



PO Box 972 Malakoff, Tx. 75148

903-489-1956

info@qehilathaderek.org

QH 6.5

WHOEVER EXALTS HIMSELF SHALL BE HUMBLD

In the twenty-first through the twenty-fifth chapters of Mattithyahu, Yehoshua our Messiah is in the city of Yerushalayim, within the precincts of the Temple. He is answering questions and teaching there. The crowd before him consists of *P'rushym*¹, *Tzadoqym*², *Sopherym*³, along with crowds of the *Am Ha'aretz*⁴. The subject matter of his oratory is diverse, ranging from obedience in the law to the kingdom of YHWH, and even includes some incredible prophecy of the *Yamym Acharym* – The Days of the End. The time of year is those days during the month of Aviv between the selection of the lambs and their slaughter four days later on the eve of *Pesach*⁵. The reason he is allowing himself to be publicly questioned on any and all of these subjects is a matter of Torah law – if he is to serve as the lamb of Elohim to be sacrificed for the sins of all mankind at *Pesach*, then Torah demands that he must first undergo inspection by the leadership of Yisrael during these four days in order to ensure that he is without any blemish⁶. That he was indeed found adequate and unblemished is indicated by the verse at the end of chapter twenty-two, which says, “And no one was able to answer him a word, and from that day on no one was bold enough to ask him any more questions.”

This was Yehoshua's last great public teaching before his death, resurrection and ascension to the heavens. With that teaching he also included several warnings to those who were and would be his *talmidym* – his students, or disciples. He was quite serious about them, speaking to them in the strongest of terms. He meant exactly what he said. He also spoke to them clearly, rather than in parables, leaving no room for misinterpretation. Even so, men have consistently ignored and violated these warnings of his ever since those days, claiming that they were only some sort of allegory and metaphor. This is a monumental error. Yehoshua meant his warnings to be taken absolutely and literally, not figuratively.

In this article, we intend to focus upon three specific warnings that Yehoshua gave in Mattithyahu chapter twenty-three. They are admonitions against egoism, hypocrisy and self-exaltation. They begin with a short introduction to the subject which is directed towards Yehoshua's own *talmidym*, but uses the *Sopherym* and *P'rushym* as examples:

“Then Yehoshua spoke to the crowds and to his taught ones, saying, ‘The scribes and the Pharisees sit on the seat of Moshe. Therefore, whatever they say to you to guard, guard and do. But do not do according to their works, for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders, but with their finger they do not wish to move them. And they do all their works to be seen by men, and they make their tefillin wide and lengthen the tzitzith of their garments, and they love the best place at feasts, and the best seats in the congregations, and the greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, ‘Rabbi, Rabbi.’”

Then comes the first warning:

¹ Pharisees

² Sadducees

³ Scribes

⁴ People of the land

⁵ Passover (i.e. the slaughtering of the lamb)

⁶ Shemoth 12:3-6

“But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’, for One is your Teacher, the Messiah, and you are all brothers.”

The Hebrew word *rabbi* (רַבִּי) literally means “my great one.” There is hardly a more bald-faced title of self-exultation than this. It was often interpreted to refer to one’s own personal teacher, though the more common word for teacher is *moreh* (מורה); which carries none of the egotistical baggage of the term *rabbi*. The reason given for this admonishment is that “you are all brothers,” implying that no one of Yehoshua’s *talmidym* is to be considered or appear greater than another.

Next comes the second warning:

“And do not call anyone on earth your father, for One is your father, He who is in the heavens.”

The Hebrew word for father is *Av* (אב). This admonition often causes some confusion, and is the primary excuse used by those who wish to reinterpret Yehoshua’s words about being called *Rabbi* for doing so. They point out that since *Av* is the common scriptural term for anyone’s natural father, which is often used throughout its pages for such, and since there is no comparable Hebrew term to replace it, then the entirety of Mattithyahu twenty-three must then be taken allegorically. Of course, this allegory is most often used by those who favor using the titles *Rabbi* or *father* upon themselves in public, or in their own pet doctrines. The counterpoint to this analogy is that Yehoshua’s prohibitions are against artificial titles of self-aggrandizement, not against material facts. All people have a natural father – an *av*; and many people are factually teachers – *morehym*. There is nothing wrong with using these words in their intended sense. It is the exultation of self with such titles that is forbidden in this passage, and literally so.

