



Baruch atah Adonai Elochenu, Melech ha-olam, Who has made His everlasting covenant with His servant Yisrael: "I will bless those who bless you, but I will curse anyone who curses you; and by you all the families of the earth will be blessed. ... May peoples serve you and nations bow down to you. May you be lord over your kinsmen, let your mother's descendants bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be everyone who blesses you!"

— Genesis 12:3; 27:29, *The Complete Jewish Bible*

## Followship in the Fellowship

This message was delivered to a congregation that had recently suffered a "split" when a rebellious faction decided that they would attempt force the pastor to change the direction of the ministry. The pastor wisely chose to follow the Great Shepherd instead of the dissenters, and the dissenters broke fellowship. Unless otherwise stated, Scripture quotations are from the Complete Jewish Bible, translated by David Stern. Copyright © 1998, David H Stern.

As some of you may know, I've been serving in pastoral ministry for a fairly long time, beginning with my first assignment as youth pastor in a Navy base chapel on Guam in 1965. That's almost 40 years ago. Since then I have served in nearly every possible office within a local congregation, and I have managed to survive through an awful lot of congregational trials and conflicts, including a few congregational splits. And I have learned a lot from these experiences. I have asked your Pastor if I might have this morning to share my heart with you — to spend the next few minutes thinking with you about what happened to this congregation, how you can get through it, and how you can keep it from happening again.

Before we get started, I think it is extremely important that you understand that what I am going to say this morning is my own personal opinion of how the Holy Community is supposed to work. I have discussed this subject with your Pastor in only vague and general terms, and the fact that he has allowed me the honor of being in the Bema this morning is not necessarily his endorsement of what I'm going to say. As they say on TV and radio, "the opinions expressed in this message are not necessarily those of the staff and management of this congregation."

I really believe that we — that is, the Body of Messiah — have taken what Yeshua and the Shliachim, the Apostles,

intended for the Family of G-d, and in many respects have turned it exactly upside down — exactly the opposite of what it was like among the Holy Community of the first century.

And I sincerely believe that G-d has raised up the Messianic Jewish Movement as a Last-Days ministry of restoration — not only to reach the Jewish people with the Gospel, but also to help restore the Holy Community to what He originally intended it to be — and to serve as example to the world in these final years before Messiah returns to reign on earth.

There are a great number of subjects that we could consider, but that would take several weeks. So for this morning there are essentially three areas that I would offer for your consideration. The three main ideas are these:

- The role or function of the Pastor,
- The role or function of the Sheep, and
- The role or function of the Assembly at large.

These three concepts are so totally interwoven that it's sometimes going to be difficult to tell which of them I may be talking about at any given time, but let's start with a look at the role of the Pastor.



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First of all, a simple word study of the Brit Chadasha will demonstrate that the titles Elder, Pastor, Shepherd, Bishop, and Overseer are used interchangeably to refer to the same office; and I also always use those words interchangeably.

Ephesians 4:11 tells us that G-d has appointed, or ordained, men who are called “Elders” within the Holy Community to perform four specific functions, or areas of ministry.

**First**, He appointed some of these Elders to serve as *Emissaries or Apostles*. We understand the title of “Apostle” in the technical sense to be reserved for those men who were eye-witnesses to Yeshua’s resurrection and who were personally commissioned by Him. Since I don’t know anyone who is 2000 years old, it is my personal opinion that there are very probably no living Apostles, in the technical sense.

However, in the generic sense, we understand the term “Apostle” or “Emissary” [or “Shiliach” in Hebrew] to refer to Traveling Elders, those Elders whom G-d has called to travel from place to place as messengers or missionaries. In fact, in modern Hebrew, the ambassadors from Israel to the other nations are referred to as Shliachim.

**Second**, G-d has also appointed some other Elders to serve as *Prophets*. While the terms “prophet,” “prophecy,” and “prophesy” sometimes contain a predictive element, the word literally means “to speak forth” and is used to describe someone who speaks in the place of another, or who delivers a message from someone else, or simply someone who speaks in front of an audience. Before we had our completed Bible to serve as our source of revelation about G-d, Adonai would often speak to his people through a person that He had chosen, and He would include in that message some information about events that would happen in their future. This was so that when the predicted events happened, His people would know that He was the true source of that message. Now that Abba has spoken to us through His Son, and we have the written record of what He wanted us to know, we have no more need of that kind of special revelation. So now in the Holy Community we have men who speak forth G-d’s word from the Scriptures, and they deliver messages to audiences. They are called Prophets, or Preaching Elders, or just Preachers, whom G-d has called to specialize in preaching the Word of G-d.

