

Oral Law and Tradition

Feast of Tabernacles
Michael Heiss—September 29, 2010

Yesterday we discussed Ishmael and Israel. It's time to leave that alone. Let's give them a rest. Today we're going to discuss a different topic known as the oral law. Another way of expressing it would be maybe the tradition of the elders. I want to say that the book that Fred sent out to us by Philip Neal is excellent. There's a lot of good stuff in here, but it is heavy duty, so you just don't read this thing like you're reading a novel. There's so many quotes in it. You read it—I read four or five pages and I'm trying to figure out what the quote was on page two or three. You do have to read it slowly and don't get bogged down with the quotes. Get the flavor of what he's trying to point out. Just get the flavor, get the concept, because he's trying to explain that *Judaism is not the religion of Moses*.

We're going to see that today, but I'm not going to bring it out the way he did here. He was showing it as it was. I have some critical quotes, rightly so. What we're going to discuss today is

- what that oral law was
- how it developed
- why the rabbis developed it
- what they tried to do with it
- how they succeeded in what they were striving to do

We will go through that. To start with, I'm going to give you two quotes. It's going to take us about 30-60 seconds for each quote, so it won't be very long. It has been said that Judaism is the religion of works, and that is certainly so. So the first quote I have for you is from a well-known figure. I'm sure you've all heard of her. She goes by the term, Dr. Laura [Laura Schlessinger].

She was a 'law' for a while, she was an Orthodox Jew. Her father actually was Jewish, her mother was Catholic, so she converted to conservative Judaism and then re-converted to orthodox Judaism—but she didn't fully stick with it. What she's into now I do not know. But she did write a book with Rabbi Vogel, *The Ten Commandments*, an excellent book. If anybody can describe the human mind and how human nature works, Dr. Laura can. So I highly recommend her book, *The Ten Commandments*. You'll get a lot out of it. It does not deal so much in theology as such, but just in how the human mind works and reacts to the various commands of God.

But this is the quote that we're going to have (*The Ten Commandments* by Dr. Laura Schlessinger & Stewart Vogel):

In the Christian view, the world is redeemed as each individual soul is saved through Jesus Christ. In the Jewish view, we are redeeming the world by our own efforts.

Now if that's not works, I don't know what it. And she's just stating it as a matter of fact. I'm not condemning it, I'm not praising it, I'm not supporting it. The idea is to explain what it is, how it came about.

The next quote is from a book called, *Why the Jews*, by another well-known talk show host in Southern California, Dennis Prager, who has written a lot of material. This is what he said. He himself is an orthodox Jew.

Judaism holds that one is put right with God through performing the good deeds of the law.

Now once again, couldn't say it better. But according to Paul, this belief is irreconcilable with Christian salvation. Galatians 2:21: "...for if righteousness is through works of law, then Christ died in vain".

Therefore, according to Paul, we conclude, Romans 3:28: "Consequently, we reckon that a man is justified by faith, separate from works of law"

Furthermore, Christ redeemed us from the 'curse of the law' (Gal. 3:10). Now that's just to point out that Judaism is a religion of works. But here's the \$64,000 question: How did it become a religion of works? Why did it become a religion of works? And the answer really is simple, if you think about it. Of course, if you don't think about it, it doesn't flow. *In Judaism there's no such concept of a savior to die for ones sins*. Does not exist. Oh, yes, they know about Isa. 52 & 53, and Psa. 22, but they don't make the connection between what's written there and the fact that someone was going to have to come to die for our sins, because that is barbarism, that's human sacrifice. Our 'sages' teach us that God calls out to Abraham, 'Don't harm the lad. Do not slay Isaac.' God doesn't want human sacrifice, and yet the sacrifice of Jesus Christ would be human sacrifice.

I remember being in a room where a rabbi was leading a discussion and he said, 'The world cannot endure such barbarism.' And that's exactly how they look at it, a bloody God. 'You mean to tell us that your God is so legalistic, He would require a human sacrifice to atone for sin?' They understand

about the animals who died there in the temple, who were sacrificed. They know that. They're taught to look upon those animals as a substitute for them. But for the grace of God, there you should be. But God in His mercy uses that as a substitute, and forgives you.