The origin of *Av* as a title probably occurs in about the same time period as that of *Rabbi*. Oddly, many people equate its origin with the Catholic Church. Obviously, that is an impossibility, as the Catholic Church did not exist until about the fourth century C.E. In Yehoshua’s time, it was used exclusively in reference to the head of each Jewish community’s *Beyth Dyn*⁷, who was then and is still known to this day as the *Av Beyth Dyn*. The reason given by Yehoshua for this admonishment is that only One person deserves the ultimate title of father of us all, and that is YHWH Himself.

And finally, the third warning:

“Neither be called leaders, for one is your leader, the Messiah. But the greatest among you shall be your servant.”

The common Hebrew word for “leader” is *nagiyd* (נָגִיד). It generally refers to the leader of any assemblage of people, such as the commander of a military force or a governing body. However, the word *nagiyd* is not normally used as a personal title. In scriptural times and to the present, the Hebrew title most often used for a leader is the word *Nassi* (נָשִׂיא). It generally is defined as a leader, prince, or president. In Moshe’s time, the leader of each of the twelve tribes of Yisrael was called a *Nassi*. Since the Babylonian exile, the administrator of each local synagogue has carried that title. Today, the Prime Minister of the state of Israel is called its *Nassi*. This is most likely the term that Yehoshua forbade in the warning to his *talmidym*.

As with the previous two terms Yehoshua warned them about, there is nothing wrong with the concept or identification of leadership. It is rather the lifting up of one’s self by using grand titles that is the problem, and this is the issue at hand in Yehoshua’s condemnations. The reason he gives in this instant verse reflects that thinking: *“But the greatest among you shall be your servant.”* According to our Messiah, it is not the one who lifts himself up with fancy titles who is great before YHWH and his Messiah. Those who do so usurp the place of the Most High and His son. It is rather those who lower themselves in the sight of Elohyim and men with humility that are greatest of all, as the final verse in this passage confirms:

“And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.”

⁷ [House of Judgment](#)

Some scholars will note that Yehoshua himself is addressed as *Rabbi* in the writings of Yochanan. This is true, but he is only addressed as such there by others. He only refers to himself as *Rabbi* in the verses of Mattithyahu twenty-three, where he forbids his *talmidym* to be called by that same title. Other scholars will assert that Shaul of Tarsos would have achieved such a title himself and would have been addressed with it, having been a *talmyd* of the esteemed *Rabbi Gamliel*. This also is probably true, but Shaul left behind all of his former achievements for the sake of Messiah, as he states most eloquently in Philippians three:

“If anyone thinks to trust in the flesh, I more – circumcised the eighth day, of the race of Yisrael, of the tribe of Binyamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, according to Torah a Pharisee, according to order, persecuting the assembly; according to righteousness that is in the law, having become blameless. But what might have been a gain to me, I have counted as loss, because of Messiah. What is more, I even count all to be loss because of the excellence of the knowledge of Messiah Yehoshua my Master for whom I have suffered the loss of all, and count them as refuse, in order to gain Messiah...”

And it must be further noted that nowhere in Scripture does Shaul or any other follower of Yehoshua and The Way ever refer to themselves or each other as *Rabbi*.

Therefore, the of title *Nassi* is only an assumption by most teachers of Scripture nowadays, and especially in Messianic circles, that in the Chronicles of Sefer Ma’asey⁸, Ya’akov Hatzadyk⁹ was acting in the capacity of *Nassi* of the community and council at *Yerushalayim*. This assumption was previously also held by the members and *Zaqenym*¹⁰ of *Qehilath Haderek* until recently, when a certain brother brought a question and complaint about it to our attention. The matter was looked into over a period of several weeks, and the assumption was found to most likely be false. Moreover, in light of Yehoshua’s words for Mattithyahu twenty-three, we think that possibility unlikely in the extreme. Please consider the following:

