

INTRODUCTION

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

Netzarim Apologetics

How to Read Your Hebrew Bible

INTRODUCTION

Netzarim: Branches or sprouts

Notzrim: Watchmen

23

וַאֲתָא (& he came) עִמָּר (to dwell) בְּמַדְיִנְתָּא (in a city) דְּמַתְקֵרְיָא (that is called)
נְצָרֵת (Natsareth) אִיךְ (so) דְּנִתְמַלָּא (that should be fulfilled)
מִדְּמַם (the thing) דְּאִתְאָמַר (that was spoken) בְּנִבְיָא (by the prophet)
דְּנִצְרֵיָא (that a Nazarene) נִתְקֵרָא (He shall be called)

אביו ירא ללכת לשם ויזהר בשנה הלך אל ארץ הגליל: ויבא
וישב בעיר נצרת למלא מה שנאמר על פי הנביא כי נצרת
יקרא:

Aramaic (top) and Hebrew (bottom) texts of Matthew 2:23. The Aramaic uses “Natsraya” and the Hebrew “Natzret.” *This is different from being a Nazirite!*

INTRODUCTION

In the period after the resurrection of Yeshua and before the destruction of the Temple by Rome, the followers of Yeshua of Nazareth were known as the Jewish “sect of the Nazarene(s)” (Acts 24: 5).

The Judaism they practiced would be Nazarene Judaism, the Judaism of Yeshua of Nazareth – the religion of Yeshua of Nazareth

INTRODUCTION

Yochanon/John 15: 18 “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.”

Hitgalut/Revelation 12: 17 (HRV) And the dragon was angry concerning the woman, and he went to wage war with the remnant of her seed--those who keep the commandments of Eloah and have the testimony of Yeshua....

INTRODUCTION

Expect to be hated by **the Dragon** and
by the world for we are called **to**
keep the commandments of Elohim
and have the testimony of Yeshua

Week 2 in

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

**HOW MANY TIMES WAS THE ONE TRUE
FAITH GIVEN?**

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

HOW MANY TIMES WAS THE ONE TRUE FAITH GIVEN?

There is only one true faith:

Ephesians 4:4-6 (NASB) *4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.*

Translation from the Peshitta (Aramaic): 4 That you be one body and one spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling. 5 For Marya (Master Yah, YHWH) is one and the faith (or trust) is one and the immersion is one: 6 And one Eloah (Elohim) is the Father of all, and above all, and through all, and in us all.

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

HOW MANY TIMES WAS THE ONE TRUE FAITH GIVEN?

And the one true faith was only given once:

Jude (NASB) 3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints

Translation from the Peshitta (Aramaic): 3 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you, concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you, exhorting that you should earnestly contend for the Faith (or Trust), which was once for all delivered to the Set-Apart-Ones.

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

**HOW MANY TIMES WAS THE ONE
TRUE FAITH GIVEN?**

There is only one true faith:

And the one true faith was only given once:

And, according to Paul (or whoever wrote Hebrews 11):

Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses,
and David (among others) are counted as faithful

**Thus, the one true faith already existed on the Earth
before the events recorded in the gospels took place.**

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

**HOW MANY TIMES WAS THE ONE TRUE
FAITH GIVEN?**

**Since the one true faith already existed on the Earth
before the events recorded in the gospels happened.....**

**It may be an anachronism to call the faith of Abraham
“the Way” (*haderekh*) or that of “the sect of the
Nazarenes” (Nazarene Judaism), but it is functionally
accurate...if the one true faith was only given once,
and Abraham had that faith.**

Week 3 in Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

Paul's Prophecy, or How "the Way" was Hijacked (Part 1)

I know that after I am gone fierce wolves will enter in among you without mercy upon the flock. And also from among you there will rise up men speaking perverse things, so that they might turn away the *talmidim* to follow after them.