For what does God say? '*Return to Me, obey My voice.*' How many times have we heard Fred point out in the Bible God says, 'Obey My voice.' Well, what sacrifice is there in that? *None!* Repent—right? What does that mean—repent? The Hebrew word is *to turn around*—'teshoovah.' Like return to sender, that's what it is. You say, 'Hey, return to me.' *That's repenting!* So you repent though, on your own works. You turn around; you come to God. What sacrifice is there? *None!*

So, because they don't see a sacrifice in connection with that, it becomes a religion simply of works, purely and simply. You do your best to love God; God automatically forgives you. He does not have to have blood. Shades of Zippora! Remember, what a 'bloody husband you are to me,' when she threw the foreskins of her sons, because Moses hadn't circumcised them. So the Jews say, 'What a bloody God you have.' And they mean that sincerely. So that's the reason why Judaism is a religion of works, by your obeying God's voice, by your keeping the commandments, God grants you salvation. Logical—*wrong!*—but logical.

We're now going to go through one Scripture that I mentioned and it's going to be again in Exodus 24. It is most interesting to see the interpretation of it. You may think you know what this Scripture means, but let the rabbi explain what it means. Exodus 24:12: "And the LORD said to Moses, 'Come up to Me in the mountain, and be there. And I will give you tablets of stone, and the law, and commandments which I have written, so that you may teach them.'"

Now according to the rabbis, what does it mean? One of the best books I've ever read, and I've had around for a long time, I've read many of these books, but this was one of the most practical ones I've ever read. It's entitled, *Judaism in Theory and Practice* by Beryl D. Cohon.

And what is meant by this passage, and the rabbi said: 'And I will give you the tables of stone with the law and the commandments which I have written that may teach them.' The tables of stone refer to the Ten Commandments.

Okay, that sounds right.

The law refers to the Bible... [Yes, I can certainly see that.] ...The commandments refer to the 'mishnah'...

Which is the first part of the Talmud. You didn't know that. We're ignorant, we don't know these things. But that's the 'mishnah.'

...which I have written,' refers to the prophets and the writings, the second and third portions of the Bible...

How you get that, I don't know, but so they say.

...and to teach them refers to the 'gemara,' which is the second part of the Talmud.

In Judaism, all law, all tradition—everything—goes back to Moses. Even if it doesn't go back to Moses, it goes back to Moses. It's like the great Rabbi Hillel who came from Babylonia, came to Palestine and he set up his own school and he went to some of the rabbis and was teaching. He said this, and they said, 'Hillel, you don't know what you're talking about.' They practically threw him out. Later on he came back and he preached it. Still wouldn't accept it. A third time he preached the same thing, except he said, 'This I heard from the rab so-and-so, who heard it from the rab so-and-so, who heard it from the rab so-and-so.' *Oh, well, why didn't you say so in the first place!* And they accepted it. Why? *It went back to Moses, went back to the ancients.*

In Judaism you can't come and teach on your own. You have to link what you're teaching with something that goes way back to Moses. That's why I say, even if it doesn't, it does.

So now we're going to look at the concept of the *oral law*. And I'm going to make, in one sense, sort of a shocking statement, but it's true if you think about it. And don't get riled. All law is *oral* to begin with. Remember Exodus 20:1? What does it say? "And God **spoke** all these words..." He didn't write them, He **spoke** them, He thundered the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai. Of course, they were later written down, yes. After all, we have it right here. But all law is oral to start with.

Think of the Garden of Eden. Think of Eve. The serpent comes in and says in Genesis 3, 'Has God said you couldn't eat of any of the trees of the garden?' What does mother Eve say? 'We may freely eat the fruit of the trees of the garden. But of the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden. God has indeed said, *You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.*' Well, first of all, does Gen. 2 talk about touching the tree? *No!* Did God say that? *I don't know.* Was she simply lying, was she embellishing it?

But let's say for the moment, for discussion purposes, it was true, that God did say don't even touch it. This would be a perfect example of explaining oral law and the tradition of the rabbis in building a fence around the Torah. In order to prevent you from eating that fruit, don't touch the

fruit. If you can't touch the tree, you can't eat. So let me give you an example. There was a posh hotel. They had in the dining room all kinds of food and fruit, and what have you. But they had a lot of carpets and tapestry, couches, and they didn't want sticky fruit being carried out of the dining hall. So what they did was, they put a sign on the front leading into the dining room, 'To avoid the carrying of fruit out of the dining hall, there will be no fruit served in the dining hall.' Now that is good rabbinic thinking. That's the fence around the law.