In Ma’asey chapter fifteen, commonly referred to as the “Yerushalayim Council,” Shaul and Barnaba have traveled to that city to attend a meeting of the *Shliachym*¹¹ and *Zakenym* of *Haderek* – The Way. The subject of the meeting was whether or not under Torah law Gentiles must be circumcised in order to be saved. The meeting quite obviously took the form of a formal *Beyth Dyn* – a Court of Judgment, as commanded by Torah. Testimony was given by those on both sides of the argument, with Shaul, Barnaba and Shimon Kepha on one side, and certain *P’rushym* on the other. Once all testimony and evidence had been presented, Ya’akov stood to give the decision to the assembled members of the council on the matter. It is because of this particular act that most scholars have assumed he must have been the *Nassi* of the *Yerushalayim* community. However, it is not the duty or place of a community *Nassi* to make legal decisions or pronounce judgment in a *Beyth Dyn*. That is the purview of the *Dayan*¹².

The Yerushalayim Council acted as the Supreme Court for all communities of *Haderek* in *eretz Yisrael*, and throughout the diaspora. It was known as the *Beyth Dyn HaGadol* – the Great House of Judgment, or Supreme Court. If any disputes between members could not be resolved in the *Batey Dyn*¹³ at their local level, they were brought before this higher court at *Yerushalayim*. When Ya’akov stood to make his decision on the matter of gentile circumcision known, he did so as *Roshey Beyth Dyn* - Head of the House of Judgment – as a judge, and not as a *Nassi*. This is evidenced by his own words following the witness testimony, when he said, “Therefore I judge...” Ya’akov may also have been considered the *Nassi* or leader of the community at *Yerushalayim*, but there is absolutely no evidence that he was ever called by that title, and he was surely aware of Yehoshua’s prohibition of it. He was, according to his own words and historical precedent, its judge.

We of *Qehilath Haderek* have stated in the past that we do not know all things, and that any denomination or religious leader that says they do must be suspect and should be avoided. We’ve also stated that if and when we

⁸ Book of Acts

⁹ Ya’aqov the Righteous – James the brother of Yeshua who was the *Nassi* of the *Beyth Din* of The Way in *Yerushalayim*

¹⁰ Elders (i.e. grey heads)

¹¹ Apostles (sent ones)

¹² Judge

learn of new things or a truth that confronts us with a need for change, we would humbly do so. We reaffirm these statements now. For many years we have used and espoused the title of *Nassi* to designate the leaders of our communities. We now have come to believe that this has been error, and that we have been guilty of violating the expressed command of our Messiah and King. We repent of this, and will do so no longer.

Henceforth, the title and position of *Nassi* in our communities is abolished. The duties and responsibilities of that position will immediately be assumed by the *Roshey Beyth Dyn* of each community, with active support of its other *Dayanym* and its *Zakenym*. This is done in order to more closely conform to the commands of Scripture, to the model we are to imitate which is shown us in its pages, and to the wishes of our Master, Yehoshua.

YHWH Im'ka, Ovadyah

To some, this change may simply sound like the exchange of one title for another. It is not. The title and position of Nassi, while referred to in the chronicles of the Torah, are nowhere commanded in Scripture to be used, but have become Jewish tradition. The command to appoint judges and create courts of Torah law in all of our communities is clear, and is evidenced throughout scripture. The administrative and leadership duties of the position of Nassi remain, even if the title and position itself are removed. Someone must take them up, and the Zakenym of each community, most especially the officers of its court, are those charged with its care and the most well-suited to do so. Shaul of Tarsos indicated such in his second letter to Timotiyos. We concur and will follow the commands and examples of the Most High and those Q'doshym who went before us.

For a complete description of the community structure and rules of Qehilath Haderek, request a copy of the newly revised version of the Qehilath Haderek Handbook from:

Qehilath Haderek

P.O. Box 972, Malakoff, Texas 75148

or order one online by sending an email to: info@qehilathhaderek.org.

The revised edition includes: the Statement of Beliefs, Community Rules, Order of Service, along with the section on the rules of the Beyth Dyn and Brakoth for Immersions. There is no cost for the booklet to members of Qehilath Haderek. Non-members please include \$2 or four stamps for your copy. The online e-version is free to all.