(Acts 20: 29-30)

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

Paul's Prophecy, or How "the Way" was Hijacked (Part 1)

Several factors play into the fulfillment of Paul's words, including but not limited to:

- Paul's death (c. 66 CE)
- The "First Jewish Revolt" (66-73 CE) and Destruction of the Temple (70 CE)
- *Fiscus Judaicus*
- Ignatius of Antioch
- The "Second Jewish Revolt" (Bar Kochba) (132 – 136 CE)

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

Paul's Prophecy, or How "the Way" was Hijacked (Part 1)

- Paul was killed in Rome (beheaded, according to tradition) in c. 66 CE
- The "First Jewish Revolt" begins in 66 CE
 - Caesarea: Response to Roman inaction when pagan Greeks sacrifice birds outside a synagogue
 - A Temple priest stops making prayers and sacrifices to Elohim on behalf of the Roman Emperor
 - Roman troops raid the Temple and take 17 talents of gold from the Temple treasury (saying it was owed to the Emperor)

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

Paul's Prophecy, or How "the Way" was Hijacked (Part 1)

- Widespread Unrest in Jerusalem
- Roman soldiers raid Jerusalem, arresting and crucifying Jewish leaders (including those that are Roman citizens)
- "Zealots" overrun the Roman garrison in Jerusalem
- XII Legion "Fulminata" based in Syria moves in, and is ultimately destroyed at the Battle of Beth Horon

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

Paul's Prophecy, or How "the Way" was Hijacked (Part 1)

- April 67 CE, three legions (X Fretensis, V Macedonia, XV Apolinaris) led by Vespasian and his son Titus;
- Revolt in Galilee crushed by 68 CE
- "Jerusalem Council" flees to the Decapolis city of Pella before the siege of Jerusalem
- By 70 CE, Nero is dead & Vespasian is Emperor
- After 7 month siege, Titus breaches Jerusalem's walls. Temple destroyed and burned, on Tisha b'Av in 70CE
- Last Judean stronghold (Masada) taken in 73 CE after mass suicide by defenders

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe
Paul's Prophecy, or How "the Way" was Hijacked
(Part 1)

This brings us to *Fiscus Judaicus*, the Jewish Tax

- Precursor: Two denarii tax levied by Vespasian after the Temple was destroyed in 70 CE in place of the half-shekel; Adult men, aged 20 – 50; Used to build the Temple of Jupiter in Rome
- The Emperor Domitian (ruled 81 – 96 CE) expanded the tax to all Jews (including females, children and slaves), converts, those who observed Jewish customs and those who "lived like Jews."

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

Paul's Prophecy, or How "the Way" was Hijacked (Part 1)

- “Domitian proceeded with great rigor, causing the names of those that lived a Jewish life without paying the tax, or that sought to keep their origin secret, to be reported to him. I recall being present in my youth when the person of a man ninety years old was examined before the procurator and a very crowded court, to see whether he was circumcised” (Suetonius, “Domitian,” § 12).

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

Paul's Prophecy, or How "the Way" was Hijacked (Part 1)

- The Emperor Nerva (ruled 96 – 98 CE) relaxed the tax to only those who openly practiced Judaism.
- It is unknown when the Fiscus Judaicus was abolished in the Roman empire, but continued at least until the 3rd century CE and possibly until the middle of the 4th century CE
- Revived by the Holy Roman Empire, collected on Christmas day.
- Fiscus Judaicus (and its avoidance) connects directly to Ignatius of Antioch (next week)

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe
Paul's Prophecy, or How "the Way" was Hijacked
(Part 1)

- If you lived in the Roman empire during Emperor Domitian's reign, how could you avoid paying the *Fiscus Judaicus*?

Week 4 in Netzarim 101:
Know What You Believe

Paul's Prophecy, or How "the Way" was Hijacked
(Part 2)

- Ignatius of Antioch

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

Paul's Prophecy, or How "the Way" was Hijacked (Part 2)

- Ignatius became the first "overseer" or "bishop" of Antioch in 98CE
- He wrote a number of "epistles" that have survived

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

Paul's Prophecy, or How "the Way" was Hijacked (Part 2)

- In these "epistles" he championed obedience to the local bishop as the final authority in matters of the assembly
- "We ought to look upon the bishop, even as we would upon the Master himself."