Now think in terms of the sacrifices. We were just about oral law, now this is decent oral law, not the bad oral law. There is bad oral law. Look at the sacrifices some time in Leviticus. I've heard rabbis discuss this and they acknowledge it's true. You wouldn't know how to sacrifice animals from the laws given in Leviticus. There isn't enough information. How were you to stand, what knives were you to use? How would you slit the throats? Just what do you do? Obviously, there was a body of instruction that was given to Aaron the priest on down. Today the rabbis have that in Jerusalem. There is a school there where they teach how to sacrifice the animals.

Now you don't find it here. I wouldn't know how to do it. You wouldn't know. So in saying this, there is such a thing as oral law, just not the tradition of the elders. Now let's look at a clear example, the prophet Haggai. So we're going to look at the prophet Haggai, which is at the end of the prophet section, just before Zechariah, which is just before the Psalms, and we're going to look and we're going to see an interesting question that is asked of the priests.

Haggai 2:11: "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Now ask the priests concerning the law, saying, "If one carries holy flesh in the *skirt* of his garment, and touches his *skirt* to bread, or boiled food, or wine, or oil, or any food, will it *also* become Holy?"' And the priests answered and said, 'No.' Then Haggai said, 'If one who is unclean by a dead body touches any of these, shall it *also* be unclean?' And the priests answered and said, 'It shall be unclean'" (vs 11-13).

Now the rabbis have said look at these two incidents. Do you find these specific instances in Exodus, Deuteronomy, Leviticus, and they said, 'No, you do not.' Therefore the priests understood this from the body of oral law, from principle. Remember, Moses sat and judged the people all day. Were all his judgments written down, were all his decisions written down? *No!* God said if something comes up that is too hard for you, go to the priest, or go to the judge in that day and follow what he says. Were all those decisions written down? *No!*

So, I'm simply pointing out that this is what would be an example of oral law that might not be bad. This is simply the decisions rendered by the judges. Oral law by itself is not necessarily bad. Now let's look at something else that might not have been written down. It doesn't really amount to much, but take a look in the book of Hebrews. This is preliminary. This is just something to give you the flavor.

This is Paul talking about the time of Moses and Mount Sinai and he says, Hebrews 12:21: "And so terrifying was the sight *that* Moses said, 'I am greatly afraid and trembling.'" Where do you find in the Old Testament that Moses ever said that? Now the people were trembling. They were the ones who said, 'Moses, you go to God, you listen to God and tell us. We don't want that lest we die.' Now Moses was afraid of what God might do to the people, that's true, but where does it say that Moses said, 'I am greatly afraid and trembling'? *I can't find it!*

There was certain knowledge that came down, that God said it's not necessary to put all this in a written word. You'd have a book like this. You'd have a massive book if everything that God ever said was put down here. This represents the knowledge that God wanted us to have. This is what He said, 'I want this preserved for all time.' Other stuff does not need to be preserved for all time.

Now what we're going to do is, I'm going to give you a flavor of Jewish thinking, Jewish law, Jewish concepts. Then I'm going to go through a couple areas of the Sabbath to show you how misinterpretation by the rabbis led to what we call the oral law and all the dos and don'ts.

So we're going to start out in Dr. Cohon's book, and you'll notice this is simply explanatory, nothing more, nothing less. And what do we find?

Judaism is the religion of the Jewish people. It represents the aspirations and the conduct of Israel as a community.

Accurate! Not the religion of Moses, not the religion of God—the religion of the Jewish people. That's clear, can't argue with it.

By supernatural revelation or historic evolution, the Bible is the Word of God, or the search for the Word of God in all branches of Judaism. Judaism is the interpretation and the application of the Word of God as understood in historic Jewry.

Couldn't say it better. That's exactly what it is. The Bible is everything, essential in Judaism, but you have to interpret it. And the interpretation is according to the Jewish 'sages'—enter the Talmud, pure and simple. They're not defending it. They're

not trying to proselytize. They're just saying, 'This is what we believe and this is why.'

Consciously or unconsciously the schoolmen...

These are the teachers of the law, the scholars, the scribes.

...stretch the law to conform to new situations by exercising the method of interpretation and re-interpretation. The prophetic impulse stretched new horizons and gave it progressive expansion. In days of crisis, revolutionary reforms were instituted. These unorthodox innovations became established usage and thus eventually part of the law.