**Third**, He has appointed still other Elders to serve as *Evangelists*, or “Gospelizing” Elders, those Elders

who have been called to specialize in presenting to the unsaved the Gospel (which Scripture defines as the Good News concerning the death, burial, bodily resurrection, ascension, and return of Yeshua HaMashiach). Billy Graham is probably the best-known example of a “Gospelizing” Elder today.

And **fourth**, He has also appointed some other Elders to serve as *Pastor/Teachers*. The very specific grammatical construction of this term as recorded in the Ephesian letter literally means “Shepherds who are also Teachers.” The Brit Chadasha also refers to these Elders as Shepherding Elders or Ruling Elders. These men are Elders whom G-d has called to fulfill a shepherding ministry over a local assembly of believers.

Since we are immediately concerned with the functioning of a local assembly of believers, we are primarily concerned with the role of the Elder whom G-d has called and equipped to serve the Holy Community as a Pastor/Teacher, or Shepherd, over that local assembly.

Why does G-d refer to this man as a Shepherd? What are his responsibilities?

In the Good News as recorded by Yochanan, chapter 21, we find the record of Yeshua appointing the first Shepherd:

The Scripture tells us that this event occurred “the third time Yeshua had appeared to the talmidim after being raised from the dead.”

After breakfast, Yeshua said to Shim’on Kefa, “Shim’on Bar-Yochanan, do you love Me [with G-d’s kind of love] more than these?” He replied, “Yes, Lord, You know I’m Your friend.” He said to him, “Feed My lambs.” A second time He said to him, “Shim’on Bar-Yochanan, do you love Me [with G-d’s kind of love]?” He replied, “Yes, Lord, You know I’m Your friend.” He said to him, “Shepherd My sheep.” The third time he said to him, “Shim’on Bar-Yochanan, are you My friend?” Shim’on was hurt that He questioned him a third time: “Are you My friend?” So he replied, “Lord, You know everything! You know I’m Your friend.” Yeshua said to him, “Feed My sheep.” (Yochanan 21:14-17)

So Yeshua’s instructions to Kefa were to:

- Feed My lambs;
- Shepherd My sheep; and
- Feed My sheep.

A shepherd is primarily concerned with the care and safety of the flock. He feeds them. He provides nourishment for them. He protects them from those who would harm them.

He treats their injuries, and even carries them when they are too weak to walk themselves. He leads them where they need to go.

Please notice that it is the shepherd—and not the flock—who determines where the flock is to go. One of the major causes of conflict in the Holy Community is when the sheep come to believe that they are supposed to lead the Shepherd instead of following him.

The 23rd Psalm says that the Shepherd leads the sheep beside the quiet waters, he makes them lie down in the grassy pastures, and he guides them in the right paths. The shepherd leads the sheep, and the sheep follow.

Yeshua describes Himself as the Good Shepherd in Yochanan 10:1-16, and He gives us some ideas of how the Shepherd is to take care of the flock:

<sup>1</sup>“Yes, indeed! I tell you, the person who doesn’t enter the sheep-pen through the door, but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a robber. <sup>2</sup>But the one who goes in through the gate is the sheep’s own shepherd. <sup>3</sup>This is the one the gate-keeper admits, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep, each one by name, and leads them out. <sup>4</sup>After taking out all that are his own, he goes on ahead of them; and the sheep follow him because they recognize his voice. <sup>5</sup>They never follow a stranger but will run away from him, because strangers’ voices are unfamiliar to them.”

<sup>6</sup>Yeshua used this indirect manner of speaking with them, but they didn’t understand what he was talking about. <sup>7</sup>So Yeshua said to them again, “Yes, indeed! I tell you that I am the gate for the sheep. <sup>8</sup>All those who have come before me have been thieves and robbers, but the sheep didn’t listen to them. <sup>9</sup>I am the gate; if someone enters through me, he will be safe and will go in and out and find pasture. <sup>10</sup>The thief comes only in order to steal, kill, and destroy; I have come so that they may have life, life in its fullest measure.

<sup>11</sup>“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup>The hired hand, since he isn’t a shepherd and the sheep aren’t his own, sees the wolf coming, abandons the sheep, and runs away. Then the wolf drags them off and scatters them. <sup>13</sup>The hired worker behaves like this because that’s all he is, a hired worker; so it doesn’t matter to him what happens to the sheep. <sup>14</sup>I am the Good Shepherd; I know My own, and My own know Me — <sup>15</sup>just as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father — and I lay down My life on behalf of the sheep. <sup>16</sup>Also I have other sheep which are not from this pen; I need to bring them, and they will hear My voice, and there will be one flock, one Shepherd.”

