar, which is exactly what happened (2 Kings 23:16)

1 Kings 21:19 has Elijah predicting that the dogs will lick the blood of Ahab in the same place that the dogs had licked the blood of Naboth. Again, this is precisely what happened (1 Kings 22:38).

But the Christian Scriptures argue for the Messiah-ship of Jesus on the basis of symbolic “fulfillment” of prophecy! If we look at the literal depiction of the Messiah in the Jewish Scriptures, we would never end up with Jesus.

To illustrate this point, when Brown was challenged (on a facebook exchange from June 9 2011) to provide examples of Jesus having fulfilled prophecy on a literal level he pointed to Matthew 4:14 and Matthew 21:5. The former speaks of Jesus relocating from Nazareth to Capernaum in “fulfillment” of Isaiah 8:23 (9:1) while the latter speaks of Jesus riding on a donkey in “fulfillment” of Zechariah 9:9. Reading these passages from the Jewish Scriptures in context will reveal that these prophecies were NOT fulfilled by Jesus in a contextual sense. Isaiah speaks of a victory over Israel’s enemies and Zechariah speaks of

a reign of peace, hardly a “literal” description of Jesus’ ministry.

**V. 28.** *Page 53-56*

Brown points to the legislation concerning the rebellious son (Deuteronomy 21:18-21) as an example of the rabbis “violating” the plain meaning of the text. The rabbis stated that this law will never be literally fulfilled. Brown considers the position of the Rabbis on this matter an unforgivable violation of the plain sense of Scripture.

Brown has provided the answer to his own question.

There are passages in the Christian Scriptures where Brown vociferously argues that cannot be taken at their immediate face value, but rather they must be read in the broader context of the complete message of Jesus. There are several examples that come to mind (such as John 8:44) but we will focus on one that Brown discusses later in this same volume.

Matthew 23:2,3 has Jesus declare: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses seat: all things therefore whatsoever they bid you, [these] do and observe...”

The obvious meaning of Jesus’ words is that his followers should obey the Pharisees because they sit on the seat of Moses. Yet in this same book (page 248 – 260) Brown argues that we not take Jesus’ words literally but rather we should read them in the broad context of his overall message (- we will demonstrate that Brown’s understanding of Jesus’ overall message is in this case exaggerated – point #69, but that is beside the point here).

If Brown recognizes that the overall context of the book can serve to alter the meaning of a given passage, he should be able to understand those few situations where the rabbinic understanding of a given passage takes the whole of Scripture into consideration.

There can be no question that the overall message of Scripture directs us to have compassion on our fellow man. This certainly holds true in the setting of parents towards their children. Scripture actually provides an example where the Law is set aside for just such a consideration (2 Samuel 14:5-11). Is it so difficult to understand that from a Scriptural perspective, parents would never bring their child to be executed by the court for disobeying them and for being gluttonous and drunk?

**V. 29.** *Page 56*

The second example that Brown provides for a rabbinic violation of the plain meaning of the text is the passage in Deuteronomy 25:11-12. In this text we learn that if a woman embarrasses another man, she is to have her hand chopped off, even if she acted in defense of her own husband.

The rabbis taught that this law is only applicable in a situation where the woman could have saved her husband through other means, and that her hand is not to be literally chopped off, but that she should pay a monetary fine.

Brown sees no textual justification for this rabbinical rendition of the law.

The fact is that there is ample justification for this teaching from the text of the Bible itself. In Numbers 35:31,32 we are instructed not to take a monetary redemption in place of the punishment for murder. This gives us to understand that for lesser crimes, a monetary exchange COULD be substituted for the punishment. This is explicitly stated in relation to one who's animal kills someone (Exodus 21:30). We can understand that when the Torah says "an eye for an eye", the option remains open for the court to set a monetary redemption instead of knocking out the eye of the guilty party.

To confirm this further, we find that when one person hits another and does not kill him, the Torah says "ONLY for his lost time shall he pay and provide for healing" (Exodus 21:19). The clear implication is that the one who hit the other person does NOT have to be hit in a likewise manner.

#### **V. 30. Page 57**

Brown provides another example of what he considers a rabbinic "violation" of Scripture. In Malachi 2:26 the prophet tells us that God hates divorce (or: He hates the one who divorces his wife). One of the interpretations that the Rabbis gave to this verse was that if one hates his wife, he should divorce her. Brown claims that this interpretation is the "*exact opposite*" of the intended meaning of the verse. Brown quotes various scholars who suggest that this rabbinic interpretation was invented in order to invalidate the Christian teaching against divorce.

There are a few points to take into consideration here. Actions talk louder than words. Christianity preaches against divorce. Judaism practices keeping families together. Statistical research has established that the divorce rate amongst Jews is a fraction of the divorce rate amongst either Protestants or Catholics (quoted in: "Permission to Receive", Lawrence Keleman, Targum Press 1996).

A second point to take into consideration is that the plain meaning of the verse is preserved and presented in both the Talmud and Rabbinic commentaries. The interpretation that Brown considers a "violation of the text" is not presented as the only meaning of the passage.

A third point to consider is that this interpretation of the rabbis is not the "exact opposite" of the plain meaning of the text. In fact it harmonizes completely with the spirit of the text. The passage speaks of suffering that husbands were causing their Jewish wives by marrying foreign women. The suffering is only exacerbated when the husband refuses to divorce his first wife and chains her to himself with the legal bonds of marriage.

Finally, it is in place to note that the rabbis had no motivation whatsoever to counteract “Christian teachings”. The teachings of Jesus had no impact on rabbinic thought at all. In this particular case, the teaching of Christianity is reflected in one of the rabbinical opinions that are mentioned in the Mishna (Gittin 9:10). So the Christian position on this issue would not be considered a “heretical teaching” that needs to be invalidated.

**V. 31.** *Page 61-62*

Brown quotes an Israeli professor who hypothesizes that Orthodox Jewish people are incapable of understanding the plain sense of Scripture.

With this argument, Brown has just invalidated Christianity. Were not the authors of the Christian Scriptures “Orthodox Jews”? A cursory reading of their writings reveals that they were incapable of understanding the plain sense of Scripture. This is not merely a wild accusation, but a serious argument with much evidence to support it.

While the broad stereotype of Orthodox Jews as people who are incapable of understanding the plain sense of Scripture is clearly a wild exaggeration, but it is not completely without substance. There is no question that one is capable of reading the commentaries of Rashi, Nachmanides, Ibn Ezra and Rashbam, (all of which are printed in the standard Jewish Five Volume Torah) will certainly be able to “understand the plain sense of Scripture” – but some of the more ignorant amongst us will often not realize that their understanding of Scripture is not in line with the literal contextual meaning. The common folk in the times of the Second Temple (- the time period of the authorship of the Christian Scriptures) acquired most of their knowledge from homiletical lectures given by the rabbis on Sabbaths and holy days. Many people who were not students of the Law would perhaps understand the homiletical applications interpretations of these preachers as the only meaning of the Scriptures. All indications give us to understand that the authors of the Christian Scriptures were from this category of the population. Their writings reflect this approach to the Jewish Scriptures. One who is capable of reading the Scriptures literally and contextually will never be taken in by the fanciful interpretations offered by the authors of the Christian Scriptures.

This particular argument presented by Brown, where he insists that Orthodox Jews are not capable of understanding the plain sense of Scripture, is actually an extreme example of: “biting the hand that feeds you”. In the dark ages, Christendom was locked into a non-contextual reading of Scripture. It was only when Christian scholars began studying the texts of the Jewish Bible commentators, such as Rashi and Radak, that Christianity began to read Scripture along the lines of plain, literal and contextual. If as Brown contends, that the Jewish people cannot read Scripture in context, then Christianity would still be in the dark ages.

**V. 32.** *Page 63*

Brown provides another example of a rabbinical “violation” of the Biblical text. Deuteronomy 25:6 seems to be saying that in a situation of a levirate marriage the firstborn child should “succeed in the name of his brother that is dead”. The obvious



meaning of this commandment is that the child be given the dead man's name, but the rabbis ruled otherwise. The Talmud states that it is not necessary to give the child the name of his dead uncle. The life of the child alone is considered to be a "succession" of the dead man.

Brown comments: *"This is yet another case of human traditions and interpretations making void the Written Torah."*

Interestingly, on page 109 of this volume, Brown supports the view that the commandment to wear phylacteries is not to be taken literally. Why is the commandment to give the child the name of the dead uncle any different? On second thought, there is a major difference between the two commandments. In the case of the phylacteries, there is no Biblical evidence whatsoever that the law is not to be fulfilled practically and literally. In sharp contrast, when it comes to naming the child of the levirate marriage we have explicit Biblical evidence that the commandment need not be fulfilled literally. In the book of Ruth, we are told that Boaz married Ruth for the same purpose of the levirate marriage.

All of the terminology that is used in Deuteronomy is used in Ruth (4:5,10), but the child was NOT given the name of the man who had died. It is obvious that the tradition that teaches that this commandment not be fulfilled literally was accepted by the author of the book of Ruth. Dr. Brown, you could ridicule our traditions, but then please be consistent and throw out the book of Ruth as well. If you want to hang on to the book of Ruth, please respect the traditions that are recorded there.

#### **V. 33.** *Page 63*

Brown presents his final example of a rabbinic "violation" of the text; Exodus 23:2. Brown terms the rabbinic interpretation of this text: *"astonishing, antigrammatical, noncontextual, reinterpretation"*.

The fact is that the oldest extant Jewish commentary on this verse; the Targum Yonatan, explains this verse literally and contextually in a way that supports the rabbinical interpretation. The Targum explains that the commandment expressed in this passage exhorts the judge not to misuse the court procedure of following a majority in a manner that will lead to a perversion of justice. The clear implication is that the accepted court procedure is to follow the majority of judges.

#### **V. 34.** *Page 69*

*"6) The Oral Law has large critical, gaps in its understanding of the written Word because most of its traditions came into existence centuries after the Scriptures were written."*

There are two fundamental flaws with this criticism of the oral traditions presented by Brown.

First, the premise of this criticism, that if part of a testimony is forgotten, that proves that all of it is false, simply doesn't make sense. The precise opposite is true. If it is so easy for the rabbis to disagree with each other and to admit that they forgot so much material, then this only highlights the areas of agreement. If there was some outside force coercing the people to accept one given interpretation, then why did it not succeed in establishing unanimity in all areas of the Law? The fact that the rabbis encouraged arguments, questions, and doubts only lends weight to those areas where we find these same rabbis in agreement.

The second flaw in Brown's presentation, is the tactic he uses to ward off the reasoning of the first flaw. Brown argues throughout his 8 page dissertation that the areas where the rabbis forgot the law are those details of the law that are Biblical in origin, while they are in agreement over laws that originated after the closing of the canon.

This is an obvious falsehood. The first example that Brown provides to establish his point immediately proves his premise wrong. Brown points to the unanimous agreement of the 39 forbidden labors on the Sabbath, which he labels: "*a creation of later rabbinic law*", and contrasts this agreement with a disagreement over the precise method for the ritual slaughtering of a bird in the Temple.

The 39 forbidden labors define a Biblical law: "You shall not do any labor" (Exodus 20:10). This is not a non-biblical legislation. This is an amazing example of unanimous agreement, over the span of generations, concerning the precise parameters of a BIBLICAL law.

Another example that Brown provides is the fact that the rabbis could not agree over the precise nature of the punishment that the Torah threatens those who violate the Sabbath, namely, having one's soul "cut off". According to Brown this is something he would have expected the people to remember.

From a Jewish standpoint Brown's position is laughable. It is obvious that those laws that bear directly on the practical life of the nation have the best chance of being remembered, while those laws that are not practically relevant are the most likely to be forgotten.

After the destruction of the Temple, the ritual of killing the bird by the altar was no longer practically fulfilled. Thus 1000 years after the destruction we find the rabbis in disagreement over the precise method of fulfilling this ritual. The laws of the Sabbath are relevant to the practical life of every Jew every week, so we could expect that these laws will be more accurately preserved.

The precise definition of the punishment of having one's soul "cut off" was never practically relevant. It is therefore understandable that the exact definition of this punishment was not preserved.

This argument of Brown reflects the sad irony of Christian theology. Brown and his fellow Christian theologians attach more significance to the punishment that God threatens in

the after-life than they do for the sin, here on earth, that God is warning us to avoid.

**V. 35.** Page 78

*“7) The fact that the rabbinic traditions had to be put in writing, beginning as early as 200 C.E., proves that there could not have been a previous, oral tradition passed down from Moses to the rabbis – meaning a period of roughly fifteen hundred years – without being written down.”*

This argument was addressed in point # 21. An additional point to be taken into consideration is the fact that even according to Brown, the traditions were preserved orally for at least four hundred years. It is clear that it is not “impossible” to preserve an oral tradition without books. If it could be done for four hundred years, then it is not “impossible”. The need for the books is related to the decline of the central leadership. It has nothing to do with the “impossibility” of preserving the information.

For illustrative purposes, let me share the following incident. At the time of this writing; (June 30 2011), I attended the funeral of Rabbi Chaim Stein. This teacher was imprisoned in Siberia during the Second World War. During that time period, he would give a daily Torah class for his fellow prisoners. His Torah class was based on the full scope of Rabbinic literature, and it followed a grueling day of back-breaking labor. This was done without a single book. Stories like this abound.

**V. 36.** Objection 6.3

*“The Torah (along with the rest of the Hebrew Bible) is unintelligible without the rabbinic traditions. From circumcision to Sabbath observance, from the vowels of the Masoretic text to the Messiah, we can only understand the Scriptures with the help of our traditions. Even common sense would tell you that every set of laws and rules needs ongoing oral explanation and interpretation. And let’s be realistic. Who am I to think that I can understand the Bible on my own? I have to ask my rabbi. In the same way that I go to the doctor with medical questions and to the lawyer with legal questions, I go to the rabbi with spiritual and biblical questions. Who am I to dispute him?”*

Here Brown presents one of the classic arguments that has traditionally been used to establish the veracity of the oral law. Before we get to his answer (or lack thereof) I would like to point out two flaws in the presentation of the question.

First, Brown exaggerates the extent of the question. By using the word “unintelligible” and by presenting the question: “who am I to think that I can understand the Bible on my own”, we get the impression that the Jewish argument posits that the Bible is completely unreadable without the traditions. This is inaccurate. We recognize that one could come to some comprehension of the Bible without the traditions, the question is how could a nation come to a unanimous observance of the Law without the traditions?

Another flaw in Brown’s presentation of the question is his inclusion of the concept: “Messiah” amongst those that are purportedly unintelligible without the traditions. This

is completely wrong. The Jewish concept of the Messiah is clearly spelled out in the Jewish Scriptures. It is not necessary to refer to the traditions to discover the Jewish Messiah. The Bible on its own provides a complete and comprehensive picture. It is the Christian concept of “Messiah” that is nowhere to be found in the Jewish Bible. It is only when one accepts the traditions developed by Christianity that they can “see” the Christian Messiah in the pages of the Jewish Scripture.

#### **V. 37. Page 96**

Brown gives a seven point answer to this Jewish objection. We will analyze his answer point by point.

*“First, the best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself, and the Word of God makes it clear to us that God’s laws were based on their plain literal sense, not on tortuous interpretations that are hardly related to the text.”*

No one will argue against the premise that the best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself. The question is what do we do when there are conspicuous gaps in the Bible’s directives? What are we to do when the “plain literal sense” of the Bible does not define basic requirements that are necessary for practical observance of the law?

*“Second, just because Judaism has preserved and developed many traditions doesn’t mean that those traditions are in harmony with Scripture. In fact, it is not hard to see that, in many cases, they are not.”*

I don’t see how this point relates to the question. In any case, as we have demonstrated (points #28 – 33), that what Brown sees as a rabbinic “violations” of Scripture, are in fact in complete harmony with Scripture.

*“Third, there are groups that take the Sabbath seriously and manage to do so successfully without rabbinic interpretation.”*

This is not true. The Karaites, who reject rabbinic interpretation were not able to maintain a unanimous observance of the Sabbath throughout their history. Their leaders had to invent various teachings in an effort to fill in the gaps left out by their rejection of the traditions. This led to a lack of cohesiveness within the Karaite community, and ultimately to their effective disappearance as a viable form of Judaism.

*“Fourth, God Himself said that He would give wisdom and understanding to those who study His Word and seek His face.”*

No one would dispute this. The question is, what does God’s “word” include? Did God grant the Jewish people any more understanding than is recorded in the book? If He did, as the Jewish people maintain, then this too is part of His word that ought to be studied in humility before God.

*“Fifth, nowhere does the Word of God tell us that we must go to the rabbis to understand what the Bible says.”*

False. God appointed the priests and the Levites to teach the people. We are directed to bring our questions to the judges (Deuteronomy 17:9). The teachers of the law play a prominent role in the Bible’s depiction of the national observance of the law (see point # 15 for the relevant references).

*“Sixth, there have been times in our history where our leaders have misled us. How can we unhesitatingly follow them without question?”*

It is indeed true that there were times when many of our leaders were mistaken. But it never happened that ALL of our leaders went wrong. God and His truth always had representation amongst the men who Israel recognized as her leaders. Whenever the nation had to correct itself, it always had leaders from within Israel to whom they could turn. This is all part of God’s promise to preserve His spirit in our midst (Isaiah 59:21). God’s law is the exclusive inheritance of the congregation of Jacob (Deuteronomy 33:4, Psalm 147:19,20). Brown’s suggestion that we turn to people like Martin Luther for guidance, is as unbiblical as it is ridiculous.

*“Seventh, there are large areas of disagreement even within Judaism. Are the ultra-Orthodox right? The Reform Jews would surely take exception to that, pointing out that they constitute a larger percentage of world Jewry than do the Orthodox or ultra-Orthodox. Orthodox Rabbis do not even recognize the authenticity, let alone a legitimate role of communal leadership, of Reform rabbis. So, even within our traditions, there are some very large areas of division. What makes you so sure that the whole system is therefore trustworthy?”*

I find this argument astounding. The Reform and Conservative movements began with a rejection of the traditions as the previous generation handed them down. Those who maintained a loyalty to the traditions managed to maintain a cohesiveness that spans the boundaries of culture, geography and time. How could Brown point to philosophies that reject the traditions as “evidence” for fragmentation within the traditions? Furthermore, what alternative is Brown offering us? Is it Protestant Christianity that cannot agree about fundamental issues such as the alleged divinity of Jesus? (- To say nothing of the myriads of other disagreement that plague Protestant Christianity).

#### **V. 38. Page 96**

Brown speaks of the Catholic Church’s history of preventing people from reading the Bible. He then turns to his Jewish reader and asks: *“How is it that you, as a Jew, don’t feel free to read the Bible on your own, with humility before the Lord and come to your own conclusions?”*

As if rabbinic Judaism could in any way be equated with the Catholic Church! As if it wasn’t the scholars of rabbinic Judaism (note – it wasn’t Karaite scholars) who provided the impetus for the Protestant reformation with their commentaries that focused on the

plain literal sense of the Bible (see point #31). As if these commentaries are not printed in popular versions of the printed Torah. A Jew is encouraged to read the Bible according to its plain meaning, and if he or she needs help, it will be readily available from the same scholars who guided the early Christian thinkers in this field (Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Radak, Ralbag). What the Jew will discover when he or she reads the Bible according to its plain meaning is that in order to observe the law together with the nation as a whole, they will need some supplemental information. They will recognize that the additional information is available when the Bible is read from within the social context of Israel's spiritual heritage.

#### **V. 39.** *Page 97*

Brown points to the *“millions of Christians who read the Pentateuch on a regular basis – entirely on their own, with little or no help from a human teacher – finding edification, insight, and guidance...”*

What Brown does not tell us is that these millions of Christians believe that the Law of Moses is obsolete. Why would they need help in applying a law that they were taught is no longer applicable? If you are a Christian, and if you believe that the law of Moses is no longer applicable – please read the words of Moses. Ask yourself: what more could the writer have written to teach us that this law is relevant for every generation of Jews? Is Paul's teaching that the Law was “nailed to the cross” consistent with the teaching of Moses?

#### **V. 40** *pages 98 – 132*

*“Before addressing some specific questions, such as, “How can we observe the Sabbath without the oral traditions?” let's look at the broader issue of how God spoke to our people in the past.”*

I think that the reader will find Brown's treatment of this significant question (“how can we observe the Sabbath without the oral traditions”) – quite revealing.