A custom comes in. I vaguely remember something about Jeremiah 10:2_[transcriber's correction]: "Thus says the LORD, 'Do not learn the way of the heathen...'" If a custom comes in and becomes accepted, it's as though it went back to Moses, regardless of its origin. And he'll state that, too.

Moreover the rabbinic authorities developed a healthy respect for popular usage as it developed in the life of the community. The custom of our fathers is law.

Let us say, *the tradition of the elders is law*. You got it. That's exactly what he's saying.

No custom should be abolished or mocked at for it is not for nothing that the customs were established in days gone by. And that's exactly what it is.

The Word of God revealed is from smoldering Sinai. No second Moses would ever arise to fetch a new edition of a law from heaven.

In fact, there's a section of the Talmud where rabbis are discussing different parts of the law, and a voice from heaven says, 'You shall listen to the voice of rabbi so-and-so for he has it right.' And the other rabbi says, 'No, the law's not from heaven. The law is in the Torah, the law is in the book, as interpreted by the 'sages.' This is their thinking, pure and simple. This is Judaism.

A Divine revelation miraculously made to the chosen teacher—supernatural, binding, complete—in written and oral form, is the foundation of orthodox Judaism. Upon this foundation the entire system of orthodoxy rests. Tampering with it endangers the whole edifice.

Yes, it does, you bet it does.

Judaism stands or falls with its belief in the historical actuality of a revelation on Sinai. The same applies to Talmudic law. No man should say, 'I will not observe the precepts of the elders since they are not contained in Scripture.' For God has said, 'Nay, My son, for whatever they decree thee, do thou perform.'

So the Talmudic law has the weight and authority of Scripture. And in reality, supersedes Scripture. Because you know the old saying, 'Well, I know it says, but what does it mean?' Well, the Talmud tells you what it means. So in reality, the Talmud in practice supersedes Scripture. That's just the way it is.

Now one more section here. This talks about the authority of tradition. This is amazing, to me anyway.

Judaism is the religion of the Jewish people. Hence, whatever the Jewish people have created is Jewish and binding. Hence, too, only the Jewish people through its duly recognized authorities may abrogate or modify any tradition.

So certainly some fellow by the name of Jesus of Nazareth has no such authority to do that.

It is not the origin of any usage or institution that is of primary significance, but the meaning, the usage, or the institution acquired in the life of Israel. All these and the many other historic forms of Jewish belief and ceremony are binding, whatever their origins may be.

If you're thinking of this world's Christianity, well, 'once upon a time this tree was an object of pagan religion, but not today. It's beautiful, it's for the children, we're keeping Christmas. We've baptized all this paganism. We no longer do it that way. The origin is not important, it's what it has come to mean to the people.' This is Judaism. That's the way it is.

The law as a whole is not the means to an end, but the end in itself. The law is active religiousness. In an active religion it must lie in what is specifically Jewish. For inherent of this school, the sanctity of the Sabbath reposes not upon the fact that it was proclaimed at Sinai, that's not really important, but on the fact that the Sabbath idea found for thousands of years its expression in Jewish souls. Practical Judaism is not concerned with the origins but regards the institutions as they have come to be. The controlling principle is that whatever observance is spread

throughout the whole community must not be abrogated by any authority.

Now I could go on and on and on, but you get the picture. That is Judaism. So I now want to take a couple of examples regarding the Sabbath and we're going to see how the Jews interpret it and then how the rabbis use their dos and don'ts to what they thought reduced the burden.

Let's turn to Exodus 16:29. We are now dealing with the Sabbath. This is the chapter where we have manna given. "See, because the LORD has given you the Sabbath, therefore He gives you the bread of two days on the sixth day. Let each one stay in his place. Do not let any one go out of his place on the seventh day." That's what it says, so you don't go out of your house on the seventh day. You don't move, you don't go anywhere on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath.

Now instead of clearly looking at the context and understanding that what God is saying is, 'Look, I've given you manna for two days, so don't go on the seventh day looking for manna.' That's what God is saying. He's not saying don't go outside your tent and walk off and see the sunset. He's not saying don't go into the tabernacle. He's saying don't look for manna. But that's not how the Jews thought of it.