This is the high standard to which the Pastor/Teacher is called. He is to be to the flock a living example of the Good Shepherd, Yeshua.

He enters the sheep-pen through the door, and Yeshua says that He, Yeshua, is that door. The *true* Pastor/Teacher becomes a shepherd the *correct* way. That means, first of all, that a *true* Pastor/Teacher has been called by G-d to that office. It means that he has spent many years in preparation and training for his calling, and that he has been thoroughly examined by a panel of other Elders who have carefully considered his calling and who have agreed with the Ruach HaKodesh that his calling is genuine, and that he has a sufficient knowledge of the Scriptures and the appropriate spiritual gifts to fulfill that calling.

Remember that even Rav Sha’ul submitted to that same kind of examination by the Elders in Jerusalem. In the first two chapters of his letter to the Galatians, Sha’ul tells us that with all his rabbinical training, after Yeshua appeared to him and commissioned him on the Damascus road he spent 14 years in private preparation before presenting himself to the Elders in Jerusalem for their confirmation of his calling and message.

Anyone who enters pastoral ministry through another door is a thief and a robber, and not a true shepherd. Please don’t misunderstand me. I am not saying that a pastor necessarily has to have a seminary degree in order to be effective, though that is certainly helpful. I am saying that he has to have an adequate knowledge of the Scriptures, that he must meet the spiritual qualifications set down in Sha’ul’s letters to Timothy and Titus, that he has to demonstrate the evidence of G-d’s calling on his life, and that it is necessary for him to submit to the authority of other Elders for the confirmation of his calling and qualification.

After he has been admitted through the correct door by the Gate-Keeper (Yeshua), then he will learn the names of his sheep, he will call them by name, and they will hear his voice. As the Chief Shepherd, Yeshua is the gate-keeper, and the sheep are His. The Chief Shepherd admits the Under-Shepherd to the sheep-pen, and puts some of the sheep under his care. The Under-Shepherd will get to know the sheep who have been entrusted to his care, and the sheep will learn to recognize his voice. That can only happen when the shepherd and the sheep are deeply involved in each other’s lives.

When the sheep learn his voice, he will lead them and

they will follow him. And he will be ready and willing to lay down his life for the sheep that have been entrusted to him.

Moreover, the Shepherd provides a living example for the human sheep to follow.

Yeshua's final mitzvah, or commission, to the Shliachim was that they were to go and make people from all nations into talmidim, or disciples (Matt. 28:19). It was therefore Yeshua's intent that we are to become *His* (Yeshua's) talmidim.

A talmid is not a person who sits under the teaching of, or learns from, his or her teacher. A talmid is not someone who wants to know what the teacher knows. Rather a true talmid is one who earnestly and enthusiastically strives to become what the teacher is!

Yeshua has called us to become *His* talmidim, to strive to become what *He* is! And whether either we or our Pastors like it or not, Yeshua has called and ordained a true Pastor to be a living example to us—a model of Yeshua that we can observe in the flesh—to follow, to become his (the Pastor's) talmidim.

In case you feel that I am putting too much on the Pastor, read what Rabbi Sha'ul said on the same subject. To the Holy Community at Philippi, he wrote these instructions:

<sup>12</sup>It is not that I have already obtained it or already reached the goal — no, I keep pursuing it in the hope of taking hold of that for which the Messiah Yeshua took hold of me. <sup>13</sup>Brothers, I for my part, do not think of myself as having yet gotten hold of it; but one thing I do: forgetting what is behind me and straining forward toward what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup>I keep pursuing the goal in order to win the prize offered by G-d's upward calling in the Messiah Yeshua. <sup>15</sup>Therefore, as many of us as are mature, let us keep on paying attention to this; and if you are differently minded about anything, G-d will also reveal this to you. <sup>16</sup>Only let our conduct fit the level we have already reached. <sup>17</sup>Brothers, **join in imitating me, and pay attention to those who live according to the pattern we have set for you.** <sup>18</sup>For many — I have told you about them often before, and even now I say it with tears — live as enemies of the Messiah's [cross]. <sup>19</sup>They are headed for destruction! Their G-d is in the belly; they are proud of what they ought to be ashamed of, since they are concerned about the things of the world. (Philippians 3:12-19)

And to the Believers at Thessalonica, he wrote:

<sup>2</sup>We always thank G-d for all of you, regularly mentioning you in our prayers, <sup>3</sup>calling to mind before G-d our Father what our Lord Yeshua the Messiah

has brought about in you — how your trust produces action, your love hard work, your hope perseverance. <sup>4</sup>We know, brothers, that G-d has loved you and chosen you; <sup>5</sup>that the Good News we brought did not become for you a matter only of words, but also one of power, the Ruach HaKodesh, and total conviction — just as you know how we lived for your sakes when we were with you. <sup>6</sup>**You, indeed, became imitators of us and of the Lord;** [and here is the result of your imitation of our lives] so that even though you were going through severe troubles, you received the Word with joy from the Ruach HaKodesh. <sup>7</sup>Thus **you became a pattern (or an example) for all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.** (1 Thessalonians 1:2-7)

To young Pastor Timothy he said:

Don't let anyone look down on you because of your youth; on the contrary, **set the believers an example in your behavior, love, trust, and purity.** (1 Timothy 4:12)

And his instructions to Pastor Titus included the following:

<sup>6</sup>... urge the young men to be self-controlled, <sup>7</sup>and in everything **set them an example yourself** by doing what is good. When you are teaching, have integrity and be serious; <sup>8</sup>let everything you say be so wholesome that an opponent will be put to shame because he will have nothing bad to say about us. (Titus 2:7-8)

Will any pastor ever be completely successful in that task? Of course not! The pastor will be no more successful in consistently setting the example than we will be successful in consistently following the example. Even the great Rabbi Sha'ul said that he had not obtained it or reached the goal, but that he kept pursuing it and straining forward to what lies ahead, he kept pursuing the goal.

Now, what should our attitude be toward those who choose **not** to follow the example that has been set for us?

First of all, we are forced to consider whether they were ever truly part of our flock.

Yeshua said that true sheep will follow the voice of their shepherd; that true sheep will run away from the voice of the one who is not their shepherd. He also said that there would come into the sheep-pen those who are thieves and robbers who come in to steal, kill, and destroy.

Yeshua also warned that there would come a time when there were within the Holy Community wolves in sheep's clothing. They look like sheep, but in reality they are raven-

ous wolves. These wolves will do whatever they can to drag off the sheep, scatter them, and kill them.

In addition to intimately knowing the sheep that Yeshua has entrusted into his care, part of the Shepherd's job is to be able to identify both the thief and the wolf, and to drive them off before they can harm the sheep.

I can promise you from many years of personal experience that this is one of the most difficult and unpopular parts of the Shepherd's responsibility, but one that he must diligently pursue if he is to be faithful to his responsibility to protect the true sheep.

But what about those whom we *think* are sheep, that follow after the thief or the wolf that has been driven out? As hard as it may be for us to accept, Yeshua's teaching is that they were not true sheep, because the true sheep will hear the shepherd's voice and follow him.

Rav Sha'ul wrote to Pastor Timothy:

"For the time is coming when people will not have patience for sound teaching, but will cater to their passions and gather around themselves teachers who say whatever their ears itch to hear. Yes, they will stop listening to the truth, but will turn aside to follow myths." (2 Timothy 4:3,4)

Yochanan tells us in his first letter, chapter 1 and verse 19, that:

"They went out from us, but they weren't part of us; for if they had been part of us, they would have remained with us. But you have received the Messiah's anointing from HaKodesh, and you know all this. It is not because you don't know the truth that I have written to you, but because you do know it, and because no lie has its origin in the truth."

In the third chapter of Rav Sha'ul's letter to the Thesalonians, he says:

<sup>6</sup>Now, in the name of the Lord Yeshua the Messiah we command you, brothers, to stay away from any brother who is leading a life of idleness [in this passage the word idleness may also be translated as "undisciplined"], a life not in keeping with the tradition that you received from us. <sup>7</sup>For you yourselves know how **you must imitate us**, that we were not idle [or undisciplined] when we were among you. [And although he is talking specifically here about working for a living, and not just living off the welfare of the congregation, his main point is that they — that is, the congregation — were to follow the lifestyle example set by the Shliachim.] ... <sup>9</sup>It was not that we didn't have the right to be supported, but so that **we could make ourselves an example to imitate.**

In this next couple of verses, don't be thinking about working to earn a living, but instead think in terms of working or ministering within the Body of Messiah.

<sup>11</sup>We hear that some of you are leading a life of idleness [or "living an undisciplined life"] — not busy working, just busybodies! <sup>12</sup>We command such people — and in union with the Lord Yeshua the Messiah we urge them — to settle down, get to work, and [oh yeah, by the way] earn their own living. <sup>13</sup>And you brothers [and sisters] who are doing what is good [within the Holy Community], don't slack off! <sup>14</sup>Furthermore, if anyone does not obey what we are saying in this letter, take note of him and have nothing to do with him, so that he will be ashamed. <sup>15</sup>But don't consider him an enemy; on the contrary, confront him as a brother and try to help him change.