The aforementioned quote is found on page 98. Brown continues by reiterating some of the arguments he already mentioned in objection 6.1. On page 100, Brown goes through some of the laws which seem to be fully explicated in the Torah. On page 101 he moves to Nehemia Gordon's argument from the public reading of the Torah every seven years. He then analyzes the reading of the Torah mentioned in Nehemiah 8:7,8. This analysis goes on until page 105. On that page he pokes fun at some of the rabbinic traditions associated with Ezra, Hezekiah and Abraham. Finally on page 107, he gets back to the question: *“But what about the Sabbath?” you ask. “You still haven't explained how to observe this commandment without the oral explanations.”*

Brown spends a bit of time explaining the question but he quickly moves back on to the attack. On page 108 he mentions a preposterous theory of his that he promises to substantiate in objection 6.6 (see point # 49) But he seems to have forgotten the Sabbath question because he moves on to a lengthy discussion about tefillin. This discussion

continues to page 113. On page 113 Brown attacks the rabbinic usage of the phrase “halacha leMoshe miSinai – a law given to Moses at Sinai. This brings us to page 117. Brown moves on to discuss the laws of Sukka, boiling a kid in its mother’s milk and sidelocks. On page 122 Brown realizes that his readers might be getting impatient from his procrastination: *“but you still didn’t answer the question about Sabbath observance”*. Brown spends the next nine pages poking fun at some of the laws of rabbinic Judaism that deal with Sabbath observance as well as other observances. Finally on page 131, Brown begins to supply his answer to the question he posed on page 98. If Brown believed his answer adequately addressed the question, then why did he feel it needed a 30 page introduction attacking the oral traditions?

When we examine his answer it become obvious why he felt the need to hide it behind a 30 page introduction that is unrelated to the question.

*“How then do I understand the Torah’s prohibition against work on the Sabbath? My answer actually presupposes that where much information was needed in the understanding of the particular laws, God gave that information in the Torah (as noted above, at the outset of this answer), and where little information was needed, God only gave what was needed.”*

If you noticed, Brown still did not answer the question. He goes on to make 5 points about Sabbath observance according to his understanding of the Torah. We will address these individually.

*“That means that: 1) in an agrarian society such as ancient Israel, there was a general understanding of what constituted “work”;*”

This theory does not negate the need for an authoritative oral tradition. Since in our modern times this “meaning” has been lost, we need some method of communicating the understanding of the word: “work” from Moses’ generation to the present. The only viable claim for such a communication is the oral traditions of Rabbinical Judaism.

*“2) God was not concerned with all the minute details and questions raised by Talmudic Judaism ...”*

This is a statement, not an answer to the question. Again, to remind the reader, the question was how do you understand the Torah prohibition against work on the Sabbath?

*“3) The death penalty was for a flagrant violation of the commandment to cease from work on the Sabbath, as evidenced by the one example of this enforced in the Torah (see immediately below), not for the rabbinic interpretation of the commandment.”*

Another irrelevant statement that does not answer the original question. As for the example provided by the Torah – see immediately below.

*“4) When Moses was unaware of something he went to God ..., and later, questionable cases and situations could be brought before the local elders, leaders, or prophets for*

*counsel and revelation”*

Let us assume that Moses did ask God for more information. Where would we find a record of this additional revelation? How is this different than saying that God originally gave Moses additional revelation?

As for Brown’s suggestion that the counsel of the elders maybe used to fill in the necessary blanks in the Scriptural legislation; the question will then arise, who is authorized to render these decisions? And who maintained a record of these decisions?

The oral traditions of Israel embody the only credible claim for the record of the additional revelation that was granted to Moses and of the decisions handed down by the authorized courts.

*“5) at some point, further national trends and customs would naturally develop, but at any time those trends and customs become binding and contrary to the spirit of the Torah, it would be right to address this and correct it, which is the very thing that Yeshua did during his ministry, exposing the wrong direction in which some of the Sabbath traditions were going ...”*

Again, this statement is not a response to the original question posed. We can all agree that if customs arise that are contrary to the spirit of the Torah, then it is incumbent upon the spiritual leadership of the nation to correct those trends; something the spiritual leadership of Israel is constantly doing. The question remains; who is the spiritual leadership of Israel? The Jews of Yeshua’s time did not see him as a spiritual leader of Israel, and history has only vindicated their decision.

Brown goes on to argue: *“In Jesus’ day, there were different groups of observant Jews – such as the Qumran community (which most scholars understand to be the Essenes) – and they diligently kept the Sabbath, without being bound by the Pharisaic traditions”* This argument is both inaccurate and self-defeating. It is inaccurate because the Qumran community did accept many of the Pharisaic traditions about the Sabbath as documented by Lawrence Schiffman in his book: *“Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls”*, in many cases going further than the Pharisees in their strictness of interpreting the law. Brown’s argument is self-defeating because even if the Qumran community did have a different understanding of the Sabbath laws, God did not preserve the Qumran’s rendition of the Sabbath observance. The Pharisee understanding of Sabbath law is the only credible claim for fulfillment of God’s promise that the observance of the Sabbath will stand as an eternal sign between Himself and the people of Israel (Exodus 31:17).

Brown continues to defend his rejection of the traditions as they relate to the Sabbath: *“Some of these groups continue to observe the Sabbath in our day – Messianic Jews will tell you that they do it in light of the teachings of the Tanakh as a whole along with the teachings of the New Testament ...”*

What Brown does not tell you is that many Messianic Jews have come to recognize the validity of the traditions. Messianic leaders such as Mark Kinzer and John Fisher have



presented the argument that since the rabbinic community is the context within which God preserved His Law, that is the context within which the Law must be observed. These leaders have come to accept many of the rabbinic traditions concerning the Sabbath.

#### V. 41. Page 111

In the course of his 30 page essay (98 – 131) that goes between the question about Sabbath observance and Brown's answer to that question, Brown discusses the Oral Law as it relates to "tefillin" (phylacteries). Brown contends that the tefillin found in Qumran contained the Ten-Commandments in contradistinction to the rabbinical understanding of this commandment. Brown goes on to say: "*Looking specifically at the Talmudic texts in question, it's clear that there was a battle over whose tradition was right – in this case, the Pharisaic tradition or the tradition reflected in the Qumran community – hence the strong words against those who differed (for this pattern in Rabbinic Judaism, see 6.4 below)...*" Brown goes on to quote Sanhedrin 11:3.

This argument is completely erroneous.

First, I find Brown's presentation of the facts amazing. The Written Torah gives no specifics at all about tefillin. We have archeological evidence from the Qumran community that supports almost every aspect of the rabbinic understanding of this commandment. The tefillin were black, they were made of leather, they were square, they had a place in the back for a leather strap to go through, they contained the four passages that the rabbis dictated that they contain, and they all had four sections. In all of these areas, every unit of tefillin found in Qumran conforms to and confirms the rabbinical understanding of the passage. There is one area, in which some of the tefillin found in Qumran differ from rabbinic tefillin and that is that some of them contained additional passages in them. None of them designated a fifth section for the additional passages, but some did contain additional passages. So there is ONE limited area, in which SOME of the Qumran tefillin differ from rabbinic tefillin. Furthermore, even in this one area, the Qumran tefillin are not unanimous. Contrary to Brown's presentation which contends that the additional passage inserted by the Qumran community was the Ten-Commandments, the facts are not quite as Brown would have them. The Qumran tefillin contained a variety of additional passages, not only the Ten-Commandments. So even amongst those who differed from the Pharisaic understanding of the law, there was no unanimous consensus. It is not as Brown would have his readers believe that the Qumran community possessed a different tradition that was clearly in opposition to the Pharisees. The archeological evidence proves that the Qumran community unanimously accepted almost every detail of the rabbinic tradition as it relates to tefillin, and in one area they present a confused divergence.

Second and more importantly, Brown's quotation of the Talmud is completely inappropriate. The Talmud criticizes those who make tefillin with five partitions or five sections. Not one unit of tefillin found in Qumran contained five sections. Every last one of them consisted of the rabbinically proscribed four partitions. Some of them possessed additional Scriptural passages but NONE of them added a fifth section. So Brown's quotation of the Talmud is simply inapplicable. Brown's attempt to portray the Rabbis as

a bunch of closed minded fanatics who persecuted their opponents with every means available to them has no basis outside of Brown's imagination.

#### **V. 42.** *Pages 133-134*

Here Brown deals with the incident described in Numbers 15 (verses 32-35) where a man was put to death for gathering sticks on the Sabbath. The question arises, if as Brown argues nothing more was taught by Moses other than the words written in the book, how would anyone know that gathering sticks is forbidden on the Sabbath?

Brown responds to the argument that this passage proves the existence of an Oral Law: *"... it does not. It could well be that the law against gathering the manna on the Sabbath in Exodus 16 provided insight about gathering sticks on the Sabbath; it could be that the man was gathering wood for a fire that he was about to make on the Sabbath, in violation of Exodus 35:3, or it could be that his normal daily work required him to gather sticks, and he decided to do it on the Sabbath. The bottom line is this: If we were the to witness the event, we would have known the man's guilt..."*

This is exactly the point. Without the Oral Law there is no way of knowing with any certainty what exactly did this man do so that we should not repeat his mistake. Brown offers his own conjectures (each of which is seriously flawed), but he has no conclusive resolution. This may be an option for someone who does not observe the fourth of the Ten Commandments. But for those of us who take God's word seriously, it is important for us to know what is prohibited on the Sabbath so that we can obey our Heavenly Father. The Oral Law provides the only credible method of understanding the violation of this sinner so that we can learn from his mistake.

As for Brown's conjectures, I would have to reject all of them. The prohibition against collecting the manna focuses on leaving one's place in order to get to the manna and not on the act of collecting (Exodus 16:29). Brown's conjecture that the man was gathering the sticks in order to make a fire which is prohibited in Exodus 35 is also untenable. If it is the making of the fire which is the prohibited act then why does the Torah emphasize the gathering of the sticks? Does Brown want to argue that the death penalty for violating the Sabbath extends also to those who intend to violate the Sabbath but have not carried out their intentions? And Brown's third theory is no better than his first two proposals. He seems to be proposing that any normal activity that could be done during the weekday would be prohibited on the Sabbath, (perhaps limited to the context of earning money – which is never associated with the Hebrew word for "work"). Would Brown prohibit a teacher from teaching on the Sabbath, or a cantor from singing in the synagogue? Are all forms of "work" prohibited on the Sabbath on the pain of death?

#### **V. 43.** *Page 134-135*

Brown argues that: *"...it has often been noted that Jewish groups that predate the Pharisees by centuries have no knowledge of many of the customs and interpretations of the Oral law."* Brown makes reference to two groups of people who "predate" the Pharisees. He quotes an account in the Talmud in reference to the Cutheans, and he

speaks of the Ethiopian group; the Beta Israel.

Concerning the Cutheans, Brown writes: *“Of course, traditional Jews look scornfully at the “Jewishness” of these groups (wether Cutheans and Samaritans are to different groups or the same group)...”*

I find this statement highly offensive. The scorn that Jews have towards the Cutheans (another name for the Samaritans) is based on Scripture. 2Kings 17:24-33 records how the King of Assyria brought certain gentile nations to inhabit the lands of the exiled ten-tribes. The passage describes their half-hearted conversion to Judaism by a priest of the Ten-Tribes. The book of Ezra (4:3) describes how Zerubbabel rejected the offer of the Samaritans to build the Temple with the Jewish people, and the subsequent efforts of the Samaritans to frustrate the building of Jerusalem and of the Temple.

The Samaritans reject the account in Kings as fictitious; they claim that they are descended of the Ten-Tribes. As one who believes in Scripture, Brown would have to agree with the “scorn” of traditional Jews towards the Jewishness of “these groups”. Yet for polemical purposes, he projects an image as if it is a quirk of “traditional Jews” to doubt the Jewishness of the Samaritans.

Brown goes on to quote a footnote in the Soncino Talmud: *“the Samaritans had more regard for the Written Law than for the Rabbis”*. A few lines later Brown jumps to the conclusion: *“The Oral Law meant nothing to them”*.

The facts are quite different than Brown would have his readers believe. The Samaritans possess many of the oral traditions. These include but are not limited to; the understanding that the prohibition of work on the Sabbath includes even minor activities that would not be categorized as “work” by the Western definition of the word (incidentally, this belief is common to every Jewish group of antiquity), the understanding that it is inappropriate to use God’s name in common conversation (- they use the word “shema” roughly parallel to the modern usage of “Hashem”), the understanding that the ten days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur are days of repentance, as well as many other traditions. More significantly as it relates to this discussion, is the fact that this community considers the traditions of the community to be the only valid context for living out the law, and the concept of “Sola Scriptura” to the exclusion of the community’s traditions is unthinkable to them.

What the Samaritans do NOT share with the Jewish people is the belief that God chose Jerusalem as the place to rest His presence, and they reject the Davidic dynasty as well. Their version of the Scripture does not include most of the canon and the sections that they do include (The Five Books of Moses and the Book of Joshua) differ in many ways from the books that we possess. It is obvious that these concepts were accepted by the Jewish people after the split between the Ten-Tribes and the Judean kingdom. Why does Brown, who does not “scorn” the Jewishness of these people, accept our canon? Why does he accept the Davidic dynasty and the choice of Jerusalem? As one who respects the Jewishness of these people, he should respect their opinion on these matters as well.

Brown moves on to speak about the Beta Israel. Here Brown is a bit more careful. Instead of claiming that he Oral Law means “*nothing to them*”, he argues that: “*they are ignorant of many of the customs of the Oral law*”. What Brown does not come out and say is that they are fully cognizant of many of the teachings of the Oral Law that Brown has spent many pages ridiculing, such as the understanding that the prohibition of “work” on the Sabbath includes many minor activities, that the prohibition of cooking a kid in its mother’s milk forbids cooking all meat and milk together, and the understanding that the ten days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur are days of repentance. This group also believes that the traditions of the community are the only living context from which to approach the law. They never heard of the Protestant notion of “Sola Scriptura” to the exclusion of the traditions of the community.

It is interesting to note, that their version of Scripture also differs from both the Jewish and the Protestant canon. The Beta Israel included the book of Jubilees in their Scriptural canon. Would Brown entertain the possibility that the book of Jubilees should be included in the canon on the basis of the opinion of the Beta Israel?

The simple historical fact is that when a small group becomes isolated from the main body of the community, they will lose some of the teachings of the community with the passage of time and that they will drift towards a literal understanding of the Five Books of Moses. This is natural and understandable. The Oral Law requires an ongoing living discussion with the participation of the community to keep it alive. But the fact that these groups all maintain some of the tenets of the Oral Law can only mean one thing; that the Oral Law has its origin before these groups lost contact with the main body of the community.

One more note before closing our discussion about the Samaritans and the Beta Israel. Every group of people that claimed a connection to Judaism, including the Sadducees, the Essenes, the Samaritans, the Ebionites (a group who claimed to be the physical descendants of Jesus’ Jewish disciples, and who were eradicated by the Gentile Church), the Beta Israel and the Karaites; all agree upon certain basic fundamentals. These groups all agree; that all worship ought to be directed to the One who revealed Himself to our ancestors at Sinai to the exclusion of anyone or anything else, and that this One God is not to be represented by anything or anyone, that when we repent – God forgives, that observance of the Torah is central in the relationship our nation shares with God, and that the redeemer will be a human being, a descendant of Abraham Isaac and Jacob, who will reign over a world in which God’s presence is manifest in His Temple. These are the common beliefs that all of these groups share. Christian Jews such as Dr. Brown, who argue for a man-god, no forgiveness through repentance, a marginalization of Torah observance, and a vision of the future that is not centered on a Temple of God – have effectively cut themselves off from the very core of the stream of Jewish history.

Brown tells us that the Orthodox Rabbinate required the Beta Israel to undergo a conversion because their status as Jews was questionable. The context implies that the reason their Jewishness was called into question was because of their lack of observance of the Oral Law. This assertion is completely false. The fact is that their Jewishness was called into question because of the distinct possibility of these people being descended from Gentiles. Many modern scholars recognize that there were groups of Ethiopian

Christians, who recognized the falsity of Christianity, adopted a Jewish way of life. (In case you might think that this theory is preposterous, please check out the modern Ugandan group: the Abuyudaya, who are in the process of experiencing precisely this phenomena.) It is the genealogy of the Beta Israel that is causing the “problem”, not their belief. Their belief might be a factor in demonstrating that there is a problem with their genealogy, but the belief in and of itself would not mandate that they undergo a conversion process. Many respected rabbinical authorities did not require the Beta Israel to undergo a conversion process, despite the fact that their beliefs do not include many segments of the Oral Law. It is only because of the question of genealogical roots that some authorities require the conversion.

#### **V. 44.** *Objection 6.4*

Brown disputes the rabbinic interpretation of Deuteronomy 17:8-13 which posits that the courts are authorized to rule in all matters of Torah law, and that their decision is to be heeded at the pain of death. Brown proposed that the correct interpretation of this passage limits the authority of the high court to matters of civil and criminal law.

Brown does not explain how his interpretation fits with the text. Why would someone whom the court ordered to pay a ten dollar payment to his friend be put to death for refusal to obey the court? Why would the court not do what every other court on this planet would do – that is to enforce its ruling by taking the ten dollars from the guilty party and giving it to the intended recipient?

Even more disturbing is the fact that Brown is ignoring Scripture’s own interpretation of this text. In 2Chronicles 19:5-11 we read how Jehoshaphat fulfilled the teaching of Deuteronomy 17. The language used in Chronicles (2Chronicles 19:10) directly parallels the language used in Deuteronomy (17:8), leaving us with no doubt that these two passages are intimately connected. The passage in Chronicles concludes with Jehoshaphat telling the judges that every matter pertaining to God should be referred to the priest and every matter pertaining to the king should be referred to a royal official. Note; the Bible says “EVERY” matter pertaining to God’s law should be directed to the priest, not only criminal and civil law, which would fall under the jurisdiction of the king in any case (see 2Samuel 15:2, Jeremiah 21:12). It is clear that the authority of the high court applies to every detail of God’s law.

Even more disturbing is the fact that Brown was handed this information approximately a decade before his fifth volume went to print. I present this argument from 2Chronicles in my booklet; “You are My Witnesses” that I personally handed to Brown 10 years ago. If Brown found a flaw in my argument, I am sure he would have shared it with his readers.

#### **V. 45.** *Page 146-147*

Brown quotes the Chazon Ish, (Rabbi A. Y. Karelitz), who speaks of a certain level of Divine inspiration that guides Israel’s judges. Brown simply rejects this claim.

It is interesting to note that the sober, practical and time-tested leadership of the saintly men who the Jewish people identify as people who live the spirit of God's Law cannot, according to Brown, be inspired from on high. Yet Brown has no problem accepting prophetic claims from people like David Hogan or John Kilpatrick. In case you don't know who these people are you may find these links helpful (- these are from a Christian organization).

<http://www.christianissues.com/hogan.html>

<https://discernmentministriesinternational.wordpress.com/tag/david-hogan/>

<http://www.equip.org/article/the-counterfeit-revival-part-three/>

<http://answering-judaism.blogspot.com/2014/01/response-to-michael-brown-on-be-careful.html>

#### **V. 46. Pages 155**

*“Aside from the fact that it is ironic to see traditional Jewish scholars praising both the alleged practicality of their Sabbath laws and soundness of the Oral Law’s interpretation of the Torah, the question must be asked again: Why the polemics? Why charge these other Jewish groups (specifically, the Karaites) with “sitting in spiritual darkness all their lives” in an explanatory note to a Torah translation?”*

This question: *“Why the polemics?”* is coming in the midst of 20 page polemic against the authority of the judges of Israel. Brown appeals to his readers to look to the plain sense of Scripture and to prophets for guidance. What Brown fails to tell his readers is that the plain sense of Scripture reads differently for people of different societies and different mentalities. What Brown fails to tell his readers is that the Scripture subjects the prophets to the authority of the judges (Deuteronomy 13:2-6, 18:20-22).