The rabbis looked and said, 'What do we do here? Don't go out of your place.' So they developed a concept where place could mean your city block. A place could mean the town in which you live. So you can go from your home to the edge of town. They're expanding this thing to make it easier on the people. So they're easing the burden that they placed in the first place. Then they said, 'Okay, from the edge of town, you can now go 2,000-cubits. We'll allow you to do that.' And they have all of the dos and don'ts of how you could get there, what you could wear when you're going there, all because they couldn't see the forest for the trees. It was simply a matter of don't go out and work gathering manna on the Sabbath. That's all God was trying to explain. They couldn't see it and so thus developed the law.

All they had to do was turn over to 2-Kings 4:23. This is the Shunammite woman. You will recall that she served Elisha, helped Elisha. Elisha told her that she was going to have son. She did have the son and now the son has died of sunstroke. So she's going to go to the man of God and she's going to saddle up old Paint and go giddy-up. She saddling up the donkey and notice what she said:

2-Kings 4:22: "And *she* called to her husband and said, 'Please send me one of the young men and one of the donkeys so that I may run to the man of God and return again.' ... [And what does he

reply?] ...And he said, 'Why will you go to him today? *It is* neither new moon nor Sabbath.' ..." (vs 22-23). What does this imply? On the new moon, on the Sabbath, yeah, I understand, you get on the donkey and you go riding off to the man of God on the Sabbath. But this is not the Sabbath. All the rabbis had to do was read 2-Kings 4:22-23 and they would have known that it was perfectly permissible to go riding.

By the way, in Orthodox Judaism, you cannot ride a horse on the Sabbath, you can't ride a donkey on the Sabbath. Not because there's something wrong in riding the donkey, but their laws say you cannot pull a switch or a branch of a tree. And if you do that to whip the donkey to get it going, you might pull a branch. So to avoid pulling a branch to get the horse or the donkey or whatever it is you're riding to go faster, you cannot ride the donkey. So if you're not riding the donkey, there's no temptation in pulling a switch or a branch or a twig from off the tree. But all they had to do was read 2-Kings 4 and they would know that. But you see, they're narrow-minded. This is legalism. They couldn't help themselves. This is how they interpret it.

This is what Paul was dealing with in the first century. It hadn't all been written down yet, it was still oral. The 'mishnah' and the 'gemara' had not been written down. That would wait till the year 220 or so by Yehudah, HaNassi, Judah, the Prince, and 'gemara' in the fifth and sixth centuries. But you see that it was ridiculous.

So Paul summed it up when he said of the Jews and he said that in Romans 10:2: "For I testify of them that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." They did not have the right knowledge.

One more thing, one more incident, Exodus 35. This is a famous one; definitely want to cover this one. There are many, many pages in the Talmud devoted to this concept. This has to do with a fire on the Sabbath, all the dos and don'ts, and the laws that derived from this one.

Exodus 35:1: "And Moses gathered all the congregation of the children of Israel together and said to them, 'These *are* the words which the LORD has commanded, *for you* to do them. Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you, a Holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the LORD. Whoever does work in it shall be put to death. You shall kindle no fire throughout your living places upon the Sabbath Day'" (vs 1-3).

Sorry, you might like some eggs some Sabbath morning, tough, can't have eggs, you're lighting a fire. In fact, you cannot even read by candlelight or by an oil lamp on the Sabbath. Why

not? Well, if you're reading and the lamp starts to flicker, you might tilt that lamp and thus improve the fire. You're kindling fire on the Sabbath, can't do that.

They used to have what they called the 'shabbos goy,' this is called the Sabbath 'goy,' your favorite Gentile. Since the law was given only to Israel, it was okay if a non-Jew would do this for you. You know you open up the refrigerator and there's light bulb in there. Well, you can't open up your refrigerator. The light goes on! In fact some said, well, you can't even if you unscrew the light. If you leave it open too long, the electric motor will kick in and you're causing activity on the Sabbath. Just crazy! But this was because of misinterpretation. It does say that. It says, 'Kindle no fire on the Sabbath.' Well, how are you going to get around it?

If you care to look at it, in Exodus 25-31, God is giving the instructions for the tabernacle. He's describing it, what it's going to be like, its length, its dimensions. Then you have it if it comes down. The Sabbath is given also in Exodus 31. 'These are My Sabbaths, you'll keep them.' And just before He gives the instructions for all the people and all the men whom He is going to bless and imbue with knowledge to build that tabernacle, He's giving this warning: 'kindle no fire.'