Time doesn't permit us to look at all that the Scriptures have to say about the Pastor's responsibility, but we can summarize the Bible's teaching on the subject with these short statements:

- The Pastor's primary duty is to give himself fully to study, prayer, and the ministry of G-d's word.
- He is to lead G-d's people by his example in word, conduct, love, spirit, faith, and purity.
- The Pastor is to equip the saints to do the work of ministry. The saints aren't to pay a hireling to do the work of ministry for them.
- The Pastor is to pray for the sick and visit those in their time of need.
- He is to benevolently rule over the local congregation of Believers and, when it becomes necessary, he is to rebuke and exhort with all authority.

And that's the part that far too many people can't come to grips with. We in America have become comfortable with our ideas about democracy, and we have tried to bring those concepts into the Holy Community. But there is nothing anywhere in the entire Bible about any form of democratic process. G-d's plan for the Holy Community is that *He appoints leaders to rule over the people, and He appoints the people to submit to the rulership of those leaders.*

- But the Pastor is not to be dictatorial in his leadership, but rather he is to be to the congregation as a loving father is to his family.
- The Pastor is to oversee the entire ministry, willingly and eagerly, knowing that when Yeshua, the Chief Shepherd, appears he shall receive a "crown of glory that does not fade away."

When it comes to the subject of leadership and authority in the Holy Community, the Bible is very clear that the Pastor who relinquishes his G-d-appointed authority over the ministry of the local assembly is simply failing miserably to perform the responsibility to which G-d has called him.

Having looked very briefly at the responsibilities of the Pastor, we now come to what are the responsibilities of the members of the congregation.

The writer of the letter to the Messianic Jews tells us in chapter 13:

“Remember your leaders, those who spoke G-d’s message to you. Reflect on the results of their way of life, and **imitate their trust** ...”

And again he says:

“**Obey your leaders and submit to them**, for they keep watch over your lives, as people who will have to render an account. So make it a task of joy for them, not one of groaning; for that is of no advantage to you.”

It should be extremely obvious to the most casual observer that if G-d has appointed the Shepherd to lead and rule, then G-d has likewise appointed the Sheep to follow and submit. Remember what I said before: one of the major causes of conflict in the Holy Community is when the sheep come to believe that they are supposed to lead the Shepherd instead of following him.

If G-d has appointed the Shepherd to set the example of what a G-dly person is supposed to be like, then G-d has likewise appointed the Sheep to follow that example. If G-d has appointed the Shepherd to teach, then He has likewise appointed the Sheep to learn. If G-d has appointed the Shepherd to *equip* the saints to do the work of ministry, then He has appointed the Saints to *do* the work of the ministry, and not expect the Shepherd to do it all.

In our society, there is a lot of emphasis placed on “leadership” — but there is almost never any mention of “followship.” And I find that very strange indeed. I believe that excellence in “followship” is every bit as important, though difficult, as is excellence in “leadership.”

In our American society, there is also a lot of emphasis placed on what we like to think of as “democratic process” — the process by which everyone has an equal voice in just about everything, whether they know anything about it or not.

*But let me challenge you to find one single place in all of Scripture where G-d provides any form of democratic process for His people. Nowhere in the Bible do you ever find the Holy Community having a voice in the operation of G-d’s kingdom. In fact, in every single instance in Scripture where the opinion of the majority is ever mentioned, **the majority opinion is always wrong!***

Just a few examples should prove my point.

Let’s start with the very first committee meeting in human history. In chapter 3 of B’reshet [Genesis] Adam and Eve and the Serpent voted on what should be on man’s menu and they outvoted G-d three to one.

In Genesis chapter 6 there was a construction project that came up for a vote. “All those in favor of building a boat in Noah’s driveway signify by show of hands.” The vote came in eight in favor of the idea and several million against.

Following the Great Big Boat Caper, G-d instructed the flood survivors to spread out and fill the earth. The majority decided that they preferred to stay at Bavel in the plain of Shin’ar and build a skyscraper, and we all know how well *that* worked out.

Bavel later became known as Babylon. Not only is Babylon used in the Bible as a euphemism for all that is evil, but it is also a country that has been causing G-d’s people grief ever since. Maybe you are familiar with the current King of Babylon. His name is Saddam Hussein. And Babylon is the direct root of all the false religions of the world, but that’s a different lesson.