Even more telling than these failures is Brown’s failure to tell his readers that when Jesus presents his version of a “higher” law, he finds the need to engage in polemics. Jesus wasn’t satisfied to present his teachings on morality. He found it necessary to bad-mouth the judges of Israel to his audience. He wasn’t satisfied with some benign statement like: “they sit in darkness”, he needed to go much further. “Brood of vipers”, “children of hell”, “murderers”, “liars”, “children of the devil” serve as but a sampling of Jesus’ treasury of “higher morality”.

Those who read the polemical statements of the rabbinical leadership were never moved to violence against the Karaite community. They distanced themselves from them, they would not interact with them, but they never hurt them. Jesus’ rhetoric against the Pharisees inspired a history of dehumanization and violence that spans the centuries.

*“Why the polemics?”* Why indeed?

#### **V. 47. Page 161**

Brown ends this section of his dissertation with the following words: *“The prophet proclaimed, All men are like grass, and their glory is the flowers of the field” (Isa. 40:6b). This includes you and me; this includes the most favored and exalted human beings; this includes the rabbis too. “The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the Lord blows on them. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall,*

*but the word of our God stands forever.” (Isa. 40:7-8) That alone is our sure foundation. Put your trust in God’s holy word, not in the reasoning and deductions of mere flesh and blood. I ask you again: How can you go wrong?”*

Did you notice? The prophet says ALL men; this includes (according to Brown, and I agree with him here) *“the most favored and exalted human beings”* – including Jesus of-course. Jesus’ Jewish following withered and died within a few generations of his own death. The Gentile believers in Jesus went and established a Church that failed miserably according to Brown’s own interpretation of Scripture. So who will you trust? Is it in the reasoning and deductions of people like Paul and Brown, whose methods have failed again and again? Or will you trust in God, in His word and in the community whom He chose as His witnesses (Isaiah 43:10) and within which He chose to rest His presence even here in exile (Ezekiel 11:16)?

#### **V. 48. Objection 6.5**

*“We have an eternal covenant that was given at Mt. Sinai, and anyone who tells us to deviate from that covenant is either a false prophet, a false teacher or both. Just look at the last verse in your “Old Testament”. What does it say? Remember the Law of Moses! That’s why we reject Christianity. It’s a foreign religion and a deviation from Sinai. Brown responds to this Jewish Objection with the words: “The real issue is: Does Sinai ultimately point to Yeshua the Messiah or to the traditions of the rabbis?”*

Sinai points to observance of the Law of Moses and encourages loyalty to the God who revealed Himself at Sinai to the exclusion of every other entity. The Jewish followers of Jesus have by and large abandoned the Law of Moses and have pledged their hearts to a man who was not revealed to our ancestors at Sinai.

Further on in this section, Brown presents another Scriptural argument for this same Jewish objection. *“But what about Deuteronomy 30, which states emphatically that after we have experienced judgment and dispersion, when we repent and return to observance of the Torah, we will be brought back to the land? That means that the central issue is Torah observance, right until the last moment before the Messianic age. Brown’s presentation of this Jewish Objection is inaccurate. The passage makes it abundantly clear that Torah observance is the central issue not only UNTIL the Messianic age but also into and including the Messianic age. The passage tells us that after the circumcision of the heart and after we come to a complete love of God we will observe all of the commandments that Moses taught us (Deuteronomy 30:8).*

In any case, Brown’s response to the objection is simply astonishing. He assures his readers that he will respond to this question in Objection 6.12, but he fails to do so! (There is a brief discussion about Deuteronomy 30 in Objection 6.10, but Brown does not answer this question there either.)

#### **V. 49. Objection 6.6**

In this objection, Brown addresses some of those passages in Scripture that seem to indicate that the oral traditions were being practiced in Biblical times. Brown responds to this objection with the following argument: *“To the contrary, the biblical texts are the source of the later rabbinic laws. It is preposterous to claim that someone who lived at least five hundred years before the rabbis got his traditions from them. Logic would tell you that it is the reverse, and that the rabbis based their traditions on the biblical accounts. I might as well argue that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. helped provide the inspiration to President Abraham Lincoln to free the slaves.”*

*Let me ask you a question. If you found an identical sentence in a speech from George Washington and Ronald Reagan, would you say that Washington borrowed the phrase from Reagan or that Reagan borrowed the phrase from Washington?”*

Brown continues with his ridicule of the Jewish Objection (as if we would argue that Washington was quoting Reagan) throughout his 15 page response. By repeating this refrain, Brown gives the impression as if those who argue for the authenticity of the Oral Law are dim-witted imbeciles who cannot figure out that Washington could not possibly have quoted Reagan.

Brown half-heartedly acknowledges that this is not quite the argument of those who believe in the Oral Law. He writes on behalf of his opponents: *“It’s obvious that you don’t understand. The Talmud contains many traditions that go all the way back to Moses, so when we see people in the Bible doing things that are taught in the Talmud, we know that they got it from our traditions.”*

In other words, Brown is acknowledging that the Jewish argument is not that Washington is quoting Reagan, but that the fact that Washington quotes the phrase, proves that Reagan didn’t invent it on his own.

Brown responds: *Actually, I understand perfectly, and there is no question that the oral tradition learned things from Daniel, Nehemiah, and others in the Bible rather than the reverse.”*

I will take the liberty to interrupt Brown’s response. The issue is not who learned what from who. The question is: How old are the traditions? The fact that they are mentioned in the Bible certainly serves as evidence that they were NOT invented in Talmudic times. Let us continue with Brown’s response: *How can I be so sure? It’s really quite simple, based on what we know. 1) We know when Daniel and Nehemiah lived and we know when the Talmudic rabbis lived. 2) The only evidence we have is what is written in the text, and the texts of Daniel and Nehemiah predate the texts of the Talmud by hundreds of years. 3) We know that in the decades before the Second Temple was destroyed, there were different Jewish groups all claiming to have the authentic interpretation of the biblical text – most prominently, the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Essenes – and they did not even agree between themselves on things as important as the details of the laws of Sabbath observance.”*



We are discussing the question of the age of the oral traditions – do they go back to Moses or were they invented after the sealing of the Bible? We point to certain traditions that were practiced or promoted by Biblical figures, which certainly indicates that the traditions were NOT invented after the sealing of the canon. Brown's response? Again; he presents the Jewish argument as if we are proposing that Jeremiah and Daniel studied the printed Talmud. The first two points that he sets forth as his response are actually the very basis of this Jewish argument. It is because we know when Daniel lived and because we know when the Talmudic rabbis lived that we can make the argument that if a Talmudic tradition appears in the book of Daniel, this must mean that the Talmud is not the inventor of the tradition.

His third point, relating to the different groups in the late Second Temple period, is just a repetition of his previous argument. He is basically saying; "I have already presented my arguments to the effect that there is no validity to the oral traditions so your argument must be wrong." If there was ever an example of circular reasoning, this is it.

Brown goes on to state: "*There is not one scintilla of proof that any of those traditions existed before they were recorded in the Scriptures...*"

Let us examine one of the examples that this argument of Brown is purportedly refuting. Jeremiah rebukes the people for violating the Sabbath and encourages them to observe it (Jeremiah 17:19-27). The text makes it clear that Jeremiah was not presenting a new law, but was encouraging the people to observe the law that had been presented to their ancestors (verse 22). So how can Brown say that there is "*not a scintilla of proof*" that these traditions existed before they were recorded in Scripture? The Scripture explicitly refers to these laws as: "just as I have commanded your ancestors". The rabbis did not need to learn these laws from Jeremiah. They could have learned them from the same ancestors that Jeremiah identifies as the original people who were presented with these laws.

Brown speaks of the Sabbath laws according to his own Protestant understanding in which prohibited work would only include people being involved in their primary means of earning a livelihood. In keeping with his understanding of the work prohibited on the Sabbath, he therefore contends that the carrying of loads mentioned by Jeremiah must be limited to "*work-related loads*" – in the sense of the Western concept of work which is associated with earning a livelihood.

The fact is that there is "*not a scintilla of proof*" to this interpretation. Every record that we possess from every sect of Judaism (including the Sadducees, the Essenes, the Samaritans and even the Beta Israel) indicate that they believed that the work prohibited on the Sabbath was NOT limited to "*work-related*" activities in the Western sense of the word. Rather, the records that we possess from each of these groups clearly demonstrate that they all believed that the work prohibited on the Sabbath included many minor activities that would never be considered "work" in the Western sense of the word. Brown is imposing his own anachronistic understanding of Jeremiah onto the text, ignoring every historical document on the subject, and this serves as the basis for his accusations

against Judaism.

Not only is Brown ignoring the historical evidence, he is also ignoring the Biblical evidence. The Torah clearly distinguishes between the work prohibited on the Sabbath and the work prohibited on the other holy days. On the Sabbath we are commanded not to do any “melacha” (-work). This word is not qualified in any way, the Torah simply says “all work” (Exodus 20:10) . When the Torah describes the work prohibited on the other holy days, the term it uses is “melechet avoda” (translated by the KJV as “servile work” – Leviticus 23:7,21,25,36). The Torah further qualifies this prohibition by allowing “that which is done for food for every man” (Exodus 12:16). In other words, on the holy days aside from the Sabbath we are permitted to do work which is necessary to prepare food for people to eat, but on the Sabbath we would not be allowed to do such work – on the pain of death! Not quite the Western understanding of “work” prohibited on the Sabbath. Instead of talking about George Washington quoting Ronald Reagan, we should be speaking of Jeremiah and Moses quoting Michael Brown.

One more observation before we leave this subject. In endnote# 276 Brown writes: *“Jeremiah did not say, “Remember what is taught in the Oral Torah, specifically, that you are not allowed to carry anything from a public domain to a private domain, or vice versa. You know the traditions.”* The fact that Jeremiah doesn’t use Brown’s formulation of his rebuke serves as “proof” that he wasn’t referring to the Oral Torah.

This argument underscores Brown’s lack of comprehension of the concept of “Oral Torah”. The whole concept of seeing the Oral Torah as something different than the Written Torah only applies in a discussion such as this one, where the authenticity of the Oral Torah is being called into question. But in a setting where the authenticity of the Oral Torah is an accepted fact, the word “Torah” clearly includes the Written Torah as understood in the context of the traditions.

The fact is that Jeremiah says: “and you shall sanctify the Sabbath as I commanded your fathers”. What more could Jeremiah say to tell us that he is referring to the Sabbath that we received from our fathers? Does this phrase not tell us that our father’s collective memory is a repository of information that is recognized by the prophet as legitimate and authentic?

#### **V. 50. Pages 178-179**

Brown discusses the fast-days that were instituted as an expression of the nation’s grief over the destruction of the First Temple. In Zechariah 7:1-3 we find that the question was presented to the priests and the prophets as to whether these fast-days should still be observed now that the Temple was being rebuilt. God addresses the prophet concerning these fast-days and informs him that these fast-days will turn into days of rejoicing (Zechariah 8:19).

Moses did not command us to keep these fast-days. These were instituted by the spiritual leadership of the nation as was the holiday of Purim (Esther 9:31). It is obvious from the narrative in Zechariah (and from the book of Esther as well) that the institutions of the

spiritual leadership of Israel is something that God takes quite seriously. These scriptural passages affirm the authority of the spiritual leadership of Israel to create new institutions, or to use the popular term: “the Rabbinic Decree”.

How does Brown respond to the scriptural evidence against his position that attributes no spiritual value to the rabbinic decree?

Brown begins his response by pointing out that the people were questioning this practice. In Brown’s words: *“If there was a divinely sanctioned Oral law, why ask if they should continue to fast?”*

In his zeal to discredit the Oral Law, Brown has missed the basic story line of this passage from the Written Scriptures. It is obvious from the context of the passage that the reason that the question was raised as to whether the people should continue fasting is because of the progress made in the building of the Temple. The entire purpose of the fast was to express grief over the destruction of the Temple. At this point, with the people restored to the land, but not completely; the Temple being rebuilt, but not in its former glory, the question came up: is it still appropriate to grieve over the destruction of the First Temple? God’s response to this question makes this abundantly clear. “For so says the Lord of Hosts, let your hands be strengthened, you who hear these words on this day from the mouth of the prophets that on the day that the foundation is laid for the House of the Lord, the sanctuary to be built.” (Zechariah 8:9) The prophet goes on to contrast the days of God’s wrath that preceded this day (of the founding of the Temple) with the days of favor that follow the rebuilding of the Temple. This culminates with the response to the original question; that the fast days will turn into days of rejoicing.

In other words, this was not a question as to whether the spiritual leadership of the people is authorized to institute these days of mourning or not; as Brown would have us believe. Rather the reason the fast days were called into question was because they correctly surmised that God’s wrath had relented from the nation and that they were beginning to experience God’s favor.

Brown continues his response: *“Second, Zechariah’s response was not even to praise them for their past observance of an oral tradition but rather to rebuke them for their self-centered spirituality.”*

How is this a response to the Jewish argument? Is Brown trying to imply that the prophet’s rebuke to the people is to be understood as a Divine criticism of the institution of the fast-days? If this would be the correct interpretation of the passage then the prophet’s repeated criticism of the blood offerings ought to imply a Divine criticism of the very institution of sacrifice, which is clearly incorrect as Brown himself notes in Volume 2, page 72. Furthermore, by speaking of the fast-days turning into holidays on account of God’s renewed favor towards Israel, we are given to understand that as long as God’s favor was not directed towards Israel, the fasting was appropriate. Finally, the book of Esther makes clear that these institutions (both the institution of the fast-days together with the

institution of the holiday of Purim) are positive developments in the spiritual history of the Jewish nation.

Brown now goes on the attack: *“third, contrary to what the oral traditions so strongly emphasizes, the people went to a prophet for practical guidance in terms of a national custom and the prophet answered with a word from the Lord, not with human reasoning and discussion of a legal precedent.*

*So if there is any text that the antimissionaries should not draw attention to it is this one, since it undermines the whole rabbinic interpretation that “the Torah is no longer in heaven”...”*

I have dealt with this argument in my work “The Council of My Nation”, which was publicized before Brown’s 5<sup>th</sup> Volume went to print. Here is my response:

“The people had been observing certain fast-days since the destruction of the First Temple (Esther 9:31). The Rabbinical institution of these fasts gave expression to the nation’s mourning and to her repentance in light of the calamities which befell the nation on those days. These observances had continued for 70 years. Now the Second Temple was being rebuilt. The people recognized that this was not the fullness of glory that they had been hoping for. The Second Temple’s beginnings were humble even when compared to the waning light of the First Temple in her last days (Haggai 2:2, Ezra 3:12). Most of the nation was still in Babylon, and the promised ingathering was yet to occur. And the nation was still in servitude to gentile kings (Ezra 8:9). The question came to the priests and to the prophets if the nation was still to observe these Rabbinic fasts in light of the progress made in the rebuilding of the Second Temple (Zechariah 7:3). The response to this legal question came through the agency of the prophecy of Zechariah. God encouraged the people, assuring them that despite the modest nature of the Second Temple it represented a turning point in God’s relationship with His beloved nation (Zechariah 8:11), thus it was no longer appropriate to observe the days of mourning (Zechariah 8:19).

At first glance it seems that the office of prophecy served to arbitrate in a matter of (Rabbinic) Law, a violation of the principle of the primacy of Moses’ prophecy. But when we study the basic elements of this story we can see that there was no infringement of the supremacy of God’s word through Moses. The Law that Moses presented taught the nation which statute would be relevant to each particular situation. Where a confluence of factors complicated matters, the question would be presented to the arbitrators of the Law. The archetype of arbitration of the Law is presented in Leviticus 10:16-20. Aaron as arbitrator of the Law recognized that the death of his sons would render his family unfit for consumption of the sacrificial offerings. The facts on the ground were clear to everyone. The question was how to add up all of the elements of the situation, and how much weight to attribute to each factor.

The incident recorded in Zechariah presented the judges with a different type of question. They were not asked what is the Law in this given situation. The question presented

was - what is the situation? The Law itself would have been plain - it was the circumstances which were unclear. The individuals presenting the question knew even before they asked that if the Second Temple represented a turning point in their relationship with God - that they would no longer be required to observe the days of national mourning. The question was - what does the building of the Second Temple represent? This type of question is well within the purview of prophecy as delineated by the Law of Moses. It is the prophet's role to help the nation recognize where they stand in their relationship with God. And that was the question presented as recorded in the book of Zechariah."

Brown moves on to attack Judaism with yet another argument: *"Not only so, but the word of promise in Zechariah 8:18-19 supports the view that, in Messianic times, there would be changes in our relationship to the Torah: "Again the word of the Lord Almighty came to me. This is what the Lord Almighty says: "The fasts of the fourth, fifth, seventh and tenth months will become joyful and glad occasions and happy festivals for Judah. Therefore love truth and peace." Yom Kippur would become a day of celebration, not contrition! (Messianic Jews already experience this reality in part..."*

Brown has confused the fast of Yom Kippur with the Fast of Gedaliah. When the prophet says that the fast of the seventh month will be turned to gladness he is NOT referring to Yom Kippur, he is referring to the Fast of Gedaliah. This is obvious from the fact that this fast (of the seventh month) is grouped together with the fasts of the fourth, fifth and tenth months, which like the fast of Gedaliah, were instituted as an expression of mourning for the destruction of Jerusalem. The fast of Yom Kippur is in no way connected to these fasts (of the fourth, fifth and tenth months). In his zeal to attack the Oral Law, Brown has again misunderstood the written words of the Scripture.

## V. 51. *Objection 6.8*

Here Brown moves into a lecturing mode. He attempts to highlight what he considers to be the shortcomings of Rabbinic Judaism and he argues that through acceptance of Jesus, these shortcomings will be corrected.

Before launching into his rebuke, Brown tells his readers that this will not be an "all-out assault". Throughout his comments he does indeed speak highly of many aspects of Rabbinic Judaism. What I find interesting is that he points out to his reader that some books and articles that he has read attack his beliefs in the most insulting terms, and he informs his readers that he will not be responding in kind. As if the only insulting articles are written by people attacking Christianity. Did Brown not read any books or articles written by Christians that attack Judaism in the most insulting terms? "Insulting" is actually to mild a term. Did Brown not read any works written by Christians that attack Judaism with murderous hatred to say nothing of the most vile defamations? Did Brown never hear of Augustine, Justin Martyr, Chrysostom, Jerome, Ambrose, Tertullian, Martin Luther, and so many others that he had to turn to the writings of counter-missionaries in order to find someone to contrast his own writings against? Brown could actually have turned to his own writings if he needed a foil against which he could contrast the civil tone that he employs in this critique. In 1992 Brown published an article

entitled; “Yeshua: Who is He?”. In this article Brown spends a lot more space denigrating traditional Judaism than he does describing Jesus (which in and of itself sheds quite a bit of light on the question articulated in the article’s title). Among other things, Brown writes: *“Traditional Judaism as we know it today is the religion of those who rejected Yeshua. It is a decided reaction against faith in Him. It is a system which has been reconstructed to negate and counteract Messiah’s real claims. That’s why traditional Jews throughout the ages have stumbled over the person of Yeshua”*. The fact is that Judaism didn’t REJECT Christianity, Judaism IGNORED Christianity. In the entire Mishna and Talmud you will not find one statement that addresses Christianity. To say that Judaism is a system that has been reconstructed to negate the claims of Jesus, is the height of insolence, but that is what Brown wrote. When the article was reprinted in 2005, Brown toned down his rhetoric, but if he was looking for a contrast, he didn’t need to go so far.

Let us now turn to Brown’s rebuke. I am well aware that Jews who adhere to Rabbinical

Judaism are not perfect. I am also aware that we ought to accept rebuke from anyone and bend to the truth regardless of who it is that is speaking it. But for an adherent of a faith with a moral record as dismal as Christianity’s to preach to its primary victim is nothing short of shocking. Still and all, let us hear what Brown has to teach us.