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

Paul's Prophecy, or How "the Way" was Hijacked (Part 2)

- Until this time, disputes that arose at Antioch were ultimately referred to the Jerusalem Council (as in Acts 15).
- Ignatius **rebelled** against the authority of the Jerusalem Council (wherever they were located at the time)
- He declared the local bishop as the ultimate authority over his assembly and declaring the same as true of all other bishops and their local assemblies

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

Paul's Prophecy, or How "the Way" was Hijacked (Part 2)

- Similarly, Ignatius rebelled against the authority of Torah
- “Be not deceived with strange doctrines; nor with old fables which are unprofitable. For if we still continue to live according to the Jewish Law, we do confess ourselves not to have received grace...” (Magnesians 3: 1)

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

Paul's Prophecy, or How "the Way" was Hijacked (Part 2)

- Ignatius rebelled against the authority of Torah, including Shabbat, and using the term "Lord's day" for Yom Rishon/Sunday:
- "...no longer observing sabbaths, but keeping the Lord's day in which also our life is sprung up by him, and through his death..."
(Magnesians 3: 3)

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

Paul's Prophecy, or How "the Way" was Hijacked (Part 2)

- Ignatius terms this new religion "Christianity" and makes it clear that it is distinct from Judaism.
- "Let us learn to live according to the rules of Christianity, for whosoever is called by any other name besides this, he is not of God...."

It is absurd to (call upon) the name Jesus Christ, and to Judaize (become as Jews). For the Christian religion did not embrace the Jewish. But the Jewish the Christian... (Magnesians 3: 8; 11).

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe
Paul's Prophecy, or How "the Way" was Hijacked
(Part 2)

- Ignatius of Antioch fulfilled Paul's prophetic warning. He withdrew from Judaism and founded a new religion which he called "Christianity," rejecting the Torah, elevating bishops, and replacing the Sabbath with Sunday worship.
- Did *Fiscus Judaicus* help or hinder Ignatius' rebellion?

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

This Week: Yavneh, Bar Kochba, R. Akiva and the *Birkhat HaMinim*

- We have reviewed how Judaism was chased out of the Nazarenes
- This week, we look at how Nazarenes were chased out of Judaism perhaps in fulfillment of the words of Yeshua:
- "But beware of men, for they will hand you over to *the* courts and scourge you in their synagogues" (Matthew 10:17, NASB, see also Matthew 23:34)

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

This Week: Yavneh, Bar Kochba, R. Akiva and the *Birkhat HaMinim*

- Yochanan ben Zakkai established the Jewish academy at Yavneh
- **According to tradition**, ben Zakkai was a pacifist during the siege of Jerusalem in 68 CE. Ben Zakkai urged surrender, but the Zealots would not hear of it, so ben Zakkai faked his own death. His disciples smuggled him out in a coffin and carried the coffin to the Roman General Vespasian's tent.

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

This Week: Yavneh, Bar Kochba, R. Akiva and the *Birkhat HaMinim*

- Ben Zakkai came out of the coffin, telling Vespasian that he had had a vision that Vespasian would soon be emperor, and he asked Vespasian to set aside a place in Yavneh where he could start a Torah academy.
- Vespasian agreed. He became Emperor within a year, and kept his word. Ben Zakkai was allowed to establish the Torah academy after the war ended.

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

This Week: Yavneh, Bar Kochba, R. Akiva and the *Birkhat HaMinim*

- According to some sources, there was a council at Yavneh c. 90CE in which the “Jewish canon” was established (excluding the “Apocrypha”)
- According to the Talmud (Berakhot 28b), Rabbi Gamaliel II instituted the *Birkhat HaMinim*, and the timeframe would likely place him at Yavneh
- Others argue that the *Birkhat HaMinim* pre-dated Yavneh, but the formulation of it may have changed there (at Yavneh)

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

What is the Birkhat HaMinim?