[Nimrod, the king of Bavel, was elevated to deity after his death; Bavel was to become known as Babylon, which caused Israel so much grief later. Nimrod was later known by many names, including Baal, Bel, Baalat, Molech, Mero-dach, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. His mother was likewise elevated to the position of the fertility goddess under various names, including Ishtar, Aphrodite, Astarte, Ashtoreth, Cybele or Sybil, Diana, Europa, Isis, Semiramis, and Venus. She was given the title of “Queen of Heaven” and the Emperor Constantine, who was the high priest of the Roman form of the Babylon Mystery Religion, later blended her feast day with the Bible to create the holiday that is still known by her name, Ishtar, with its bunnies and eggs and other fertility symbols. And when some who call themselves “Christians” refer to our Lord’s mother as “the Queen of Heaven” they are not talking about Miriam at all, but rather they are referring to this fertility goddess, Ishtar. All of that

confusion and grief to G-d's people came about as a result of "the majority" refusing to obey the command of G-d to "spread out and fill the earth" after the flood.]

A few hundred years later G-d told Avraham that he would be given a son, but Mr. and Mrs. Avraham had a meeting with a servant named Hagar, and together they decided that they had a better idea for creating a nation. G-d intended to provide a nation from Yitzhak, but Avraham wound up with a nation from Ishmael. About 4,000 years later, that committee's decision resulted in the destruction of the World Trade Center.

A little more than 400 years after the Ishmael disaster, another committee voted 10 to 2 against following G-d's instruction to go in and take the Promised Land, and G-d made sure that everyone who followed that decision died in the wilderness, and of their entire generation only Joshua and Caleb were allowed to enter the Promised Land.

Fast-forward 2,000 years. The majority decided that Yeshua wasn't the Messiah that G-d had promised through the prophets. The "up side" is that Gentiles were brought into the Holy Community. The downside is that Israel has lived in dispersion for 1,878 years from the year 70 to the year 1948.

And a few weeks after Israel corporately (though certainly not individually) rejected their Messiah, and after Yehuda [Judas] defected, the remaining Shliachim voted for Mattityahu to take his place. But G-d's choice was not Mattityahu. G-d's choice was a rabbi named Sha'ul who may have actually been a member of the Sanhedrin when they sent an innocent man to the cross [another unfortunate majority vote]. Even the majority vote of the Shliachim — the Apostles — was wrong.

Fast-forward another couple thousand years to the end of the book of the Revelation, and we find the majority of nations deciding that it's time to end this Israel thing once and for all. And you know their vote gets overruled in the end.

If in the Scriptures the majority opinion is always wrong, why do some of the members of the Holy Community today insist on believing that somehow their majority opinion is the correct one?

We have 6,000 years of Biblical and post-Biblical history to show us that G-d's way of running things is totally different than man's way of running things. And we sit in our

congregations and piously claim that "we are in the world, but we are not of the world." We say, and rightfully so, that HaSatan, the Deceiver, is the G-d of this world, and that we want to live differently than the rest of the world.

Then why in the world [pun intended] do we insist on trying to make our congregations look like corporations? Why do we try to run G-d's family by following the same policies and procedures that we use to run our worldly businesses? Why do we follow the lead of unbelievers and try to pattern the Holy Community after the business community?

As I was discussing these concepts with a friend a couple of weeks ago, the subject came up of the way congregations call a pastor, and even that process is almost never done the way the Bible says it should be done.

Typically when a congregation is in need of a Pastor, they form some kind of committee. Sometimes that committee is called a search committee; sometimes it's called a personnel committee. But that committee is typically charged with collecting resumes and reviewing them to find out which of the many applicants for the job is best suited to what they want "their" pastor to look like.

When they finally find an applicant that looks good to the committee, that person is invited to "candidate" for the position. That means that he comes to the congregation where he is submitted to a series of interviews. Depending on how many layers of management there are in the congregation, the candidate must satisfactorily navigate his way through as many as three or more interviews. If the various committees and boards like what they see so far, the candidate is invited to come preach one or two sermons. If he adequately tickles the ears of the congregation, presents just exactly the correct amount of showmanship, and doesn't say anything that puts anyone under conviction of any kind, he receives an offer of employment. There is usually a contract of some kind involved, which defines what the pastor's new employers expect from him in the way of office hours, detailed ministry responsibilities (i.e., how he is expected to do the job of ministry according to the congregation's expectations, not to G-d's requirements) and other information about how his performance is to be evaluated.

If both the candidate and the hiring committee come to

an agreement on all of the details and conditions, the candidate is hired.