1 – Brown poses his first question to the adherents of Rabbinical Judaism: *“Have the traditions have become exalted beyond the word of God itself?”*

Brown recognizes that from the standpoint of a Rabbinical Jew the traditions are a part of God’s teaching: *“...if you are a traditional Jew, I know that you make no distinction between the two (the word of God and the traditions). I would encourage you, then, to look up every reference to “the Torah” in the Scriptures and you will see that it consistently refers to the written word, as demonstrated in 6.1 above.”*

This statement is an exaggeration of the inaccuracies that Brown put into writing in his response to Objection 6.1. In that Objection Brown did NOT deal with references to *“the Torah”*; those would include many that refer to the complete Law, both written and unwritten (see Deuteronomy 17:11, Joshua 1:7, 22:5, 2Kings 17:13, 21:8, 2Chronicles 14:3, 33:8). What Brown does do in Objection 6.1 is that he lists all the Scriptural references to; *“the law/teaching of Moses”*, as *I/he/ the Lord command(s/ed) through Moses*” and *“it is written”*. I have already demonstrated in points #10,13 and 14 that Brown’s statements concerning these phrases are also inaccurate.

Another interesting point to consider here is the simple fact that everywhere the Scriptures speak of “God”, yes, every last reference, refers to God and not to Jesus! I would encourage you to consider this significant truth.

While it is true that some segments of Rabbinic Judaism are remiss in the study of Scripture, the overall accusation of Brown is inapplicable. The Psalms speak of the study of God’s Law (Psalm 19 and 119) as an activity that ought to occupy us at all times and

under all circumstances. What Brown denounces as the study of the “*traditions*”, is the only viable study of God’s Law that has endured through the generations. Brown’s own study of Scripture has nothing to do with the study of God’s Law because Brown believes that it is no longer necessary to observe God’s Law. Instead of respecting the obedience towards God that is inherent in Rabbinical Judaism’s preoccupation with the practical observance of God’s Law, Brown considers this expression of obedience a “shortcoming”.

2 – The next question that Brown poses to the adherents of Rabbinical Judaism also zeroes in on our study of God’s Law: “*Has there been an overexaltation of study?*”. Brown concludes this argument by contrasting Ezra with his warped view of the leaders of rabbinic Judaism: “*It does not say that he (Ezra) studied sixteen hours a day or that he had committed twenty thousand oral traditions to memory. To the contrary, Ezra was also an active community leader, just as Joshua was and just as Moses was. (Many of the famous rabbis served their communities by rendering legal decisions, sometimes by the tens of thousands, but this also underscores the emphasis on laws and traditions.) So here, too, one of traditional Judaism’s greatest strengths has become one of its greatest weaknesses. Think about how many more lives could be touched if traditional Jews spent more time doing good works – this is not to say that they do no good works at all – and spent less time engaged in studying their traditions.*”

Brown’s accusation ignores facts, the history of our people and the Scriptural testimony. The facts are that many of our leaders were active community leaders and this did not take away from their studies, on the contrary, their ability to lead the community with truth and with selflessness was rooted in their study. Most of our greatest scholars spent hours every day helping the community in practical ways, with the greatest emphasis on those in the community who are hurting; the downtrodden, the widow and the orphan. Many scholars ran numerous organizations that benefitted the people both spiritually and practically. For Brown to describe our leadership’s assistance to the community in the limited terms of “*rendering legal decisions*”, is to ignore the facts.

Another basic fact that is ignored by Brown is the spiritual heights achieved by those who studied God’s Law. The heroes of Rabbinical Judaism are her moral giants. Go into any Orthodox Jewish book-store and see if you can count how many biographical works are being sold that portray the lives of men and women who excelled in all areas of spirituality. These people set examples in humility, in kindness, in devotion to God and in devotion to their fellow man. The spiritual achievements of these people was rooted in their intense involvement in God’s Law. I don’t think it is in place for Brown to lecture to Rabbi Moshe Feinstein about humility, to Rabbi Aryeh Levine about kindness and love for our fellow man, to Recha Sternbuch about the appreciation for human life or to the Chofetz Chaim about devotion to God. Instead he should be humbly asking them how it is that they achieved this spiritual greatness. A foundational part of their answer will be that they were devoted to the study of God’s Law.

Brown is ignoring history with this attack on the devotion of our community to God’s Law. The history of our people is replete with examples where our leaders guided us through spiritual confusion, in times when people of lesser spiritual stature than our leaders were

perhaps not even aware of the dangers. In other situations, the common-folk may have been aware of the danger involved, but did not know how to deal with it. In these situations God sent us leaders who guided our people and helped our nation overcome these difficulties.

A prominent example from times gone by is the Maccabean revolt. When the Syrian-Greeks were working to uproot our observance of the Law, it was the Hasmonean family of priests who raised the banner of rebellion against them and were crowned with God's victory. Our nation remembers these fighters as men who were busy with God's Torah ("oskei toratecha" – as mentioned in the prayer of Channuka).

A more recent example that comes to mind is the Hassidic movement founded by the Ba'al Shem Tov. At the time, many people did not appreciate the accomplishments of the Ba'al Shem Tov and his followers. But with hind-sight we can see that the movement that he sparked helped our nation overcome the persuasions of the enlightenment that threatened our commitment to God and to His Law. Another, more recent, example of the spiritual foresight of our leaders would be the re-establishment of Torah Judaism after the holocaust. Many people could not imagine that the Jewish people could reestablish themselves, in a spiritual sense, after the destruction of World War II. Many were convinced that the spiritual commitment of the European Jews was a thing of the past, relegated to the dead pages of history. But our spiritual leaders took the appropriate steps to re-establish the communities that were lost together with their spiritual vitality.

The spiritual foresight of our leaders is drawn from their intense study of God's Law. If these leaders would have spent the years of their youth as volunteers for the Hatzolah organization (the Orthodox Jewish organization that offers emergency medical assistance) or for any of the other numerous organizations that our community is blessed with, instead of studying as they did, then these leaders would not have had the foresight to guide our community through the turbulence of time. Our community would have lost her spiritual vitality and would have ceased to exist.

The Scriptural testimony that Brown is ignoring is twofold. First we have the priests of Israel and the Levites. The Law of Moses dictates that the Levites and the priests be supported by the tithes of the rest of the nation. A large segment of the population is to be idle from practical economic contribution towards the community and is to live off the tithes of the laborers. For what purpose? The Bible explicitly answers this question: "In order that they strengthen themselves in the Torah of God" (2Chronicles 31:4). This alone should have tipped Brown off that the study of Torah is not a peripheral activity in the life of our nation. Even if he would have no explanation as to why and how this is true, Brown should have realized that this is God's way.

The second part of the Scriptural testimony that Brown is missing is that the Scriptures actually describe how it is that the study of Torah is the heart, the vitality and the spiritual life of our nation. Moses and Malachi both describe the vital nature of the priest's and Levite's role in the life of our nation (Deuteronomy 33:10, Malachi 2:5-7). When Deborah



contrasts those who ignore their responsibility towards the nation against those who shoulder the burden of the nation, she points to the scholars before she points to those who volunteered to fight (Judges 5:9). Psalm 119 describes the spiritual development of those who are loyal to God. The Psalmists points to the commandments as the means through which we are to cleanse our ways (verse 9), they are to be our counselors (24), the song of our lives (54), our hope, our love and our joy (74, 97, 111), and the light of our path (105). The wicked have no salvation because they have failed to seek God's Law, while those who love God's law are guaranteed not to stumble (155,165).

The Law of God is God's will as it relates to our lives. By studying His Law we absorb His will, and this gives us the spiritual vitality to be able to live as His servants. What is true for the individual is true for the community as a whole. We all look to those amongst us who have been transformed through their encounter with God's Law. Their insight, guidance and wisdom enables the community at large to discharge her duty as God's chosen nation.

3- The next question that Brown poses to the adherents of Rabbinical Judaism is: *"Has the prophetic voice of the Scriptures been replaced by the study of legal traditions?"*

Brown explains that he is not referring here to the study of Talmud as opposed to the study of Scripture (these were addressed in the previous rebukes) but rather Brown encourages us to: *"Read through the books of the prophets; feel the power of their experience in God; listen closely to the force of their words (which are the Lord's words); be shaken by their insights and pierced by their rebukes. Let their words sink deep into your spirit and soul. And then turn to the Talmud and begin studying, or begin reading the Ramabam's Mishneh Torah or Caro's Shulchan Arukh. What a stark contrasty there is, the contrast between the thundering voice of God – a voice that was heard in the Ten Commandments as well – and the all-too-human voice of men, replete with arguments and conflicting opinions.*

*What happened to the voice of God? What happened to a prophetic message for the nation(s)? Something very precious and important – no to mention very biblical – is missing from the traditional Jewish faith."*

At first glance, there seems to be some merit to this rebuke. It is indeed true that the Jewish community has not recognized a prophet since the days of Malachi. But is this such a shortcoming? Does Brown think that the alternative of "Charismatic Christianity", replete with its false prophets and corrupt prophets is the better way? The fact that our sensitivity to truth, honed by our study of God's Law of truth, protected us from many a false prophet throughout the ages is not a shortcoming of our community but a positive feature of our community. (For more information on this subject, see the website of a Christian organization; Personal Freedom Outreach, or PFO.)

Although we do not have direct prophecy from God, we still have His guiding spirit in our midst (Isaiah 59:21). We heard it when Mattisyahu called for rebellion against the Syrian

Greeks with the words of Moses: “Whosoever is for God – to me!”. We experience it in the songs of Rabbi Yehuda Halevi. God’s spirit echoes through the letters of Nachmanides which put down a serious inter-communal controversy. It reverberates through the ethical and devotional writings of the Chovot Halevavot, Ramchal and Rabbi Yisroel Salanter. We can touch His spirit in the devotion expressed in the writings and in the lives of the Ba’al Shem Tov and his disciples, who still guide us today. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch’s battle against assimilation, Sara Schneirer’s struggle to establish an educational network for Jewish girls. The Chofetz Chaim’s fight for purity of speech, and the Chazon Ish’s war against the drafting of Israeli girls to the army – serve as but a sampling of the working of God’s spirit amongst our nation.

Brown’s contrast of the books of the prophets against the Talmud, the Rambam’s Mishneh Torah and the Shulchan Aruch is completely misplaced. The books of the prophets records God’s words to His beloved nation, the Talmud, the Rambam, and the Shulchan Aruch do not attempt to record God’s words to the nation. These works record the nation’s collective acceptance of God’s words. These books document how throughout the ages our nation strove to understand God’s command and to live by His light. Yes, these books are the words of men, but these are the men we want to stand with as we attempt to discharge our duty as a nation who is called upon to serve God.

#### **V. 52. Page 195**

The next rebuke that Brown offers our people deserves a section of its own. Here is the question he poses to the adherents of Rabbinical Judaism: *“Has an emphasis on Torah obedience produced a self-righteous attitude?”* Brown continues his rebuke: *I know that religious Jews pray daily for God’s mercy and recognize that, without that mercy, they are lost. But with an emphasis on repentance and human responsibility, often much more strongly than an emphasis on atonement and forgiveness, it is very easy for self-righteousness to be produced.”*

It is hard to find the words to describe the error of Brown’s rebuke. Brown has a problem with *“an emphasis on Torah obedience”*!!! and he expects his readers to believe that the position he is representing is Biblical?!! Which Biblical book does not emphasize Torah obedience? In the Torah, God articulates the heart of our calling as a nation before him with the words “hearken to my voice” (Exodus 19:5). This concept stands behind every verse in the Torah. God tells us through Jeremiah: “I did not speak to your fathers or command them, on the day I took them out of Egypt, concerning matters of burnt offering and sacrifice. But rather it was this that I said to them; hearken to my voice and I shall be to you for a God and you shall be to me for a nation and you shall walk in all of the path that I command you in order that it be well for you” (Jeremiah 7:22,23). The Bible EXPLICITLY tells us to place the emphasis on obedience rather than on atonement in 1Samuel (15:22) and in Micha (6:8).

If Brown recognizes that the community of Rabbinical Judaism has placed a stronger emphasis on obedience, repentance and human responsibility, then he has inadvertently

given us a ringing endorsement that we are in line with the spirit of God as reflected in the Jewish Scriptures.

If Brown admits that the belief system that he is promoting places a greater emphasis on atonement than on obedience, then he has inadvertently condemned his belief system as one that has taken up a position against God and His prophets.

The fact that he expects this argument to be considered as a Scripturally based argument, declares loudly and clearly, that he has not begun to grasp the spirit of Scripture.

#### **V. 53.** *Pages 195-198*

Brown describes self-righteousness as a *“feeling that you have attained righteousness before God based on your actions, or the feeling that you are morally superior to others.”* Brown speaks of: *“the efforts of religious Jews on the days leading up to Yom Kippur to have their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds so their names might be written in the Book of Life for another year?”*

In place of the Jewish attitude (as Brown understands it), Brown offers the word of Paul: *“not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Messiah – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith”*(Phil. 3:9).”

Brown has again displayed a lack of understanding of the facts on the ground within Judaism and, more importantly, a lack of understanding of the spirit of Scripture.

It is true that the Jewish attitude is to focus on our deeds, especially in the time-period leading to the Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, as if our judgment depends upon our deeds. In the words of Maimonides: “One should always see themselves, throughout the year, as if they were halfway innocent and halfway guilty, and so the entire world, that it is halfway innocent and halfway guilty; if he sins one sin, he causes himself and the world to be considered guilty and he brings destruction upon himself; if he does one meritorious deed, he has caused himself and the world to be considered righteous, and he brought upon himself and upon them salvation and deliverance” (3 Teshuva 4).

The key words in this teaching are: “all the time”. Immediately after doing a good deed, we should still be looking at ourselves as though we are standing on the edge. When properly understood, this teaching actually precludes self-righteousness. The thrust of the teaching is that we must act as if everything depends upon our future actions, and that at no given point in time could we rely on our past actions. I still haven’t met the Jew who walks around with the attitude that he or she is righteous enough to stand before God on the merit of his or her deeds. Maimonides (based on the Talmud) is encouraging everyone, both a person steeped in sin and a person who has lived a moral life to see themselves as one who stands on the edge. The point is not to consider yourself righteous, but rather, to treat your actions with all seriousness. Judaism emphasizes the concept expressed by David; “...no living being is righteous before You (God), and echoed by Job (Psalm 143:2, Job 15:14, 25:4). Furthermore, we recognize that, with our deeds, we give nothing to God that He does not already possess (1Chronicles 29:14, Job 35:7). At the same time, this does not exempt us from our responsibility as God’s servants. God puts the burden

squarely on our shoulders when He commands us to obey His commandments and in His mercy, He counts our deeds for righteousness despite the fact that we gave Him nothing (Deuteronomy 6:25).

The joy and happiness we experience when we fulfill God's will is not the feeling of pride in our own accomplishments. Rather, the happiness that results from our obedience to God is rooted in the recognition that we have just received the greatest gift from God and the greatest expression of His love.

To sum it up; we act as if everything depends on our deeds, because that is how God wants us to act. We put all of our trust in God, because we know that everything depends on His mercy.

So Brown has misunderstood the Jewish attitude towards good deeds, and towards God's judgment. He has also misunderstood a basic theme in Scripture.

The concept that righteousness based on our deeds is somehow not from God while righteousness based on faith is from God, is completely without any Scriptural foundation. God, in His mercy, counts both our faith and our deeds towards us for righteousness (Genesis 15:6, Deuteronomy 6:25). As long as these (the faith and the deeds) emanate from a heart that is humble before God and that recognizes that God is the absolute sovereign to whom both our faith and our deeds belong, then these are accepted by God. But a faith that is not based on the recognition that God already possesses our hearts, such as the faith that Paul and Brown are encouraging, will never be accepted by God. Such a faith is the height of arrogance towards God. How could a human being pledge his or her heart to anyone aside from the One that created it to begin with? Brown's criticism of Judaism for possessing an attitude of moral superiority should be directed at the Bible. Throughout the Bible, God contrasts Israel's position against the position of the gentiles (Exodus 19:5, Deuteronomy 7:6, 14:2, 26:18,19, 33:29, Jeremiah 10:16). There is no question that the people of Israel received greater gifts from God than did the other nations of the world. The question is: do we recognize these as undeserved gifts? – as the Scriptures encourage us to do (Deuteronomy 9:4). Judaism encourages us to acknowledge that which we were granted from God as undeserved gifts and as a responsibility before God and man, and not to use these gifts as an excuse for arrogance.

#### **V. 54. Pages 198-204**

Brown poses his fifth and final question to the community of Rabbinic Judaism: *“Has a personal relationship with God become legislated by man?”*

Before I broach the subject of a personal relationship with God, which is a concept that stands at the heart of Judaism, a note of introduction is appropriate.

It is relatively easy to experience the emotions of love, adoration and reverence towards another human being. If you believe that this human being is righteous, graceful and that he loves you to the degree that he has suffered for you, then your natural emotions are

aroused to love, adoration and reverence. You are feeling these emotions towards someone like yourself, someone who you are entirely familiar with and whose existence doesn't challenge you in any way.

To arouse these same emotions of love adoration and reverence towards God, who is invisible and whose nature cannot be fathomed by the mind of the created being, is more difficult. This is compounded by the fact that God's existence and our debt towards God demands that we call our own existence into question. A true appreciation for what God is doing for us will, by definition, include the recognition that our existence is not an axiomatic fact; a challenge we do not encounter when we love and revere a man who lived and breathed like ourselves.

To articulate this point from another angle: There are different types of knowledge that we possess. There are certain concepts that we only know of through our intellect, and there are other concepts that we know of, not only through our intellect, but through our senses and our imaginations as well. Those concepts that we have experienced through our senses or that we have encompassed with our imaginations are much more real and alive to us than concepts that we have only encountered on an intellectual level. To illustrate this difference to yourself; think of a person who you know nothing about except his name, and think of another person who you have seen pictures of and who you have read about. You will realize that the first person does not appear real to you in the same way that the second person does; unless you apply your imagination and supply the first person with a face and with characteristics that you can relate to.

When Christians speak of a personal relationship with Jesus, they are speaking of a relationship that is enhanced by their imaginations and their senses. Their fleshly senses do not present a challenge to the relationship, on the contrary, they enhance it.

In order to develop a relationship with a holy God, a God who is above and beyond our fleshly senses and our human imaginations, and in order for that relationship to be real, we are called upon to rise above and beyond our senses and our imaginations.

Yes, it is possible to have a relationship with God, a real relationship, a relationship that is vibrant and alive. In fact it is possible to experience God in a way that is much closer to us than the experience of a relationship with another human being. But it will not happen through our senses or through our imaginations. This relationship will touch our inner beings, which was breathed into us by God to begin with (Genesis 2:7). This part of our being yearns for God, this part of our being loves truth and hates falsehood, and this part of our being rejoices in the recognition that we are completely dependant upon God.

It is only to the degree that you love truth, that you will be able to love the God of truth. It is only to the degree that you live for selfless kindness that you will be able to experience the God of kindness in your life. And it is only to the degree that you are humbled in gratitude before your Creator that you will be able to rejoice in His embrace.

So indeed, Christians who have made God into a man that can be imagined with our fleshly senses and our finite imaginations, will generally jump right into a personal

relationship. But this is not the personal relationship that King David experienced. The relationship that David experienced was in no way enhanced by his fleshly senses or by his human imagination. David's relationship was rooted in his gratitude towards his Creator, in his yearning for holiness and truth, and in humility towards God.

Brown's rebuke of Judaism, where he sees a lack of personal relationship with the Divine, is rooted in some truth. It is much easier for a Jew to call him or herself a Jew and not experience a personal relationship with God, than it is for a Christian to call him or herself a Christian and not experience a personal relationship with Jesus. However, this only highlights the fundamental difference between Judaism and Christianity; the one is focused on God and the other is focused on one of God's creations.

One who does not experience a personal relationship with God, but who has also not experienced a personal relationship with Jesus, is much closer to the God of Israel than is someone who lives with Jesus in their hearts.

What is completely false about Brown's accusation is that he ties the lack of personal relationship with God to the Oral Law. I live in the Jewish community. I see people who live with God every waking moment of their lives and I see people to whom God is just an abstract truth – and I see many people in between these two extremes. Those people that I know whose relationship with God is so tangible that you touch it when you come near them, are completely obedient to the Oral Law. While those who I know who do not live with God as a reality in their lives are generally not very devoted to observance of the Oral Law either (or to the Written Law for that matter.) As a general rule, these two concepts go together. To the degree that you believe that God chose Israel as the nation amongst whom His presence dwells, and through whom He transmits His truth to the world (which is belief in the Oral Law), to that same degree will one find a living experience with God as a member of the chosen nation. But to someone who finds the entire concept of Israel as a nation who bears God's truth and testimony to be an abstract idea, to that same degree will the person find it difficult to experience God on a personal level as a child of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

There is indeed a different group of people; people who seem to be very meticulous about the Law, but are far from God as far as east is from west. These are religious hypocrites that can be found amongst the adherents of any religion. It is in no way related to belief in the Oral Law. In fact one can be scrupulous about their denial of the Oral Law and believe in that denial as a spiritual principle that can be used as a foundation for religious hypocrisy. You don't have to work too hard to be a hypocrite, you can believe in the Oral Law or you can deny its validity, either way, you will find it just as easy to be a hypocrite. Both methods have been tried and tested.