What it means is, 'I don't care how important you think the tabernacle is—and it's important—do not work on the Sabbath. Don't build this edifice on the Sabbath.' That's all it means! Look at the concept, it'll tell you that. But they felt it meant no Sabbath at all. So if you have fire, you've got to light that fire before the Sabbath. Then you can keep it burning.

I'm going to read a portion, this is the final book we're going to look at. It's called *A Guide to the Sabbath*. It's a fascinating little book written by Dr. Solomon Goldman. He had some very, very, very interesting things in here that I want to give to you. He talks about the law and what it really means.

The rabbis of the Talmud were more concerned with practical guidance than philosophical definitions. Later, thinkers sought an answer to the question: What is the common quality inherent in all the activities which much not be engaged on the Sabbath?

From that they went: Is this constructive work? Is it not constructive work? If it's constructive work, you can do this. If it's not constructive work, then you can't do that. I don't want to burden you reading the whole thing, but I'm looking for one particular segment here that I had.

The rabbis believed uniformity could be achieved not by the enunciation of general principles, but by sharp and detailed demarcation of the areas of what is forbidden and what is permitted by prescribing even for the remote contingency by governing the apparently trivial circumstances of daily life and by strict definition of terms. Life itself, they felt, consists of a multitude of minimal.

That was their thinking. You obey God by the time you get up in the morning, you utter prayers. There's a prayer for everything. There's a prayer for going to bathroom. There's a prayer for eating. There's a prayer for washing. You name it and there's a prayer for it. We have a prayer, a blessing before the meal, very simply: (Prayer in Hebrew): Blessed art Thou, our Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth. Every Jew throughout the world will utter that same prayer—uniformity. Because what the rabbis tried to do—and they succeeded in this—

- How do you preserve a nation that has no land and is scattered everywhere?
- How do you preserve their identity? Look at the nation of Israel, the ten tribes.
- Do they know who they are? *No!*
- What people really knows who they are?

Now Ishmael kind of knows who it is, but then here again they're there in the land where they've always been. The Jews are scattered. Well, how do you do that? *By tradition, by rote!* The Jews maintained the name of Israel. They did by

- everybody observing the Sabbath in the same way
- everybody praying the same prayer
- reading the same prayers themselves—morning, noon and night.
- having the same synagogue services.

That's what they did and they succeeded.

Israel said at one point, if you want to look at it, not necessarily right now, but you can read there where the ten tribes got jealous of Judah because they were claiming David and they said, 'We have ten parts in David.' You read it there in Samuel. 'And therefore David belongs to us.' And yet what happened after Solomon's death and Rehoboam increased the burden? 'To your own tents, O Israel.' Here they were all fired up to be part of David and they threw David off. So you see, Israel was fickle, but the Jews were so stubborn, so stubborn and so stiff-necked God used it. He used it to preserve the Torah.

Think of the Churches of God and Fred has done an excellent job describing to us what

happened in Revelation 2 & 3 to the various churches. Here were people of God's Spirit, and yet, what happened? *They lost their knowledge!* I don't know exactly how. There was the woman Jezebel. 'You have allowed that woman Jezebel in there.' Adopted the Nicolaitans. How did that happen? Well, I'm not here to tell you how it happened. Fred can do it better than I can. He understands that.

All I'm saying is the Jews with the people of God, would they have preserved the Bible? Could the Church of God have successfully done that? I'm not so sure, but God used the stubbornness of the Jewish people to preserve the Torah. He did it. Now would He have chosen it done that way? *No!* Would He have chosen the Talmud? *No!* But that tradition, that regulation preserved them.

As it has been said, more than Israel, meaning the Jews, have kept the Sabbath. The Sabbath has kept Israel. Have any of you ever heard of the name of the man, Herman Wouk, very famous playwright and author? He was a playwright, an author, a production man. They would be working on stage and every Friday night about half hour before sundown he would leave and they said, 'Come we need you, we need you for this, we have this problem, we have that problem.' And he said, 'Don't worry, those problems will be waiting for me when I get back Saturday night. They'll still be here, don't worry.' One of his associates said, 'Herman, I don't envy you, your religion, but I envy you your Sabbath.' Interesting tribute to the Sabbath.