Now, if you're running a company and hiring an individual for a particular position, that's probably not too bad a procedure.

But for a local congregation of the Family of G-d, that process is totally unacceptable!

In the first place, the *true* Pastor is not—he *can not* be—an employee of the congregation. He's not even an employee of the Board of Elders or Board of Deacons. The federal government, part of HaSatan's world organization, recognizes that fact; why can't G-d's people recognize it? Under current IRS regulations a Pastor's income from the congregation is not reported on an employee's form W2, but on form 1099 like all other *independent* contractors.

The Bible has a name for a man who is an employee of a congregation. That name is "hireling"—and we have already discussed what Yeshua says about the hireling. But to review briefly:

Yeshua said:

<sup>11</sup>"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup>The hired hand [or hireling], since he isn't a shepherd and the sheep aren't his own, sees the wolf coming, abandons the sheep, and runs away. Then the wolf drags them off and scatters them. <sup>13</sup>The [hireling] behaves like this because that's all he is, a hired worker; so it doesn't matter to him what happens to the sheep." (Yochanan 10:11-13)

Another time, Yeshua said:

"No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to one, and despise the other." (Luke 16:13, NASB)

Secondly, that implied employer-employee relationship suggests that the Pastor is to be held accountable to the congregation. As Bible Teacher Steve Brown likes to say, "That's a lie from the pit of hell, and it smells like smoke."

I challenge you to show me a *single* passage of Scripture which even remotely suggests that the Pastor is accountable to the congregation he serves!

A *true* Pastor is accountable only to G-d and to the Elders who commissioned him. In a congregation with

multiple Elders, the Elders are accountable to each other, and they are each in turn accountable to G-d.

A *true* Pastor cannot be subject to the congregation and at the same time be subject to the Lord. And the Pastor has a choice to make: whether to be submitted to the Lord, or to be submitted to the congregation.

The only time that I can ever envision a Pastor being subject in any way to the congregation is in the event that he falls into sin and the Elders fail to hold him accountable. Then the congregation would be forced to follow the procedure outlined in Matthew 18:15 and following.

Now, you might well ask me, "If 'the way we've always done it' is not the correct procedure for calling and interfacing with a Pastor, then how does a congregation call a pastor?" I'm glad you asked that question!

Here's how I think it's supposed to work. This is only my opinion, and you can either take it or leave it. But it is an opinion that I have gradually developed over many years of contemplation and study, and I believe that it will stand up to the scrutiny of the Bible. And I would encourage you to take everything that I am telling you today and be good little Bereans, and search the Scriptures to see if what I am saying is true. I'm not going to take the time to read all of the Scriptures that have led me to this opinion, but I will mention some of the key verses.

Also remember what I said earlier about the terms Elder, Pastor, Shepherd, Bishop, and Overseer being used interchangeably in the Brit Chadasha to refer to the same office.

First of all, I believe that a true Pastor is irrevocably called by G-d to a lifetime of service in that capacity, whether or not he is actively leading a congregation.

In 2 Timothy 1:8-11 Rav Sha'ul tells Timothy that "God has saved us, and called us to a holy calling" and that he, Sha'ul, for the sake of the gospel "was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher."

In Romans 11:29 he says that "the gifts and the calling of G-d are irrevocable." Once he accepts the call to service, a *true* Pastor, or Elder, can *never* turn back.

Sha'ul's letters to Timothy and Titus tell us several things about the Elder or Pastor/Teacher.

- They tell us that if someone aspires to the office of Elder, it is a fine work that he desires to do.
- They tell us that the spiritual qualifications of an Elder are extremely high.
- They tell us that the Elder is not to be commissioned or ordained until he has been thoroughly examined and tested.
- They tell us that Elders are to be appointed by other Elders for every congregation, not elected, called, or hired by a congregation.
- They tell us that we are to look for potential Elders among the Deacons [servants] of our own congregation.
- They also tell us that any accusation against an Elder must be directed *only* to other Elders, and *must* be supported by the eye-witness testimony of two or three witnesses.

Based on these and other Scriptures, I believe that once he has been called, trained, tested, and commissioned or ordained to an irrevocable life-time of service, the Pastor is to be appointed to a local congregation by other qualified Elders, whether within or outside of the local congregation.

I also believe that if, in subjected obedience to the Ruach HaKodesh, the Elders have appointed the Pastor to a particular congregation, the Pastor is to stay with that congregation for the rest of his life or until he is called to another congregation by the clear calling of the Ruach HaKodesh and the agreement of the other Elders.