Brown points to the standardized prayers of Judaism as an impediment to a personal relationship with God. Brown has missed a fundamental aspect of Biblical Judaism.

Jews are called upon to relate to God on two levels; as individuals and as members of the nation chosen by God. The Bible speaks of both relationships, but the national relationship is emphasized throughout Scripture so much more often. Most of the prophets speak to Israel as a collective whole. In order to experience God as a member of

the Jewish nation, I need to stand before God with the emotions, the yearnings, the fears and the desires of all the Jews who walked before me and who stand with me in my loyalty to the God of our fathers. The standardized prayers that Brown critiques are the primary source of this connection to God. It is in these prayers that we experience God, not so much as individuals, but as members of a collective whole.

Brown argues that the standardized prayers stand in the way of a living experience with God. If you are a Jew, I encourage you to join your people in one of these standardized prayers. Before you begin, familiarize yourself with the yearnings and desires expressed in these prayers. Bring to mind the fact that when you will put your heart into these words, your yearning for your Heavenly Father will join with the yearnings of all the Jews who walked before you, and with all the Jews who live today and with those who will come after us. Fill your heart with a love for your people and recognize that you will stand before God as a part of the collective stature of the entity that God lovingly calls; His firstborn son. Bring to mind that you stand before the God who Created all. See yourself as one with the high-priest in the holy of holies that was built through the love of Israel towards God, and was consecrated with God's love for Israel; and start praying.

The people that I know whose connection to God radiates forth from their being, live for these prayers that Brown is denigrating. For more than 2000 years, our people poured out their hearts to God through the portals of these prayers and they came back to earth after these prayers flooded with the light of God's presence.

#### **V. 55. *Objection 6.9***

Brown focuses on the concept that Israel is called to be a light to the nations (Isaiah 42:6, 49:6). He contends that the Jewish people have not fulfilled this calling, while Jesus has fulfilled this calling through the missionary activity of his followers.

This argument doesn't get off the ground for seven reasons.

First; let us assume that Brown's accusation is correct; how does this prove his point? Brown acknowledges that many aspects of Israel's calling before God are fulfilled in Judaism. Brown does not come out and say it, but he would have to admit, that these same aspects of Israel's calling before God are NOT fulfilled in Christianity – such as obedience to the Law of Moses, maintaining the Scriptural calendar and life-cycle, and maintaining the identity of Israel as God's firstborn son. So if Israel failed on one aspect of its mission, as Brown contends, how does this invalidate Judaism and support Christianity?

Second; Brown's argument assumes what it attempts to prove. If devotion to Jesus is idolatry, as Judaism maintains, then the missionary activity of the Church has NOT provided light to the nations. You cannot use the missionary activity of the Church to "prove" the validity of Christianity's claims.

Third; Brown's argument reveals a slanted view of history that staggers the imagination. For 2000 years the Church taught a venomous hatred of Jews and Judaism. This hatred saturated the soul of Europeans to the marrow of their bones. The Crusades, in which tens of thousands of Jews were offered the choice of baptism or death, and the holocaust,

which saw Christian Europe approve of the slaughter of six million innocents, are but the high points of the effects of the Church's teachings on the Jew. The Inquisition, which lasted for centuries and pervaded many Christian countries, was rooted in the joy that Christians experienced when they saw Jews, (- converted Jews), burning at the stake in public spectacles. In Spain alone, the Inquisition exterminated hundreds of thousands of Jews. And this is only the Church's impact in relation to the attitude towards the Jew. The Church also had a negative moral impact on the European people in other ways. The Church's teachings on the unworthiness of the deeds of men, discouraged the development of civilization. The teaching of the intrinsic evil of man, did little to enhance the value of human life in the mind of its adherents. The Church's opposition to the study of the sciences, kept the Europeans shackled in darkness for ages. And the Church's support for the feudal system and for cruel monarchs robbed the Europeans of their freedom.

While all this was going on, the Jewish people had a positive impact on civilization. The Jewish emphasis on the fact that every man is created in God's image, that our positive actions are accepted by God, the Jewish respect for education, and the Jewish concept of social justice – all served to temper the Church's influence, and served as an important catalyst in most of the social reforms that occurred during the past few centuries.

So, to answer Brown's question (articulated on page 215); *"I ask you, has God done nothing overt and active in making Himself known to the nations during the last 2000 years?"* – The answer is – whatever it was that God was doing – for the most part – the followers of Jesus stood in His way. A glance back at 2000 years of history will reveal that the followers of Jesus brought darkness to the nations while the Jews who did not follow Jesus brought God's light to the nations they touched.

Fourth; The concept that Israel is to be a light to the nations is not presented as a commandment. The prophet speaks of this concept as something that will be granted to Israel. In the Torah, Moses encourages us to observe the Law so that the nations should realize the wisdom of the Law (Deuteronomy 4:6). In the days of King Solomon this prophecy was realized. The Scriptures describe how people came from far and wide to hear the wisdom of Solomon (1Kings 10:24, 2Chronicles 9:23). No one went out to preach to the nations of the world. The Jewish people did what they were supposed to do, and the nations came of their own accord. Solomon himself describes the process through which the nations of the world will come to know the God of Israel. He does not talk of an international missionary campaign. He talks of the glory of God being manifest in the Jerusalem Temple and the nations hearing about God through this manifestation (1Kings 8:60, 2Chronicles 6:33). Isaiah, Jeremiah and Micha all describe a similar process in the Messianic age (Isaiah 2:2,3, Jeremiah 3:17, Micha 4:1,2).

The way Israel brings light to the nations is through their reputation. Before the spread of Christianity, there was a growing respect for Jews and Judaism throughout the Roman Empire. The Christian Scriptures speak of gentile "God-fearers". These were people who were not Jewish by birth, nor had they converted to Judaism, but they revered the God of Israel. The phenomena of Gentile respect for Judaism was widespread throughout the Mediterranean basin. Along came the teachers of Christianity who exerted themselves to the utmost to reverse this trend. These Church Fathers and those who followed them did



whatever they could to vilify Jews and Judaism. The Church was the vehicle that prevented, and continues to prevent the Gentile nations from learning from the Jew. For the spiritual heirs of these hate-mongers to accuse the Jewish people of not fulfilling their calling as a light to the nations reminds me of Elijah's rebuke to Ahab: "Will you murder and also inherit?" (1Kings 21:19).

Fifth; The prophets clearly describe when and how it is that Israel will be a light to the nations. According to the prophets of the Jewish Scriptures, it will only be with the physical salvation of Israel from her exile, that the nations will walk to her light. Isaiah compares the error of the nations to a veil that covers their faces (25:7), and to a thick cloud of darkness (60:2). The prophets teach that God will use the physical salvation of the Jewish people to dispel this dark error. When the downtrodden and persecuted nation is exalted, and their enemies are destroyed, the nations will see the light and be converted to the service of God. Israel's deliverance is the catalyst for the conversion of the nations. This lesson is repeated by the prophets again and again (Isaiah 17:12 - 18:7, 25:1 - 8, 30:26, 34:1 - 35:10, 40:1 - 11, 41:17 - 20, 49:8 - 13, 52:7 - 10, Zephaniah 3:8 - 20, Psalm 9:8 - 13, 40, 66, 69, 98, 102, 117 ). Any faith that the nations are coming to before the light of God is openly revealed upon Israel, can only be a part of the darkness that the prophets yearned to see dispelled (Isaiah 60:1 - 3).

Some of the Psalms that Brown quotes to support his argument that Israel is called to praise God before the nations, clearly confirm that this will take place at the time of Israel's physical redemption. Brown quotes Psalm 9:12 (verse 11 in the Christian Bible) which calls upon Israel to praise God amongst the nations. But the very next verse continues with: "Because the One who seeks revenge for blood has remembered them, He has not forgotten the cry of the humble". In other words, it is when God arises to avenge the blood of Israel's martyrs that this public praising of God is to occur. Similarly, Brown quotes Psalm 96 which describes all of creation singing to God. But this Psalm concludes with: "Before the Lord who is come, He is come to judge the earth...". This Psalm is obviously speaking of a time when God's judgment is openly revealed to all.

Brown attempts to head off this argument by pointing out that some of the Psalms call upon Israel to praise God amongst the nations, without explicitly putting this calling into the context of the Messianic era. Brown's reasoning is flawed. David and Isaiah themselves did not engage in any international missionary campaigns. They lived as Jews and trusted that through their connection to God and through God bringing His presence to dwell amongst His people, Israel's mission will be brought to fruition. Although not every Scriptural reference states explicitly that Israel's calling will only be fully fulfilled in the Messianic era, but the total evidence of Scripture leaves us with no doubt on the matter.

Sixth; The light that Israel is to bring to the nations is the light that they were granted by God through the exodus and Sinai. The truth that God planted in our hearts at Sinai is the torch that we are called upon to carry through history and to hold high. This truth calls upon us to reject a theology that deifies a man. As we articulate this rejection, we bring light to the nations. When the nations of the world see the Channuka lights in our windows, they have no questions in their mind about who it is that we are praising. They

know clearly and unequivocally that we attribute all glory to the One God who created all, and who can in no way be compared to any image. When the nations see our observance of Passover, they know who it is that we are thanking for our deliverance from slavery. When the nations of the world see any of our religious observances, even when they see our mode of dress, they know what we represent. We represent the One God to whom all, including Jesus, are beholden. Our steadfast loyalty has brought light to the nations that were willing to hear the message, and will continue to bring light, until God in His mercy shines His light to all of the world – through us (Isaiah 60:3).

Seventh; The verses that speak of Israel being a light to the nations are understood by most commentators to be referring to the prophet Isaiah himself. God promised Isaiah that he will be the prophet to proclaim the concept of the Messianic era to the nations. Indeed, it is Isaiah's articulation of the Messianic era that is most often used to describe this glorious future for mankind. Isaiah's metaphor of the lion lying with lamb, and Isaiah's phrase; "they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, no nation shall lift sword against another nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" – are the two concepts that are most commonly associated with the Messianic era. Isaiah did indeed serve as a light to the nations, and Israel, his nation, joined him in that calling by remaining loyal to his vision and preserving the hope for his vision of the future.

#### **V. 56. Page 205**

Brown critiques Judaism: *"...it does not provide complete redemption for the soul. In other words, it does not bring the assurance of forgiveness of sins, the assurance of being in a right standing with God, the assurance that upon death, we will be received into His eternal presence."*

I don't see the Christian's assurance of forgiveness, and the Jew's lack thereof as a shortcoming of Judaism or as an advantage of Christianity. For people, who are tainted with the character faults of pride, envy, self-centeredness and greed, to stand there and to proclaim that they are "assured of being in a right standing with God" is nothing that I envy. For a person who is tainted with these flaws to be "assured" that they have been cleansed of these flaws, is something that I envy even less.

The assurance that the Jew experiences, is the assurance that King David experienced: "Even if I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, because You are with me" (Psalm 23:4). Wherever we are, God is with us. Not a god, who depends upon schools of theologians and libraries of writings to justify our devotion to him, but the God who holds the breath of every being in His hand, including our own breath, and including the breath of Jesus in those few years that he was granted on God's earth.

We walk in the assurance that God is merciful and just and that He does not demand of us that which we are incapable of bringing forth. We experience the assurance that God accepts our sincere repentance to the degree that He forgets our sins. Sincere repentance is an ongoing, never-ending process that requires as to constantly seek greater depths of sincerity and of truth. As we draw ever closer to God, we are flooded with the light of His

love – every time we are granted the privilege of fulfilling one of His commandments, and every minute that we are granted the privilege of breathing His air and walking His earth. Our hearts are steadfast with the assurance that His purpose on earth is being fulfilled through us as His beloved firstborn son.

#### V. 57. Pages 213-214

Brown takes issue with the Jewish view that the Gentiles are called upon to serve the Jewish people in the Messianic era. The fact that the prophets clearly endorse this Jewish belief does not faze Brown in the slightest. Brown writes: “*As for those verses which speak of Gentile subservience of the Jews, they are either in the context of former enemies bowing low before the Jewish people or of their willful honoring of the restored nation as part of their honoring of the Lord (and part of the Lord favoring Israel again). That too will happen, but its only a small part of the larger picture, a picture in which the earth will be full with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea*” (Isa. 11:9b).” Before we refute Brown’s interpretation of the prophets, it is important that we set the record straight as to what the Jewish people believe about Gentile subservience in the Messianic era.

We do not believe that the Gentiles will not know God in the Messianic era. In fact, one of the central themes of the Jewish prayers on the high holidays focuses on the prophecy of Zephaniah which proclaims in the name of God: “For then will I turn all nations (to speak) a pure language, so that they all will proclaim the Name of the Lord, to worship Him with a united resolve” (Zephaniah 3:9). The idea that all the nations will together worship God as one stands at the heart of Israel’s yearning for the Messianic era.

At the same time the prophets foretold that Israel will be called to stand as priests of the Lord while the nations will do their work (Isaiah 61:5,6). Israel’s status towards the nations will be similar to the status of Israel’s priests towards Israel. In both cases, everyone is worshiping the One Creator of all. Everyone has direct access to our Father in heaven. The difference lies in our role here on earth. Just as the Israelite farmers tilled the ground and supported the priests with the tithes so that the priests can devote themselves to the study of Torah (2Chronicles 31:4) and to the work in the Temple (Numbers 18:21) – so it is with the Gentile nations and Israel in the Messianic era. All will serve God in the Jerusalem Temple (Isaiah 56:7, Zechariah 14:16). But Israel is called upon to devote themselves to the bringing of God’s light to all (Zechariah 8:23), while the Gentile nations will support them through the working of the land.

For Brown to say that the verses refer to a “*willful honoring of Israel*”, is to ignore the explicit statements of the prophets. Isaiah tells us that the nation that will not serve Israel shall go lost (Isaiah 60:12), hardly a “*willful honoring of Israel*”. Daniel predicted that: “And the kingdom, and the dominion and the glory of the kingdoms under the heavens will be given to the nation of the holy exalted ones, its kingdom is an eternal kingdom, and all rulers will serve and obey it” (Daniel 7:27). This is not placed in a context that would somehow limit the Gentile subservience to Israel to her former enemies. Daniel is talking of all of the kingdoms under the heaven (Daniel 7:14, 18, 22, 27).

The concept that Israel will be exalted amongst the other nations in the Messianic era, is a central feature of the prophet's vision of the future. There are so many passages that emphasize this point. There are far more passages that speak of Israel's exaltation than there are passages that speak of the exaltation of the Messiah. For Brown to say that Israel's exaltation is only a "*small part of the larger picture*", while at the same time arguing for an extreme exaltation of the Messiah – all this in the name of the Jewish Scriptures, is to turn the Jewish Scriptures on its ear.

#### **V. 58. Page 219**

Brown quotes Israel's prayer of Isaiah 26:17,18, which he represents as: "*the people bemoaned their failure to bring God's salvation and victory to the earth...*" Brown goes on to say: "*Through Yeshua, we can change all that... My Jewish friend, the world is waiting for you. Let us join together and make our king known to the ends of the earth...*" The problem with Brown's "solution" to Israel's problem is that it is precisely the opposite of God's solution to this problem, as expressed in this very same Scriptural passage that Brown has just quoted. Instead of instructing Israel to launch a missionary campaign to the outside world, God encourages Israel: "Go, My people, enter your chambers and close your doors behind you, hide yourself for a brief moment until the anger has passed. For behold the Lord is going forth from His place to bring punishment for the sin of the inhabitants of the earth.." (Isaiah 26:20,21). Brown has again brought to light the deep discord that exists between his own position and that of the Jewish Scriptures.

#### **V. 59. Objection 6.10**

In this objection, Brown addresses the Jewish assertion that observance of the Torah is an accomplishment that is within our ability. The passage of Deuteronomy 30:11-14 seems to make this very point. God assures us through Moses that: "For this commandment that I command you today, is not hidden from you nor is it too far... For the matter is very close to you, in your mouth and in your heart to do it."

Brown responds to this argument with: "*The problem is not with the Torah, the problem is with us, as it reveals our sins and shortcomings. We acknowledge that it is good, we affirm that it can be kept, but then we fall short (see 6.17 below; see also vol. 4, 5.29). This was the pattern of our people throughout the Tanakh, to the point that God Himself said in Jeremiah 31:31-34 that He would institute a new covenant, one unlike the Sinai covenant, since we broke that covenant and it was clear that we would continue to break it.*"

Brown is in effect arguing that God's statement in Deuteronomy 30:11-14 was presented to highlight our disobedience. As if God was saying, "Look how easy it is to keep – and yet you still fall short". The upshot of this message is that since it is impossible for us to keep the Torah, therefore, observance of the Torah cannot be the solution to our problems – the only way Israel could be reconciled with God is through a new covenant.

Again, Brown has confirmed that his own beliefs and those of the Jewish Scriptures are polar opposites. The context of Deuteronomy 30:11-14 is that it follows immediately after

Deuteronomy 30:1-10. The first word in verse 11 is: “For”, or “because”, clearly indicating that verses 11 thru 14 are going to explain something about the previous passage. In the previous passage, Moses tells us how, at the end of days, after we experience the blessing and the curse, we will ultimately return to God. Moses speaks of repentance, of returning to God to obey His commandments according to everything that Moses had presented to us on that day (the day that Moses spoke). Moses tells us that when we repent, God will return us to the land, He will circumcise our hearts and we will merit the favor of God. Verse 11 thru 14 are presented in order to assure us that the solution to our problems that was presented in verses 1 thru 10 (repentance) is something that is sure to happen.

In other words; the entire point of the passage under discussion (verses 11 thru 14) is to teach us the precise opposite of what Brown would have us believe. The point of the passage is that instead of getting discouraged from our record of disobedience and falling into the trap of seeking other solutions to our national problems, we should take courage and realize that the path that Moses set down for us as the solution to our national problems is completely accessible.

Brown continues to say that some Messianic Jews understand that Deuteronomy 30 speaks of the very same new covenant prophesied by Jeremiah, and that the circumcision of the heart spoken of in verse 5 is the new covenant promise of Jeremiah. He goes on to assert that: *“Messianic Jews would see Torah obedience reaching its fulfillment through obedience and faith in the Messiah...”*

If these Messianic Jews are correct in their assumption that Moses and Jeremiah spoke of the same new covenant (and I believe that this interpretation is indeed correct), then Brown’s argument is completely refuted. Moses tells us that the path to the new covenant is observance of the Torah as he presented it to us (verse 2). This is talking of a pre-new-covenant observance. And it is this observance that Moses is referring to when he assures us (in verse 11-thru 14) that the Torah is completely accessible to us. So instead of highlighting the “need” for a new-covenant, as Brown claims, Moses is describing the path to the new covenant. Furthermore, the observance of Torah that follows the new covenant is described with the exact same words that are used to describe the Torah observance that precedes and leads up to the new covenant – “according to all that I (Moses) command you today”. Just as the pre-new-covenant observance has nothing to do with Jesus, as Christians must admit, so it is with the post-new-covenant observance. In fact the words that Moses uses; “according to all that I command you today”, specifically preclude a new teaching by a teacher that claims to have superseded Moses.

In endnote # 343, Brown offers another interpretation of Deuteronomy 30:1-10: *“another view would be that Deuteronomy 30 as a whole is part of the Sinai covenant and will therefore never be fulfilled as written because of our consistent failures, hence the promise of a new and better covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34.”*

Again, Brown crashes right in to the wall of Scriptural reality. The opening phrase in Deuteronomy 30 is: “It shall be when all these things befall you, the blessing and the curse...” The passage is talking of a time when Israel has already experienced God’s curse as a result of her disobedience, and the point of this passage is to direct us and guide us

in repairing our relationship with God AFTER our disobedience. How could Brown think that this passage is canceled because of our disobedience? This is the very problem that this passage is coming to address. This would be like saying: “you can’t use a fire-extinguisher to put out a fire, because fires are very dangerous”. Well, what then is the point of a fire-extinguisher? This passage is the fire-extinguisher of our national problems, and Brown is saying that we can’t use it because of our national problems!