But my point in all of this is the simple fact that, as Paul said, *they had a zeal for God*. God used that zeal, however imperfect that zeal was, however legalistic that zeal was, because how can you go through a mass of letters called the Bible, the Torah, master it, know it inside and out, upside and down, knowing how many letters is in each section. It's unbelievable what they know. God used that zeal to preserve this book we call the Old Testament. I have the New Testament here as well, but we're talking about the Old Testament. God used it.

So it's about time, as I said, to wrap this up with the understanding that these traditions about the Sabbath and these traditions about traveling, and about not kindling fire, these are the traditions of the elders that Jesus talked about in Mark 7 and elsewhere. He wasn't talking about the oral law that did come from Moses, He was talking about all the *customs* that the Jews picked up from Babylon, and the washing of pots and pans. I can't prove this yet, but I believe that came out of Egypt. Because even Herodotus tells us how the Egyptians were fanatic about washing and cleansing everything. I'll bet you, push comes to shove, they picked it up from Egypt. But remember, when a custom is picked up

and it's accepted by the people and you do it, it goes back to Moses, even if Moses didn't say it.

It is said in the Talmud that God blessed Moses in coming back to life to sit in the back of a synagogue, a teaching section where the great Rabbi Aqiba, the great rabbi who died in the Bar-Kokhba Revolution, 132-135. He was the greatest rabbi of his day. He was teaching and expounding the law. And so God accompanied Moses and they're sitting in the back and Moses is listening. And he says to God, 'What is this? I never heard that. I never preached that. I don't understand this.' And God says, 'You don't worry, Moses, it is merely an application of what you taught, for soothing is your teaching just the same.' This is Judaism.

To them every tradition, every decision by every rabbi in one way or another goes back to Moses. It doesn't, but in their minds it does. That's why they say the Bible is everything, but it's the interpretation. That's why it is true as Philip Neal said, Judaism and all these rules and regulations developed by the rabbis—no—they *don't* go back to Moses. But the rabbis had to *make* them go back to Moses, because if they didn't it would not work, the people would not accept it. They would say, 'Who are you? Moses we know, who are you?' It's this concept. That's the oral law. This is Judaism—works of law. They believe it with all their heart and might and they're not going to change until captivity comes and the Son of God appears on the scene. Then they will know, but until then the Jews are the Jews; the oral law is the oral law; tradition is tradition. You and I aren't going to change it. So at least when you talk about the tradition of the elders or you read about it, you will know what Paul is talking about. You'll know what Jesus was talking about and you'll have an idea of what the tradition of the elders really is.

One nice thing about Phil's book. If you go back to the back of it, you will find parts of *The Code of Jewish Law*, parts of the sections dealing with the Sabbath and some of the rules that he has put in there. Very, very interesting! I highly recommend it. And I certainly appreciate the opportunity of at least presenting to some degree trying to give you the flavor of what Judaism is, that it is a religion of works. It is a religion of tradition, but that without those traditions, if you don't have God's Spirit to lead and guide you, what else do you have? *Tradition!*

Remember Tevye, *Fiddler on the Roof?* *Tradition, tradition!* Remember what he said, very cutely done. 'Without our traditions, we would be as shaky as the fiddler on the roof.' But because of their traditions, they preserve themselves. Those traditions we know will be dissolved when Jesus Christ returns.

Scriptural References:

- 1) Galatians 2:21
- 2) Romans 3:28
- 3) Exodus 24:12
- 4) Exodus 20:1
- 5) Haggai 2:11-13
- 6) Hebrews 12:21
- 7) Jeremiah 10:2
- 8) Exodus 16:29
- 9) 2-Kings 4:22-23
- 10) Romans 10:2
- 11) Exodus 35:1-3

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Galatians 3:10
- Isaiah 52, 53
- Psalm 22
- Genesis 3
- Exodus 25-31
- Revelation 2, 3
- Mark 7

Also referenced: Books:

- *Judaism: Revelation of Moses, or Religion of Men?* By Philip Neal
- *The Ten Commandments* by Laura Schlessinger & Stewart Vogel
- *Why the Jews* by Dennis Prager & Joseph Telushkin
- *Judaism in Theory & Practice* by Beryl David Cohon
- *A Guide to the Sabbath* by Solomon Goldman
- *The Code of Jewish Law* by Solomon Ganzfried & Hyman Goldin

MH:lp

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