- Literally: “Blessing of the Heretics”
- Actually, a curse against heretics
- 12th blessing of the *Shemonah Esrei*, aka the *Amidah*

Birkat HaMinim: 12. Against Heretics

And for slanderers* let there be no hope; and may all wickedness perish in an instant; and may all Your enemies be cut down speedily. May you speedily uproot, smash, cast down, and humble the wanton sinners--speedily in our days. Blessed are You, HaShem, Who breaks enemies and humbles wanton sinners. (Talmud Berakhot 28b-29a states that this originally said “*laminim*”)

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

What is the *Birkhat HaMinim*?

- How do we know that the *Birkhat HaMinim* was added to the *Shemonah Esrei*?
- Because there are 19 blessings in *Shemonah Esrei*
- What we do not know precisely is when it was added, nor the original formulation. The modern version is likely to have been modified to be less offensive

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

Birkhat HaMinim in the Cairo Geniza

- In 1925, the Cairo Geniza was discovered
- Ancient Jewish storehouse for worn Hebrew scrolls, oldest dating to late 1st millennia
- *Birkhat HaMinim* in the Cairo Geniza consistently contain the wording of “*Netzarim*” (or ‘*notzerim*’) and *minim*” i.e., Nazarenes (or Christians) and heretics

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

Effect of *Birkhat HaMinim* on Nazarenes

- Since the *Shemonah Esrei/Amidah* is part of the synagogue service, Nazarenes could not remain in the synagogue to pronounce **curse**s on themselves
- The Cairo Geniza texts of the *Birkhat HaMinim* also consistently begin with a curse against *meshummadim* (apostates). Rabbinic texts indicate that the term can also apply to **those who reject elements of rabbinic authority**

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

Effect of *Birkhat HaMinim* on Nazarenes

- “Church” historian Epiphanius in his *Panarion* 29: 9 (written 374-377 CE), describes the *Nazoraeans* (a group of Jews who believe Yeshua of Nazareth is the Messiah) as people whom the Jews curse and anathematize three times a day in the synagogue
- This does not use the term, but suggests the context of *Birkhat HaMinim*

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

Effect of Shimon Bar Kochba and Rabbi Akiva on Nazarenes

- In 118 CE, Roman emperor Hadrian gave permission to rebuild the Temple
- However, soon after, he modified his permission to allow the Temple be rebuilt somewhere other than the original site
- Hadrian began forcibly moving Jews to North Africa and.....forbidding circumcision

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

Effect of Shimon Bar Kochba and Rabbi Akiva on Nazarenes

- In 132 CE, Hadrian began construction of a temple to Jupiter on the Temple Mount
- This precipitated the Bar Kocha revolt, aka “the Second Jewish War”
- Shimon Bar Kosiba, the leader of the revolt, had some initial military successes
- Rabbi Akiva, the *nasi* of the Sanhedrin, renamed him Shimon Bar Kochba, using a Messianic prophecy from Bemidbar/Numbers 24

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

Effect of Shimon Bar Kochba and Rabbi Akiva on Nazarenes

- Rabbi Akiva declared Shimon Bar Kosiba/Kochba to be the promised Messiah
- Rabbi Akiva thus became a false prophet, and Bar Kosiba/Kochba a false messiah

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

Effect of Shimon Bar Kochba and Rabbi Akiva on Nazarenes

- Hundreds of thousands of Jews were killed by the Romans in crushing this revolt between 132 and 136 CE
- Until this declaration, some Nazarene Jews had been fighting alongside other Jews against Rome (despite *Birkhat HaMinim*)
- Afterwards, they withdrew from supporting a false messiah and his false prophet...and were **considered traitors** as a result

Netzarim 101: Know What You Believe

Nazarene Judaism: Squeezed from Both Sides



Fiscus Judaicus

Ignatius of Antioch
Anti-Jewish Feeling in Roman
Empire

Birkhat HaMinim

False Messiah/False Prophet
Traitors