#### **V. 60. Objection 6.11**

Here Brown deals with the idea that no other form of Judaism aside from Rabbinic Judaism has survived the ravages of exile. Brown responds to this point with the argument: *“We have been preserved as a people by the Lord’s grace and mercy, and for any group to take credit for our preservation is misguided.”*

Brown has missed the point of the Jewish argument. No-one is attempting to take credit for the preservation of our people, we recognize that it is only God’s grace and mercy that preserved us, and that is the very point of this argument. The Torah makes it clear that observance of the Law of Moses will be available to every generation of Jews. Deuteronomy 30:2 speaks of the end of days, after we have already experienced the blessing and the curse, and encourages us to obey the Torah as Moses presented it to us. Furthermore, God promised that the sign of the Sabbath will endure throughout our generations as an eternal sign that God sanctifies our nation (Exodus 31:13). It is clear that when God gave the Torah to our people, He ensured that it will be preserved in our midst for eternity. The only form of Torah observance that has been continuously followed throughout history is the observance of rabbinical Judaism. It is this form of Torah observance that God chose to preserve. Why did God not bother to preserve the form of Torah observance of Jesus’s Jewish followers? Why did God not bother to preserve the Sadducee observance or the observance of the Essenes? The miraculous continuity of rabbinic Judaism is a sign of God’s favor and grace. And the fact that, of all the competing Jewish communities, God chose the community of Rabbinic Judaism within which to preserve His Law, validates the claims of that community.

To underscore the power of this argument, I turn to Brown’s own words: *“In fact, although it brings me no joy to write this, Pharisaic/traditional Judaism is the only form of Jewish practice that has been subject to continual dispersion, judgment, and exile...”* (Page 234).

In Brown’s world-view, the fate of the Jerusalem Church, which ceased to exist as an identifiable Jewish entity some 1700 years ago, is more favorable than the fate of rabbinical Judaism which has been preserved under judgment until today. Let us contrast this with the view of the Jewish Scriptures, repeated and emphasized again and again. Throughout the Scriptures, the most severe punishment uttered against the most vile sinners, and against deviant communities, is that they will be cut off from amongst their people (Leviticus 20:5, Ezekiel 13:9 are but a few examples). This punishment was the lot of the Jewish followers of Jesus, and Brown is comforted by the fact that they did not experience continuous judgment!?! Just how far could you stray from the spirit of

Scripture in the name of Scripture?

**V. 61.** *Pages 223 – 235*

Brown takes issue with what he considers “strong arm tactics” of the leadership of Orthodox Judaism for declaring that other forms of Judaism, such as Karaite Judaism, Reform and Conservative Judaism, to say nothing of Messianic Judaism, are not legitimate expressions of Judaism.

What does he propose instead? That we should accept every form of Judaism that any one may choose to invent as a legitimate expression of Judaism? Is he willing to do the same for Christianity? Is he willing to accept the claims of Mormons, Christian Science, and the Witnesses for legitimacy as valid expressions of Christianity? Does Brown want to say that as the inheritors of the Sinai legacy that we do NOT have the responsibility to hand to our children the Judaism that we received from our ancestors?

**V. 62.** *Objection 6.12*

Brown presents one of the fundamental Jewish Objections to Christianity: *“Judaism is a unique religion. Of all the religions of the world, only Judaism began with a public revelation witnessed by the entire nation. No one and nothing can alter that fact or change the substance of that revelation.”*

Brown responds on behalf of Christianity with three arguments: *“1) Followers of Jesus also accept the revelation of God at Sinai, recognizing it as the foundation of everything else that follows...”* Further on (Page 236) Brown elaborates: *“...the revelation at Sinai is NOT the exclusive property of traditional Judaism. Rather, it is the heritage of all who embrace the Tanakh, and that includes hundreds of millions of Christians as well.”*

Brown’s second argument: *“2) In and of itself, the revelation of Sinai argues against a binding oral tradition – which is the foundation of traditional Judaism – rather than for it.”*

Brown presents his third argument: *“3) God did not stop speaking at Sinai, and therefore I embrace the words of the prophets and the words of the Messiah, which build on the foundation of Sinai. I should also point out that many liberal Jewish scholars do not even believe that this revelation at Sinai ever occurred...”*

Before refuting Brown’s arguments, a question is begging to be asked. Why bring up the liberal scholars? What is the point of reminding his audience that there are people who do not believe in the Sinai revelation? Could there be any other motivation other than to minimize the power of Sinai in the eyes of his audience? If this conclusion is correct (and I do not insist that it is, it simply the only logical answer I can see for my question) than another question presents itself. Why? Why is it important for someone – who claims to believe in Sinai, and who claims a share in the heritage of Sinai – to attempt to minimize the impact of Sinai? The fact that Brown found the need to include the opinion of these

liberal scholars in his response to the Jewish argument based on Sinai, leaves me with a strong impression, that Sinai does not sit all that well with Brown. For all of his declarations to the effect that he affirms the revelation of Sinai, something is seriously wrong.

Since Sinai is so foundational to Judaism, and since the Scriptures put Sinai and the exodus at the very center of the faith-structure of Scripture, I will beg the reader's indulgence, and I will take the time to elaborate.

Before I begin, I will quote some Scripture.

“When you are in distress and all these things have befallen you, at the end of days, you will return to the Lord your God, and hearken to His voice. For the Lord your God is a merciful God, He will not abandon you nor destroy you, and He will not forget the covenant of your forefathers that He swore to them. For inquire now regarding the early days that preceded you, from the day that God created man on the earth, and from on end of the heaven to the other end of the heaven: Has there ever been anything like this great thing or has anything like it been heard? Has a people heard the voice of God speaking to them from the midst of the fire as you have, and survived? Or has any god ever miraculously come to take for himself a nation from the midst of a nation, with challenges, with signs, and with wonders, and with war, and with a strong hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with greatly awesome deeds, such as everything that the Lord your God, did for you in Egypt before your eyes? You have been shown in order to know that the Lord, He is the God, there is none beside Him. From heaven He caused you to hear His voice in order to teach you, and on earth He showed you His great fire, and you heard His words from the midst of the fire.” (Deuteronomy 4:30-36).

The point of this passage is: That the fact that Israel is the only nation that claims to have heard God's voice from the midst of the fire, and the fact that Israel is the only nation that claims to have experienced anything like the exodus from Egypt, is supposed to encourage the Jew at the end of time that God will not forget the covenant that He made with our forefathers.

Why? How do the unique claims of Judaism reassure us that God's covenant with us still stands? What is the covenant that we share with God?

The thrust of the covenant that Israel shares with God is that we are called to be His nation and He declares Himself to be our God (Exodus 6:7, Deuteronomy 29:12, 1Chronicles 17:22). This means that God tied up His own identity with that of Israel. The covenant that Israel shares with God denotes that God will be called: “The God of Israel”, and that Israel will be called: “The people of God”. In other words; a covenant is like a marriage. No longer can we look at the two parties of the covenant as separate entities; the destiny of these two parties is bound up with one another and the very identity of these two parties is bound up with one another. The exodus and Sinai sealed the connection between God



and Israel. From that point onward, Israel is God's bride, and God is Israel's husband and lover.

Israel's intimacy with God that was displayed by the exodus and the familiarity with God that Israel gained through the Sinai revelation remains unmatched by any other national entity.

In these verses in Deuteronomy, God is reassuring Israel that no nation will ever match Israel's claim of being married to God.

The perception of God that Israel acquired at the Sinai revelation is not a peripheral aspect of our covenant with God. Neither is this perception something that fades away with the passage of time. God points to this knowledge of God that we acquired at Sinai as the very heart of our relationship with Him, and God speaks to the last generation and points to this knowledge as a unique possession that sets us apart from every other national entity. This knowledge was not acquired through the handing over of a book, nor was it accomplished through the recital of words. God points to a fiery encounter, collectively experienced as the means through which He imparted this knowledge to us (Deuteronomy 4:35). God also tells us how it is that this knowledge will be preserved throughout the generations. Again, it is not through the recital of words or through the reading of a book; but through the channel of love and trust that exists between children and their parents (Deuteronomy 4:9, Psalm 78:5).

Sinai and exodus were fiery experiences that seared the perception of God into the minds and the hearts of the people who experienced it. They were commanded by God to keep this awareness and intimacy with God alive and to pass it on to their children. Each generation of Jews is enjoined by God to absorb the testimony of exodus and Sinai from their parents, to come to know and love the God of their ancestors and to stand together with their parents in a covenantal relationship with God (Deuteronomy 29:13). The power, the reality and the truth of God embodied in the testimony of exodus and Sinai is so weighty that the last generation of Jews can put their full trust in the God of Sinai on the basis of this testimony (Psalm 78:7). A trust in God that will encourage them to give their lives for Him (Psalm 44:17-23). A trust in God and a love for Him that will carry them through the darkest times (Isaiah 26:13, Micha 7:7,8). A trust and a yearning for God so that when God arises to judge the earth, the children of the exodus and Sinai will cry out with joy: "Behold! This is our God! The God that we hoped for! (Isaiah 25:9). And the connection between God and Israel that was forged at exodus and Sinai runs so deep and is so steadfast, that when God alone is exalted on that day (Isaiah 2:17), His bride, Israel, will be vindicated to the eyes of all the nations (Isaiah 49:23, 62:2. Micha 7:10, Psalm 98:2,3).

Now here we have Brown, declaring that hundreds of millions of Christians share in the heritage of Sinai! Brown seems to be under the impression that Sinai is completely restricted to a book, it has nothing to do with living people, so that according to Brown, anyone who grabs hold of the book can claim a share in the inheritance of Sinai.

Brown has missed the point of Sinai, which is actually the central point of the entire Scripture. Its not about a book, it is about a covenant between two living parties; between the living God, and between His bride, Israel. Just because you are holding a copy of a description of the wedding ceremony doesn't make you the bride. And if you make it your life's mission to declare to one and all that the witnesses that God commissioned at Sinai are liars, then how can you turn around and claim the heritage of Sinai for yourself? (Just to remind the readers; in Volume 2, Brown contended that Israel's rejection of the trinity is not based on what they learned at Sinai, as Israel claims, but is rather: "*a gut-level negative reaction to anything Christian*" (Page 7).)

Brown's argument that: "*the Sinai revelation does not give a hint of the Oral law. Not a hint!*" – is equally fallacious. The whole point of the exodus and Sinai is that words alone, neither written or spoken can effectively communicate a perception of God; it can only be done through a living experience. The whole point of exodus and Sinai is that through a series of living experiences, God forged a nation for Himself that will walk through the corridors of history with His truth in their hearts (Isaiah 51:7) – a living nation, not a series of books.

#### **V. 63. Page 235**

*"3) God did not stop speaking at Sinai, and therefore I embrace the words of the prophets and the words of the Messiah, which build on the foundation of Sinai."*

There is another foundational aspect of Sinai that Brown has missed and together with Sinai he has missed the mainstay of the faith structure of the Jewish Scriptures.

Through the exodus and Sinai, God established a perception of Himself in the minds and in the hearts of Israel (Deuteronomy 4:35, 39). At Sinai God also established the authenticity of Moses' claim to prophecy (Exodus 19:9). The truth of these two concepts (Israel's perception of God, and the validity of Moses' prophecy) were so firmly established, that every subsequent generation of Jews is enjoined to evaluate prophetic claims in light of these two perceptions. No matter how many miracles and no matter how spectacular those miracles are; if the claimant to prophecy contradicts Israel's perception of God or if he contradicts Moses; he should be put to death (Deuteronomy 13:6).

Brown's acceptance of Jesus' claims for deity, is a direct contradiction to Sinai. Brown's acceptance of the claim that Jesus is somehow greater than Moses is likewise contradicted by Sinai. It is only because Brown rejects Sinai, that he is able to accept the claims of Christianity.

#### **V. 64. Pages 237-238**

Brown goes back to the Jewish objection (6.12) and reiterates it in different words: "*You might say, "but God DID give the Ten Commandments and much of the Written Torah to Israel, in a public, definite way, before the whole nation, whereas you claim that Jesus just showed up on the scene and drew a few disciples about him and then changed*

*everything. Why should we believe this?”*

Before we approach Brown’s response to the Jewish objection, it is important to point out that his presentation of the objection is misleading. First and foremost, a key concept that is missing, is the concept of credibility. The claims of Judaism are more credible than are the claims of Christianity. And second, it was not *“much of the Written Torah”* that we received in a public definite way, but rather it was a perception of God (Deuteronomy 4:35), and the knowledge that Moses is His prophet (Exodus 19:9) that we received at Sinai. To approach these concepts from a different angle; if I were to ask a Christian: How do you know your god? On what basis do you accept the claim that Jesus was god incarnate? Did anyone SEE that he is god incarnate? – If we turn to volume 2, we find a series of arguments (incidentally; no mention of Sinai) arguing for the alleged divinity of Jesus. That is still not seeing. The Jew on the other hand can say: “We encountered God face to face” (Deuteronomy 5:4). If you ask the Christian: How do you know that Jesus was a prophet? – Brown will point to signs and wonders that Jesus performed before those who already believed in him – but that is still not KNOWING that God spoke to him. If we ask a Jew, how it is that he knows that Moses is a prophet – he could respond – “we heard God talking to him” (Exodus 19:9).

Now for Brown’s response to the Jewish objection. Brown points to various phenomena that accompanied the career of Jesus. He points to the prophetic prediction which, according to Brown, predicts that the Messiah must come before the destruction of the Second Temple (- we addressed these in Contra Brown), he points to signs in the heaven and an angelic announcement that preceded the birth of Jesus (Matthew 2 and Luke 2), the preaching of John the Baptist that preceded Jesus’ ministry, the faith healings of Jesus that Brown refers to as “unprecedented signs, wonders and miracles”, the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on donkey-back, the supernatural events that coincided with Jesus’ death; namely an eclipse, and earthquake and the rending of the Temple veil, Jesus’ resurrection, the “outpouring of the spirit” that took place on the Pentecost, the miracles the Peter performed, and Jesus’ prediction of the destruction.

Brown appeals to his readers: *“When you think of it, with Israel scattered throughout the world, what could have been more public than the Messiah’s triumphal entry and death at the time of the Passover – with Jerusalem thronged with Jews from around the world – and then Jews from every nation hearing and seeing the events at Shavuot?”*

(As an aside, before we respond to Brown’s argument – I find it noteworthy that Brown did not mention the many dead saints that Matthew claims were resurrected at the time of Jesus’ crucifixion. I would have thought that this most incredible miracle should be at the forefront of the list of miracles that are supposed to confirm Jesus’ claims.)

To respond to Brown’s question: *“what could have been more public?”* – I say; God could have spoken to Jesus from the thick of the cloud like He spoke to Moses, that would at least place him on an equal footing with Moses. God could have turned the Jordan river into blood for seven days, He could have stopped the sun in the sky as He did for Joshua, He could have done any number of miracles that would impact the nation on a practical level – but He didn’t. Brown has failed to understand the unique nature of the exodus

miracles. The exodus impacted Israel and Egypt on a practical level. To put things in a modern American perspective; could you compare the Mississippi turning to blood for a full week, to a faith healing that may take place in front of those who already have faith in the healer? (Note: Matthew and Mark inform us that Jesus could not perform mighty miracles in places where people did not have faith in him – Mark 6:5, Matthew 13:58). Would you compare the impact of the bulk of America’s military forces drowning in the sea to a dead person reappearing to a select few devotees, who had already committed themselves in devotion to this person?

Furthermore, the alleged miracles of Jesus can only be found in the pages of a book written and edited by a limited group of individuals that have dedicated themselves to promulgate the glory of Jesus. There is no one on earth today who claims that he or she is a direct descendant of one who experienced one of Jesus’ miracles. Contrast this with the exodus, where you have an entire nation of living people testifying to the truth of the exodus – telling their children that they heard from their parents that they were personally impacted by the miracles of the exodus. In fact, the descendants of the people amongst whom Jesus lived namely the Jewish people, remember Jesus and his followers in a negative way.

The bottom line is and remains; Both Judaism and Christianity make claims about the realm of the unseen and unknown: Judaism claims that all of our devotion belongs to our Creator and to no one else, while Christianity claims that our devotion ought to be directed towards a man who lived and walked this earth. The assertions of these two belief systems cannot be verified through the five senses; each of these belief systems claims to have received their respective beliefs through a revelation from that realm of the unknown. In the case of Judaism, that revelation came to the entirety of the nation – all of them encountered the living God at Sinai; in the case of Christianity, the Christian points to Jesus as the channel through whom this information came from the realm of the unknown to this world. In the case of Judaism, we believe the testimony of a nation, in the case of Christianity, it all stands on the words of an individual.

#### V. 65. Page 238

Here Brown devotes one paragraph to one of the major Jewish objections against Christianity (- note: one paragraph out of a five volume series that spans almost 1500 pages! And this paragraph is not even placed in the section that purportedly deals with the Jewish objections of this category (- theological objections; idolatry)).

*“I am aware, of-course, that traditional Jews point to God’s revelation at Sinai, as recounted by Moses in Deuteronomy 4:14-34, emphasizing that the people of Israel saw no form on Sinai – including that of a man or woman – and that they should not make an idol in any shape or form. Therefore, it is argued, we are violating the Sinai covenant by worshipping Yeshua as god, as if we were making a man into a god (or vice versa).”*

Again, before getting to Brown’s response; a question is in order: Why when quoting Deuteronomy 4 does Brown stop at verse 34? Does he not realize the critical nature of verse 35 and its central place in this discussion? Verse 35 reads: “Unto you it was SHOWN

in order that you know, that the Lord is God, THERE IS NONE ELSE BESIDE HIM.” In other words: whatever it is that we are to worship was shown to us at Sinai, and we are to worship NOTHING ELSE.

Now to Brown’s response. *“But that is a crass misunderstanding of our faith. We do not worship a human form. The New Testament plainly states that “no one has ever seen God” (John 1:18a) describing Him as the One “who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see” (I Tim. 6:16). In Yeshua, however, we recognize the fullness of God revealed, not in physical form or shape – how absurd! – but in spiritual reality, clothed in human flesh.”*

A crass misunderstanding of Sinai and a mockery too. As if a nifty word-game can get around the prohibition against idolatry. This is actually the third lesson of Sinai that seems to have completely escaped Brown. Brown missed the idea that Sinai sealed a covenant between two living parties, Brown missed the idea theme that Sinai is the yardstick against which subsequent claims for prophecy are judged, and here Brown misses the idea that Sinai serves as the definitive teaching on the subject of idolatry (Exodus 20:19, Deuteronomy 4:15). Brown also has completely missed the concept of the Oral Law because it is here that the Scripture most explicitly testifies to the concept of the Oral Law.

Allow me to reiterate what we mean when we say Oral Law. When we say that we believe in the Oral Law we are saying that there is more to the commandments than what is written in the Five Books of Moses. The concept of the Oral Law maintains that the full scope of the commandment can only be grasped through the living testimony of Israel. Those, such as Brown, who dispute the authenticity of the Oral Law contend that everything that Israel needs to know about the Law is completely contained in the Five books of Moses.

When it comes to the Law that prohibits idolatry, the Torah clearly and unequivocally authenticates the position of the believers in the Oral Law. God chose to teach the prohibition against idolatry to the nation of Israel in a direct fashion. As opposed to the other commandments, where God taught them to Moses who then went and taught them to Israel, God Himself taught the nation of Israel the injunction against worshipping idols. Now, according to Brown and his fellow deniers of the validity of the Oral Law, God should have recited some words or handed Israel a book – and nothing more. After all, if there is no Oral Law then everything must be contained in written words. But that is not what God did. He certainly did recite words and He also gave Israel a written record of those words in the form of the two tablets, but He did not stop there. In order to teach Israel who it is that they are to worship and who it is that they are not to worship God put Israel through a fiery experience which goes far beyond words. And the written words itself point to this fiery experience as the touchstone for the prohibition against idolatry (Exodus 20:19, Deuteronomy 4:15). Subsequent passages identify idols with the simple term: “that which I have not commanded” (Deuteronomy 17:3), or: “that which your fathers did not know” (Deuteronomy 13:7); implying that if we did not hear about it from our ancestors from Sinai, then it is an idol that is not deserving of our worship. If there is anywhere in scripture that we are taught that words alone do not adequately convey the

underlying message of a commandment; it is here. And it is precisely here, in the realm of idolatry, that Christianity most emphatically rejects the living testimony of Israel.