Now this may really surprise you, but I see nowhere in the Scriptures that the congregation is to pay the Pastor a salary. A salary implies an employer-employee relationship. What I see in the Scriptures is that the congregation is to provide for all the needs of the Pastor and his family so that he may devote 100% of his attention to meeting the spiritual needs of the flock. A Pastor who is concerned about where his next car payment or basket of groceries is coming from simply cannot devote his attention to his pastoral duties.

Here's a really radical idea for your consideration! I even believe that the congregation should have one full-time, fully-supported Pastor for every 15 families in the congregation.

Oh, my! What congregation could ever afford that???

It's really easy. Just do the math. A congregation in which every single family brought the full tithe into the storehouse could easily afford to support one full-time Shepherd for each 15 families. The tithe of 10 of those families would

provide the Pastor and his family with a lifestyle equivalent to the average lifestyle of the congregation, and the tithe of the remaining 5 families would meet the other expenses of maintaining the facility and other ministry expenses, with some left over to support worthy ministries outside of the local congregation.

Now that we have established that a tithing congregation can actually afford a fully-staffed ministry, where do the additional Elders or Pastors come from?

Remember that one of the responsibilities of the Pastor/Teacher is to be a talmid, a disciple, of Yeshua, striving to become what Yeshua is. Likewise, the members of the congregation are to be talmidim, disciples, of the Pastor, striving to become what he is. As the Pastor becomes more and more like Yeshua, the congregation, following his example, will likewise become more and more like Yeshua.

As the men of the congregation become more and more like the Pastor's example, and as they grow and become more and more spiritually mature, and as they learn how to "rightly divide the Word of Truth" through the practical experience of sharing in the various teaching ministries of the congregation, some of these men will be called and gifted by Ruach HaKodesh to assume the office of Elder within the congregation. And as the congregation continues to grow and prosper, it will easily be able to provide for the needs of one full-time Elder for every fifteen families.

It would also not be beyond the reach of a fully-tithing congregation to completely support [including both the support of his family and his tuition and books] a worthy young man [or a not-so-young man] as he attends Bible college and/or seminary in preparation for either serving that congregation as one of its Elders, or even as an emissary of Yeshua sent out from that congregation to serve elsewhere in the Family of G-d.

The congregation then becomes a fully self-sustaining organism whose head is Adonai Yeshua. And that congregational organism will then reproduce itself in exactly the same manner that G-d designed all other organisms to reproduce—by division and continued growth.

For example, assume the congregation grows to the point where there are 10 full-time pastors serving 150 families. The organism divides and becomes two fully mature and healthy congregations of 75 families and 5 full-time elders each. The outreach potential of the single congregation has just potentially doubled.

“But we’ve never done it that way, and we don’t know anyone who is doing it that way!”

That’s exactly my point! As the Body and Bride of Messiah, we have everything upside down! And if we are going to please Yeshua, we have to turn it back right-side up. We have to dare to be different. We have to have the courage to tell the majority that they are wrong and that the handbook that G-d gave us for the operation of the Holy Community is right.

What I have shared for you this morning is *my* vision. It may not at all resemble the vision that G-d has given your Pastor for this particular congregation. But, you see, that’s really OK. Because G-d has called your Pastor, and not me, to be the Shepherd of this flock. And G-d has given him, and not me, the vision for this congregation.

G-d has truly blessed this flock with a Shepherd who faithfully listens to the voice of the Chief Shepherd, who strives to be a talmid of the Great Shepherd, and who is willing to risk it all by taking the high road and making the tough and unpleasant decisions that need to be made for the benefit of this flock.

And our responsibility, yours and mine, as long as we are members of this flock, is to follow the leading of our G-d-appointed Shepherd. We may not always understand where he is leading us or why he is leading us in a particular direction. Your Pastor is a reasonable man. If you have a question about where he is leading, all you have to do is ask, and he will explain to the best of his

ability. But sometimes G-d doesn’t tell the Shepherd all the details, and sometimes not even the Shepherd understands fully where, or why, or how the Great Shepherd has called him to take the flock.

The point is that we don’t always need to understand.

G-d has appointed Shepherds to lead. G-d has appointed Sheep to follow. G-d has appointed the Holy Community to live not as an organization, but rather as a living, self-replicating organism whose head is Yeshua and whose members corporately and individually strive to learn their spiritual gifts and perform their own G-d-appointed function for the perfection of the entire Body of Messiah.

What specific ministry functions have you been called to perform within this Body? If you don’t know, I strongly suggest that you contact your Pastor today, and he will help you find out what Ruach HaKodesh has called you and equipped you to do for Messiah.

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