How does the living testimony of Israel negate the claims of Christianity concerning the alleged divinity of Jesus? Simple! At Sinai we were shown towards whom it is that we are to direct our devotion. Anyone or anything that was not revealed to our ancestors at Sinai, is not deserving of our worship. No one ever claimed that our ancestors saw Jesus at Sinai. If God wanted us to direct our devotion to Jesus, He would have shown Jesus to us at Sinai. Since Jesus was not there at Sinai, worship of him is idolatry.

But what about those nifty word-games? What about the claim that Jesus is somehow one and the same as the God we encountered at Sinai?

The basic response is that if “a” is not equal to “b” then “b” cannot be equal to “a”. In other words, if worship of the God who revealed Himself to our ancestors at Sinai is not worship of Jesus, then worship of Jesus is not worship of the God who revealed Himself at Sinai. Its as simple as that.

To illuminate the matter from a different angle let us focus on the sin of idolatry. The sin of idolatry is not a philosophical abstract, it is a sin of the heart. The sin of idolatry is not committed when you use the wrong phrase – for example, according to Brown; the phrase: “the fullness of God revealed in physical form” would be “absurd” and presumably idolatrous, while the phrase: “the fullness of God revealed in spiritual reality clothed in human flesh” is perfectly fine. These word games have nothing to do with the sin of idolatry.

The sin of idolatry is perpetrated when one’s heart is committed in devotion to an entity other than the God of Israel. In order for one to commit their heart in devotion to someone or to something, there has to be a basis for that devotion, a motivation and a stimulus for that devotion. In the case of the God of Israel, the stimulus for the devotion is the awe one feels in the presence of the Master of all creation, who holds the existence of every being in His hand. Devotion to God is rooted in the understanding that every fiber of our existence belongs to Him because it was He who brought us into existence to begin with. Worship of God is inspired by the sense of gratitude that we feel for all of the kindness that He is constantly pouring upon us with love and mercy. Israel’s devotion to her God is rooted in the very fact that God is God. It is impossible to separate between Israel’s devotion and the concept of Creator, Master, and Sustainer of all existence – because Israel’s devotion is rooted in those very truths.

The Christian’s devotion to Jesus on the other hand is rooted in the admiration of a human character portrayed in the pages of the Gospels. It is rooted in an awe for his alleged righteousness, in a reverence towards his teachings, and in an appreciation for his sacrifice and suffering – all of which took place in a human body. All of this devotion has nothing to do with the claim that he is somehow divine. All of the feelings that a Christian bears in his or her heart towards Jesus are entirely possible without believing that Jesus is divine. The argument that Jesus is somehow one and the same as the God of Israel is not the root or the stimulus for the Christian’s devotion – rather it is the result of the

Christian's devotion. The words: "Jesus is the same as the God of Israel", are simply a set of words that is appended to the Christian's devotion to Jesus as a justification for the devotion, but in no way is this set of words an intrinsic and inseparable part of the devotion itself.

The awe that one experiences when contemplating the reality of the Master of all existence, the gratitude that one feels for the kindness of existence, and the submission that we feel towards the One who created us out of nothing – has nothing to do with the admiration that Christians feel towards the human character portrayed in the four Gospels. These are two different devotions rooted in two different sets of human emotions. One is the service of God and the other is idolatry.

#### **V. 66.** *Objection 6.13*

Brown deals here with the Jewish objection that contrasts the rationality of Judaism with the irrationality of Christianity. Brown goes on to say that Christianity encourages thought and education (I imagine that Brown would label the Church's history of opposition to education as an invalid expression of Christianity – "they were not real Christians"). Brown continues his argument with the point that there are many concepts in Judaism that seem to be irrational, such as the miracles recorded in the Jewish Scriptures. Brown concludes his response to this Jewish objection with a quote from Isaiah 55:8,9: "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts".

Brown has missed the thrust of the Jewish objection and he has completely misunderstood Isaiah.

The thrust of the Jewish objection is not focused on rational versus irrational, it is focused on honest versus dishonest. In order to teach Israel who it is that they are to worship, God went out of His way to satisfy the human sensitivity to truth. Remember; the concept that there is a Supreme Being who is above and beyond all of nature, is a concept that the philosophers and thinkers of most cultures affirm through the process of human reason – but God did not rely on that. He had to turn the Nile into blood for seven days (- try to imagine the Amazon, the Mississippi, the Rhine, or the Volga turning into blood for seven days!). That wasn't enough, He brought the frogs, the lice, the wild animals, the pestilence, the boils, the hail, the locusts, and three days of darkness on the entirety of Egypt; still not enough. The first born of Egypt, every last one of them, die at midnight; still not enough. A pillar of cloud, a pillar of fire, the sea splitting and the Egyptian army drowning, bread from heaven, and water from a rock; still not enough. God was not satisfied until He introduced Himself to the entire nation of Israel in an unprecedented and never-repeated collective national revelation; then and only then was God satisfied that Israel is convinced that they owe their worship to the One Supreme Being who holds their breath in His hand. Contrast this with the Jesus of Christianity, who was condemning those who doubted the truth of his claims – according to Brown these include that he, a human being, is somehow deserving of worship – to the eternal fires of hell –

even before his alleged resurrection! Is there a comparison?

The foundations of the Jewish faith are rooted in two pieces of information that God imparted directly to the nation as a whole. These are: Israel's perception of God (Deuteronomy 4:35), and the knowledge that Moses is truly God's prophet (Exodus 19:9). God ensured that our sense of honesty is completely satisfied before demanding that we accept these two principles. All the rest of Judaism's beliefs rest upon these two pillars. We do not claim to understand every detail, but as long as we are sure that they came from the God who we encountered at Sinai and were taught by the one man who merited that God attest to the validity of his mission on a national level – we accept it. Our sense of honesty requires this of us. Contrast this with the teachings of Christianity. What do they stand on? On the flimsy claims of a few individuals, who never saw that Jesus is god, but came to that conclusion on the basis of their human analysis, or on the basis of the books of Christian Scriptures, whose authenticity is still the subject of scholarly debate. How does this compare to the testimony of Judaism that was in the hands of a nation from its inception?

The God of Judaism went out of His way to appeal to our sensitivity to truth, the god of Christianity did not.

Brown's quotation from Isaiah is an appalling misuse of Scripture. Isaiah is not talking about who it is that we are to worship or about the teaching of the trinity. Isaiah is talking about the efficacy of repentance. If one appreciates the magnitude of a sin, a rebellion against the sovereignty of God, then it is difficult if not impossible to fathom how repentance can wipe the slate clean. Indeed, many people, Brown included, have presented various logical and semi-logical arguments in an effort to negate the efficacy of repentance. But Isaiah teaches us – don't try to understand it. As long as your sense of honesty is satisfied that it is God who has spoken, it is not for you to doubt. God's ways are not our ways nor are our thoughts His thoughts. And Judaism takes God on His word. If You, God, say that repentance works (Isaiah 55:7), then we accept Your word and we trust in Your abundant mercy. Christianity on the other hand is built upon a rejection of Isaiah's message in these very verse that Brown has quoted. Since the wages of sin is death, Christianity argues in a semi-logical fashion, there can be no forgiveness for sin without the shedding of blood. Isaiah's appeal to put our logic aside for this issue is ignored by Brown and the theologians of Christianity.

When it comes to the object of our worship, on the other hand, Scripture appeals directly to human logic and even to human humor to make its point. Isaiah points to the futility of trusting in a man that needs a constant supply of oxygen in order to function properly (Isaiah 2:22). Jeremiah points to the absurdity that is inherent in worshiping an inhabitant of this earth (Jeremiah 10:11). Daniel rebukes the Babylonian king for directing worship to an entity other than the One who holds his breath in His hand (Daniel 5:23). When it comes to the issue of directing our worship, the Scriptures teach us to follow our logic and our conscience. If it is abhorrent to you to direct worship to a human being that lived and breathed like yourself, as it should be, then don't do it. Don't fall for the arguments of the apologists that encourage you to put your sensitivity to truth aside on this matter. If they quote Isaiah 55:8,9 to you to support their argument, that is only God's



way of demonstrating to you just how irresponsible and unreliable these apologists and their arguments are.

#### V. 67. *Objection 6.14*

Here Brown responds to the charge that the ethical teachings of Jesus were borrowed from the teachers of Rabbinic Judaism.

The fact is that this objection doesn't really deserve a response. Judaism does not claim to be the exclusive possessor of every bit of spiritual insight. We believe that every human being carries a spark of God's breath inside of them (Genesis 2:7), and that by searching their own conscience they can arrive at various aspects of God's truth. I have heard many pieces of spiritual insight from the cultures of the Far-East, from Africa and from the Native American nations. I don't see a need to attribute their moral and ethical insights to Jewish tradition or to deny their validity. But it is Brown's astonishing response to this objection that brings us to the real objection.

Brown's response to the objection is multi-faceted, but at one point he makes the claim: *"weighed in the scales of positive world influence, the writings of the New Testament come out handily on top, being read and revered by far more people and having had a more widespread, positive influence than the rabbinic writings..."*

Did you ever hear of the Crusades? How about the Inquisition? How about the holocaust? The New Testament having a more positive influence?! Is there no limit to the absurd?

Brown goes on to the Sermon on the Mount as an example of the ethical teachings of Jesus and he contrasts this with the Talmud, which although Brown acknowledges that it contains many ethical teachings, but: *"they are scattered throughout many other discussions, hence detracting from their power and simplicity"*.

The fact is that the community that followed the teachings of the Talmud managed to maintain themselves as an island of sanity and morality amongst a corrupt world, while the communities that followed the New Testament somehow completely missed the power and the simplicity of the Sermon on the Mount. If you read the Sermon on the Mount in context, you will see why they missed the moral message. The author of the book of Matthew is not satisfied to present a series of ethical teachings and to tell his audience, this is how you should live. The Sermon on the Mount is presented as a "proof" to the authenticity of Jesus' mission, and as a denigration of the teachers of Judaism. Matthew concludes his description of the Sermon on the Mount with the report that : "When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law" (Matthew 7:28-29). In other words, Matthew uses the Sermon on the Mount to disparage the teachers of Judaism – hardly an ethical or moral example. Jesus himself was guilty of the same, according to Matthew. In this very same Sermon on the Mount, Jesus presents his own teachings against lust, anger and the taking of oaths as original teachings that were never taught before. Until today, these words of Jesus are used to disparage the teachers of Judaism who, contrary to the claims of Jesus, clearly taught against lust, anger and the

taking of oaths on the basis of Jewish Scripture that preceded Jesus by several hundred years.

In other words, as opposed to the Talmud who presents the ethical and moral teachings as instructions for life, the authors of the New Testament present these teachings as part of an effort to disparage Judaism.

Then Brown goes on to one of the most staggering arguments in this five volume series (and there are no shortage of these): *“Or consider this parable of Jesus, one that proved to be incredibly prophetic just forty years after his death and resurrection:*

*“Listen to another parable: there was a landowner who planted a vineyard, he put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. Then he sent more servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. Last of all, he sent his son to them. ‘They will respect my son’ he said.*

*But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, ‘This is the heir, Come, let’s kill him and take away the inheritance.’ So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.*

*Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants? ‘He will bring those wretches to an evil end’ they replied, ‘and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at the harvest time.’ Jesus said to them, ‘have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes’?*

*Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces but he on whom it falls will be crushed.” (Matt. 21:33-44)*

*Do you understand his words?*

This is a teaching of Jesus that Brown is proudly holding up as an example of Jesus’ amazing ethical and spiritual insight with no parallel in the rabbinic writings.

Indeed. You will not find a parallel to this in any of the rabbinic writings, and for good reason. This evil parable of Jesus is a blood-soaked stain on the history of Christianity. What is the point of the parable? And how does Brown see its fulfillment forty years after Jesus’ death?

The owner of the vineyard is God, while the tenants are the Jewish people. The son of the landowner is Jesus and the murder of the son is the crucifixion of Jesus. In the parable, Jesus tells us the motives behind the murder of the son of the landowner: *“But when the*

tenants saw the son, they said to each other, “This is the heir, Come, let’s kill him and take away the inheritance”. In other words, they identified landowner’s son as the landowner’s son, and they killed him because they wanted his inheritance. To transpose this onto the events surrounding the crucifixion, Jesus is saying that the Jews who killed him knew that he was who claimed to be, and killed him because they somehow thought that by killing him they would take that which belongs to him. Jesus is not done. He tells us that the guilt of the tenants belongs to all of them and the whole lot of them will be punished by having the vineyard taken from them. In the real world, he puts the guilt of the crucifixion upon all the Jews and tells them that the kingdom of God will be taken from them and given to others. Brown sees a fulfillment to this pronouncement in the destruction of the Second Temple and in the rise of the Church.

Words fail to convey the evil that is inherent to this parable.

How many Jews were involved in the crucifixion of Jesus? – perhaps a handful. Why did they want to kill him? According to the very same Christian Scriptures we have two answers to this question; either because they considered Jesus to be a blasphemer (Matthew 26:65), or because they were frightened of the Roman reaction to his claims (John 11:50). The accusation that is implicit in Jesus’ parable, namely that the Jews KNEW that he was who he claimed to be and killed him anyway – has no basis in reality. The idea that they killed him because they wanted something that belonged to him is ridiculous to begin with. What did he have that they thought they could take. The idea that all the Jewish people are guilty for the crimes of a few, is also immoral and unethical. Yet on the basis of this teaching, Christian Europe decided that all the Jews are guilty of deicide – having committed the sin, with full knowledge of the severity of the act.

This led to teachings of hate and dehumanization that have their roots on this evil parable, but continued to flourish in what Brown sees as an “*incredibly prophetic*” fulfillment of Jesus’ words. As the Church spread, so did its Jew-hatred deepen – persecution, of every sort, incitement to murder, murder, Crusades, Inquisition and holocaust – all have their roots in this evil parable. And this is what Brown holds up as something we should be impressed with?

Just look at the hypocrisy – which is really too small a word to describe two millennia of crime. It was a few Jews who killed Jesus who never believed for a second that he was the son of God. Brown is satisfied with the judgment that all Jews should now lose the kingdom of God. So who inherited that kingdom? Who are the good tenants that Brown is happy to see tending the vineyard as an expression of justice served? The Church! The Church who killed and tortured millions of people who are explicitly identified by Scripture as God’s firstborn son (Exodus 4:22, Jeremiah 31:8). If the killing of one son requires that you lose the kingdom, what does the killing of several million do for you? But for Brown, justice is served. The Jews lost it, and the Church got it – and Brown sees this as an “*incredibly prophetic*” fulfillment!?

Brown is working hard to outdo himself in these closing pages of his five volume series. I quote: *“Not surprisingly, there are no rabbinic parallels to these words that explain the heart and soul of the “gospel” (that is god’s good news)”*

Brown goes on to quote from the book of John: *“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the son of man must be lifted up [speaking of his death by crucifixion], that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life...”*

Before I continue with Brown’s quote from John, I will point out that there is a popular rabbinic teaching on the incident with the snake in the desert; it is not parallel to John’s teaching on the matter, it is in fact the direct opposite of John’s interpretation. The sages of Israel asked the following question concerning the story described in Numbers 21:4-9: *“Is it the snake that brings death? Or is it the snake that gives life?”* The sages answered their own question: *“But this teaches you that as long as Israel was looking heavenward and subjecting their hearts to their Father in heaven, they were healed; and if not, they deteriorated.”* (Mishna, Rosh Hashana 3:8).

The lesson that the sages of Israel took from this incident was not to exalt the snake, but rather to direct all of our trust and hope to our Father in heaven. So Brown is correct in saying that there is no parallel to John’s teaching in any of the rabbinic writings, but this is nothing that Judaism should be ashamed of. The teaching that we are to look beyond the physical and connect with our Father in heaven, and to see in Him the only true source of all blessing and healing is the heart of Judaism and the soul of the Jewish Scriptures. John’s interpretation that exalts an inhabitant of this earth, is a direct repudiation of all that Moses and the prophets of Judaism stood for.

Brown continues with the quotation from John. *“Whoever believes in him (Jesus) is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be plainly seen that what he has done has been done through God.”*

Here John’s Jesus “explains” why it is that some people don’t accept his claims. It is not because these people have strong biblical arguments against the claims of Jesus (remember, John’s Jesus was speaking before the crucifixion, so most of the missionary’s proof-texts were not relevant). It is not because of the most serious problem that if Jesus is not who he claims to be than the devotion that he is demanding is idolatry, the greatest rebellion against God. The only reason that John’s Jesus can think of to explain why it is that people do not accept his claims is because they “do evil” and because they do not “live by the truth”. In chapter 8 of this same gospel, John’s Jesus is more explicit. He informs us that the reason that the Jews do not accept him is because: *“Ye are of [your] father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and standeth not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof”* (John 8:44). For many dark centuries, Christian Europe learned from John, that the Jewish rejection

of Jesus is proof that the Jewish people are children of the devil. According to John, the Jew stands apart from Christendom; the Christians are “children of light” while the Jews are the “children of darkness”. The dehumanization of the Jew, which culminated in the holocaust is rooted in these same words that Brown holds up as a shining example of moral and ethical light.

#### V. 69. *Objection 6.15*

It is here that Brown addresses the third of my challenges to him: “An honest reading of the NT will reveal that Jesus and his followers believed in, and observed the unwritten traditions which the Jews accepted as God-given.”

It is important to note that this discussion is not relevant from the stand-point of the Jew. Whether Jesus did or did not repudiate the Oral Law has no bearing on the Jews acceptance of the Oral Law. Furthermore, since the Jew sees no reason to trust the editors of the Christian Scriptures, the Jew is in no way convinced that the Christian Scriptures present an accurate portrait of Jesus and his disciples. Nonetheless, the Christian Scriptures as we have them today still contain strong evidence that Jesus and his Jewish disciples accepted the validity of the Oral Law. This, despite the fact that by the time the Christian Scriptures were being edited, the Church found itself in an intense conflict with the Pharisees – the bearers of the oral traditions. The editors of the Christian Scriptures were no friends of the Pharisees and their negative feelings towards them pervade their writings; still and all, they could not hide the fact that Jesus himself was a Pharisee.

Brown limits the challenge to Jesus’ directive quoted in Matthew 23:2,3: *“The teachers of the Law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.”*

The fact is that there is more evidence in the Christian Scriptures that support the argument that Jesus believed in the Oral Law, and Brown does touch on some of it throughout his response to this objection, but he does not share with his readers the full scope of the argument or of the evidence that has been brought forth to support it.

Before we get to all of the textual evidence that supports the contention that Jesus himself observed and believed in the Oral law, let us summarize Brown’s response to the quote from Matthew 23.

Brown begins by acknowledging that certain Christian scholars, such as Dr. John Fischer, recognize that Jesus *“even accepted Pharisaic extensions”*; meaning that Jesus accepted both the Written and Oral Laws, including even rabbinic injunctions that were appended to the Law by the Pharisees. Brown lists the tithing of herbs (Matt. 23:23), the recitation of grace at meals (Mark 6:41; 8:6), blessings over wine and the recitation of Hallel at the Passover seder (Mark 14:22-23,26).

Brown however, argues that this interpretation of Jesus’ words must be wrong. Brown attempts to demonstrate that Jesus teaching was directly opposed to the teachings of the Pharisees in so many different situations, that his words in Matthew 23; (“do everything

they tell you to do”) cannot be taken literally.

Therefore, Brown concludes, Jesus must have been speaking sarcastically, or what Jesus meant is that his disciples should obey the Pharisees insofar as they accurately represent Moses, or Jesus was only instructing his disciples to obey the Pharisees up until the time when “the kingdom would be taken from them”, which Brown associates with the destruction of the Temple. Brown offers yet a fourth interpretation of Jesus’ words, namely that the directive only applied to matters of local legal disputes, and finally, Brown offers us a variant reading of Matthew 23 as proposed by Nehemiah Gordon in which Jesus instructs his disciples NOT to obey the Pharisees.

Brown asserts that at least one of these interpretations must be correct because throughout the Christian Scriptures, we find Jesus in conflict with the Pharisees. On this basis, Brown negates the straightforward meaning of Jesus’ words.

As for Brown’s five interpretations; the first and the last don’t deserve a refutation (if Jesus meant this sarcastically, what else did he mean sarcastically? And Gordon’s variant reading is not found in any ancient manuscript). The second and third interpretations do not negate the point that Jesus accepted the Oral Law. In the context of Pharisee Judaism, the idea of “accurately representing Moses” would include the interpretations of the Oral Law. If Jesus meant to negate the authenticity of the Oral Law, he should have referred to the Sadducees, who were closer to Brown’s idea of ignoring the traditional interpretations and sticking to the Written word alone. As for the third interpretation, where Jesus has his disciples obey the Pharisees until the time that “the kingdom is taken from them”, this would still indicate that as far as the Law of Moses is concerned, the Pharisee approach is the one to be followed, and not the Protestant approach of “Sola Scriptura”. Brown’s fourth interpretation which limits Jesus’ directive to obey the Pharisees to areas of local legal disputes, also does not negate the argument that Jesus accepted the authority and the authenticity of the Oral Law. The Torah provides legislation on all matters of disputes that arise between man and man. The Law of Moses requires that each of these disputes be settled in a specific way. If Jesus believed, as Brown does, that the Pharisees possessed a completely crooked and inaccurate understanding of the Law of Moses, why would he submit his disciples to their authority? Why would he not send his disciples to the Sadducees, who were closer to Brown’s “Sola Scriptura” approach to Scripture?

When we us examine the areas of conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees as recorded in the Christian Scriptures, it will become clear that Jesus was NOT disputing the Oral Law as it was passed down from Moses. On some occasions he was disputing some rabbinic enactments, which are different from the Oral Law as an interpretation of the Law of Moses. Even in his disputes with these enactments, Jesus limits himself to those enactments which were disputed within the circle of Pharisees themselves, or to those enactments that were in the process of being instituted. On the other hand, on every occasion, we see that Jesus accepted the Pharisee interpretation and the Pharisee application of the Law of Moses. This helps us understand why some of Jesus’s disciples identified themselves as Pharisees (Acts 15:5 – a comparison with Galatians 2:11,12,14 will reveal that Peter himself was one of these Pharisees). It is obvious that they understood Jesus’ directive to obey the Pharisees in its most straightforward sense – obey

the Pharisees!

Brown refers to the rebuke of the Pharisees that follows Jesus' directive to obey them (Matthew 23:5-39. Brown points out that Jesus refers to the Pharisees as "blind men" and "blind guides", which seems to indicate that they are not leading the people properly. Brown points to Matthew 15:14 where Jesus tells his disciples: Leave them, they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into the pit." How then could Jesus' original directive to obey the Pharisees be taken literally? – asks Brown.

This argument is refuted by Matthew's Jesus himself. Jesus clearly says: "they do not practice what they preach", or according to the King James: "for they say, and do not". In other words, Jesus was arguing that as men who are supposed to lead by example, they are blind guides, but their words are true and authoritative. (As for Jesus' words in the context of Matthew 15:14, see below.)

Brown points to Matthew 23 verse 4 where Jesus describes the Pharisees as people who: "*put burdens on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.*" Brown argues that the way the Pharisees put burdens on people's shoulders was through their teachings, so how then can Jesus be instructing his disciples to submit to these same teachings?

This rebuke of Jesus can be understood in a way that does not conflict in any way with his clear directive to obey the Pharisees who sit in Moses' seat. We must put these words into their historical context. The Pharisee leadership in the time of Jesus were in the process of setting down rabbinical enactments. These were new decrees that were meant as a "fence" to the Law of Moses. One such decree, which was still in the process of being accepted in Jesus' day was the enactment of hand-washing (- see below). It was these new decrees that Jesus was deriding as "burdens" that his contemporaries were placing upon people's shoulders. He was not referring to teachings that his contemporaries were handing down from previous generations. This is obvious from the wording he uses. He throws out a personal accusation against the contemporary Pharisee leadership; it is these people who he accuses of placing the burdens, he is not referring to leaders from previous generations and neither is he referring to teachings that these people are passing on in the name of Moses.

Brown reminds his readers of the dispute that Jesus has with the Pharisees concerning the hand-washing decree as recorded in Matthew 15 and Mark 7. Here is an area where Jesus clearly rejects a Pharisee teaching. In light of this conflict how can we understand his instruction to obey the Pharisees?

The answer to this question is quite simple. The hand-washing decree was never presented as an interpretation of the Law of Moses. It was a rabbinic decree that, at first, was not accepted by all. It is only the contemporaries of Jesus who gave this decree its full legal force (B. Talmud Shabbos 14b). So Jesus was not disputing an interpretation that the Pharisees were passing down from Moses, he was not even disputing an ancient tradition. Jesus was taking issue with a new decree that had a history of uncertainty surrounding it. This hardly constitutes a repudiation of the Oral Law; certainly not one

which would force us to reinterpret the straightforward meaning of Jesus' clear directive as quoted in Matthew 23.

There is another conflict that Jesus has with the Pharisees that Brown does not mention directly; this encounter is found in Matthew 15:5,6 and Mark 7:10-12. In these texts Jesus is criticizing a practice wherein one would consecrate his possessions so as to avoid having to honor his parents. The problem with this account is that there is no historical record of any Jewish leader presenting such an opinion. According to every opinion in Jewish law, honoring one's parents is one of the foremost commandments, and no leader on record ever encouraged his followers to consecrate their possessions in order to avoid honoring one's parents. In a situation where one went ahead and actually consecrated his or her possessions to the Temple treasury, those possessions would be assumed by the Temple treasury and in effect, this person would no longer be able to honor his or her parents because of a lack of means to do so. But this person would have utilized a Biblical Law (Leviticus 27:14, Numbers 30:3), and not an oral tradition, in order to avoid fulfilling the commandment to honor parents. So Jesus's rebuke of the Pharisees for exalting their tradition above the commandment of God is not readily understood in light of what we know of the Pharisee teaching on the subject.

The most likely interpretation of these texts would have Jesus in conflict with a select group of Pharisees and not with the entire movement. Since this rebuke of Jesus is placed together with his arguments against the hand-washing decree, it follows that this was a recent innovation of some Pharisees that Jesus was criticizing. From the historical records, it seems that the opinion that Jesus was criticizing, never gained any level of popular support.

Brown goes on to the violations of the Sabbath that the gospels attribute to Jesus and his disciples. Brown tells his readers: *"...the New Testament authors not only record these instances where Jesus' disciples differed with the Pharisaic tradition, but at other times, they record instances where Jesus himself violated some of these traditions..."*

Brown sees these Sabbath violations as an example of Jesus' repudiation of the Oral Law. Let us examine these texts more closely. Mark 2 and Matthew 12 record an instance where Jesus' disciples plucked some grain as they walked through the fields. The Pharisees challenged Jesus: *"why do they on the Sabbath that which is not lawful?"* According to Brown's hypothesis which has Jesus repudiating the Oral Law, Jesus should have told these Pharisees that this activity is NOT prohibited on the Sabbath under any circumstance. Would Brown hesitate to pluck something off a tree to eat on the Sabbath? But this is not what Jesus answered. Jesus launches into a speech about David's eating from the show-bread which was forbidden to him and about the priests violating the Sabbath in the service in the Temple. These two are examples of an activity that violates the Law, but is permitted due to extenuating circumstances. By providing these comparisons, Jesus affirms his acceptance of the Pharisaic definition of prohibited activity on the Sabbath. His only difference with the Pharisees was whether the prohibition was relevant in that specific situation.



In the book of John, Jesus justifies his Sabbath violation with the following argument: *“If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?”* (John 7:23). Again, Jesus does not argue that the activities that he did should not be defined as “work” that is forbidden on the Sabbath. Jesus fully accepts that his activities fall under the definition of forbidden “work”. He argues instead that his activities should be permitted because they are done for the purpose of healing.

Furthermore, the entire weight of Jesus’ argument rests on the assumption that the Oral Law is true. Without the Oral Law how would we know that the act of circumcision is considered a forbidden activity on the Sabbath? And after we accept that premise, then where in the Written Torah does it say that the act of circumcision may indeed be preformed on the Sabbath? The fact that Jesus accepted these two axioms (that circumcision falls under the category of prohibited “work”, and that for the sake of fulfilling the commandment, this act is permitted on the Sabbath), and the fact that he based his argument on these two axioms, tells us loud and clear that Jesus accepted the Oral law, and that he expected his audience to accept it as well.

The fact that Jesus observed the Pharisaic calendar, the fact that he observed many Pharisee teachings such as the blessings on wine and bread, and the order of the Passover seder (as Brown acknowledges), the fact that his disciples observed the times of prayer instituted by the Pharisees (Acts 3:1), and the fact that many of Jesus’ disciples identified themselves as Pharisees long after Jesus had died – testifies clearly that Jesus did not repudiate the Oral Law. When he instructed his followers to obey the Pharisees because they sit in Moses’ seat, his immediate disciples did not think that he meant it sarcastically.

#### **V. 70. Objection 6.16**

Brown discusses the question; which community is more deserving of the title: “People of the Book”. He first presents the argument that the Karaites who reject the Oral Law should be called the “People of the Book” because they attempt to adhere to the literal sense of the Scriptures. However, Brown concludes that is the Messianic Jews, those who follow Jesus, who are most deserving of this title because they are the people who *“make god known to the nations and who have the manifest presence of god in their midst”*.

I find this entire discussion ironic. The title: “People of the Book” comes from the Koran. The Jewish Scriptures never describe Israel’s relationship with the Torah with the term: “People of the Book”. God lovingly calls Israel: “a nation, My Law in their hearts” (Isaiah 51:7). The question is not: who can follow the most literal interpretation of the Law? but rather the question is: who can carry the soul and the spirit of the Law in their hearts and live it out in real life. The Pharisee community is the only community that has been successfully doing just that since the time of Moses.

#### **V. 71. Objection 6.17**

Brown discusses the correct translation of Psalm 19:8. According to the KJV the verse reads: “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul”. If this translation is correct,

then the Torah has the power to change a person and then there would be no need for Jesus. Brown goes on to argue that the KJV translation is incorrect, thus he maintains his argument that God's laws cannot "*fundamentally change us on the inside*". According to Brown, only Jesus can do that.

What Brown has done in the course of presenting this objection and his response, is that he shifted the focus of the discussion to the one verse in Psalms, as if the entire argument revolves around the translation of this verse. He presented the Jewish argument as if it hangs on this one verse, and when he demonstrates that the KJV translation is wrong, the Jewish objection "disappears"! And then Brown is free to tell his audience that faith in Jesus can convert the soul without presenting a single verse in the Jewish Scripture to back up his theory.

The reason that Brown does not provide a citation from the Jewish Scriptures to justify his claim is simply because no such Scripture exists. There is not one verse in the Jewish Scriptures which in any way associates a changed heart with the person of the Messiah, let alone with faith in the Messiah. But there are many verses that do associate the concept of a changed heart with God's Law. Let us examine these passages.

The prophets taught us that the ultimate remaking of our hearts will occur during the Messianic era. The prophets never associate this event with the person of the Messiah, rather they tell us that this is an act that God will do to the hearts of the Jewish people. Moses called it a "circumcision of the heart" (Deuteronomy 30:6). Ezekiel spoke of this event as God "taking out our heart of stone and replacing it with a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26). Jeremiah described this phenomena as God "writing the Torah upon our hearts" (Jeremiah 31:32). From the words of these prophets we might come to the conclusion that until the Messianic era, we cannot hope to change our hearts for the better, but this is not so. Although we cannot accomplish a complete and total change of heart, but we are enjoined to do what we can until that time comes. Moses and Jeremiah tell us to circumcise our own hearts (Deuteronomy 30:6, Jeremiah 4:4). Solomon encourages us to write the Torah upon our hearts (Proverbs 7:2), while Ezekiel encourages us to make for ourselves a new heart (Ezekiel 18:31). It is obvious that although the final cleansing will be accomplished by God in the Messianic era, but we can still achieve some circumcision of the heart and some cleansing of the heart before that time.

The way this is accomplished is as Solomon says; write the Torah and the commandments upon your heart (Proverbs 7:2). This quote from Proverbs is not a rare concept that appears nowhere else in Scripture, but rather this is a theme that runs through the entire Scripture.

In Psalm 119:9 we are told: "How can a youngster cleanse his path? By guarding Your word." In other words, by guarding God's word, which includes, absorbing God's Torah through diligent study, making God's Torah part of one's thought process, and observing the commandments of the Torah, will result in a purification of one's path. In Numbers 15:40 we learn that through observing God's commandments we obtain holiness. The same concept appears in Leviticus 11:43,44 we learn that by violating God's commandments (specifically as they relate to forbidden foods) we defile ourselves and

that by keeping His commandments we sanctify ourselves.

Right in the beginning of the Torah we learn that death came into the world through Adam's sin (Genesis 3:19). We are also told that there is a "Tree of Life" that one who partakes of its fruit will reverse the effect of Adam's sin and live forever (Genesis 3:22). The Torah is associated with life many times throughout the Scripture; Leviticus 18:5, Psalm 119:93, Deuteronomy 30:15,19, 32:47).

The Torah gives wisdom to those who guard it (Psalm 19:8; 119:98,99,100). God's wisdom is identified as the "Tree of Life" in the book of Proverbs: "Praiseworthy is the man who has found wisdom, a person who can derive understanding. For her commerce is better than the commerce of silver, its produce [is better] than fine gold. It is more precious than pearls, and all of your desires cannot compare to it. Length of days is at its right; at its left, wealth and honor. It is a tree of life to those who grasp it, and its supporters are praiseworthy." (Proverbs 3:13-18). It is significant to note that the Hebrew word used here in Proverbs for "grasping" the wisdom of God, is the same word used in 2Chronicles 31:4 to describe the priest's study of Torah. Proverbs 8:35 has God's wisdom proclaim: "For one who finds me, finds life".

Psalm 119:155 tells us that salvation is far from the wicked because they do not seek God's commandments, while 37:31, and 119:165 teach that those who love God's Law do not stumble. Deuteronomy 17:18,19,20, teaches us that study of the Torah and observance of the commandments will preserve the King's heart from becoming haughty.

All of these passages (and many more) give us to understand that through study of God's law and observance of His commandments we become sanctified and are protected from sin. We understand that this does not happen immediately in a drastic way, but rather, as Solomon describes: "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4:18). It is a slow and laborious process, but it is filled with light and joy (Psalm 19:9). The Jewish people have tried and tested this process for some 3300 years now and it has never failed. To the degree that one imbibes of God's Torah, through study and through observance of the commandments, to that same degree do we see how that individual is suffused with Godliness. This process is also one that must be approached correctly. The prophets warned us to "plow before we plant" (Jeremiah 4:3); in other words, our approach to the study of God's Law and to the observance of His commandments must be in the framework of justice and charity towards our fellow man. Isaiah echoes this sentiment as well (Isaiah 58:2). But when we do approach God's Law with the correct attitude, we will find joy in God (Isaiah 58:14), together with God's eternal grace (Psalm 103:17).

## **V. 72. *Objection 6.18***

Brown concludes his five volume series with an appeal to his readers to put their faith in Jesus. I will conclude my critique of this series with an appeal to my readers to put their faith in God, and in God alone.

I find it interesting that Brown chose to place his objections against the Oral Law as the “closing argument” in his five volume series. The entire debate about the Oral Law is not very relevant to the controversy between Judaism and Christianity. The Karaite Jews, who do not accept the Oral Law, are among the most vehement critics of Christianity. On the other hand, we find Christians that see no need to repudiate the Oral Law in order to maintain their belief in Jesus. It seems however that Brown considers the discussion about the Oral Law to be central to the divide between Judaism and Christianity. Protestant Christianity takes prides in her claim that her theology is based on the word of God, in other words, on the Scripture (both Jewish and Christian) and on the Scripture alone. From the standpoint of the Protestant Christian, the Jewish acceptance of the Oral Law, is a fatal flaw in the faith structure of Judaism. The Protestant challenges the Jew: “How can you rely on the words of men?”. The Protestant looks to his own faith and is satisfied that it is based on the words of God.

But is this truly so?

When we examine the matter just a bit beyond the superficial, it becomes clear that it is Protestant Christianity who relies on the words of men, while Judaism leans on the words of God.

Did you ever notice that NOT ONE of the core doctrines of Protestant Christianity are directly spelled put in the Jewish Scripture? The Protestant cannot point to one verse that says: “put your faith in the Messiah in order to receive eternal salvation”. There is not one passage in Scripture that says that belief in the Messiah effects atonement, and there is not one passage in Scripture that encourages us to direct our devotion to a human incarnation of God.

EVERY ONE of the core doctrines of Judaism are EXPLICITLY and DIRECTLY spelled out in Scripture. God introduced Himself to our fathers and said: “I am the Lord your God who took you out of the land of Egypt, you should have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:2,3). God explicitly said that repentance is all that is necessary to wipe the slate of guilt clean (Ezekiel 33:16). And the Scriptures explicitly declare that the path to the restoration of Israel is through observance of the Law of Moses (Deuteronomy 30:2).

Furthermore, the entire faith of Christianity stands on the reasoning of biased men. No one ever SAW Jesus die for anyone’s sins, and no one ever SAW that Jesus is the second person in a triune godhead. What happened was that a group of people, who were already completely devoted to Jesus, came up with these theories (Jesus’ atoning death, and his alleged divine nature) as an INTERPRETATION of various phenomena they saw or heard. But it was a TWO-STEP PROCESS. They first saw and heard the phenomena (Jesus’ life, death and alleged resurrection), they then processed these events in their human minds, and only then did they came up with these theological theories as an EXPLANATION to the events that they believed had happened. The fact is that the Christian’s faith must lean on these explanations concocted by finite human beings.

Contrast this with Judaism, where the two pillars of faith were actually witnessed by the entirety of Israel – no interpretation was necessary and nothing needed to be explained. All of Israel SAW that God is the power (Deuteronomy 4:35) and all of Israel HEARD God talking to Moses (Exodus 19:9). Jews does not need to rely on anyone’s interpretation for the foundations of their faith; their perception of God, and the knowledge that Moses is His prophet. The Scriptures openly declare that the Jewish people are God’s firstborn son (Exodus 4:22, Jeremiah 30:8) and His witnesses (Isaiah 43:10). It is because we trust God’s witnesses that we accept the canon of Jewish Scripture. We trust that God’s firstborn son is capable of sorting out the true prophets from the frauds and that they are capable of identifying God’s holy spirit when they see it manifest in a person’s life. The Jewish people testify to us about the authors of the books of the Jewish Bible – and all of them lived amongst the Jewish people – that these were Godly people who lived a life in line with God’s truth. These same witnesses testify about the authors of the Christian Scriptures – all of whom lived amongst the Jewish people as well – that they did not live a life that reflected God’s truth. If you want to trust God’s witness, go ahead and accept all of their testimony. If you choose to reject their testimony, please be consistent and reject all of it. The witness can be trustworthy or he can be a liar, but he can’t be both at the same time.

The underlying message of the Jewish Scripture is that God is the absolute Master of all creation. This core truth permeates every chapter and verse in the Jewish Scriptures. As God’s creations, we all owe all of our devotion to Him who gave us our hearts to begin with.

The calling of the Jewish people is to bear this truth and to carry it with them wherever they go. God established His testimony in Jacob through the events of the miracles and the Sinai revelation. These unparalleled evens planted the truth of God’s sovereignty into our hearts to the degree that even our children who stray far from the path of their ancestors, still cannot bring themselves to direct their devotion to a fellow creation of God.

I appeal to you, turn to your Creator. The One who provided for your every need can surely satisfy the yearning of your soul. The One who was lovingly maintaining your existence even while you sinned against Him, will surely forgive you if you just sincerely return to Him. Could there be a greater joy than the embrace of your Creator?

“Taste and see that God is good, happy is the man who takes shelter in Him” (Psalm 34:9).