

He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isa 53:10,11).

From the remotest past, the saints looked forward to events which still lie before us in the future. "Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all" (Jude 1:14). The patriarch Job said: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at

the latter day upon the earth... whom I shall see for myself" (Job 19:25-27). Zechariah had a vision of the Mount of Olives with the Lord standing there, King over all the earth, and all the saints with Him (Zech 14:4-9).

And as the prophecies of the past have been fulfilled, so certainly shall also the prophecies of the future. "Now we see not yet all things put under Him, but we see Jesus, crowned with glory and honour" (Heb 2:8,9). And He says, "Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."



## MIDRASH: THE CAMEL'S NOSE

[www.despatch.cth.com.au/Articles\\_V/midrash.html](http://www.despatch.cth.com.au/Articles_V/midrash.html)

Report by Richard Engstrom (1996-1999) [tgd@multipro.com](mailto:tgd@multipro.com)

### WHAT DO WE NEED THE TERM MIDRASH FOR?

Is it an extra-Biblical knowledge that one cannot gain from the Bible itself, or is it a fancy name for something all Bible scholars know anyway?

I declare that this "Midrash" (being one of the latest fads among the exponents of the Hebrew Roots Movement) is just "the camel's nose"; and as the Bedouin parable goes: if the camel is allowed to stick his nose in the tent, before long, the whole camel will be in the tent. The "camel" in my illustration is the newest attempt at Judaizing Christianity by the exponents of the Hebrew Roots Movement.

The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

FIRST, we are just being asked to acknowledge the "possible" superiority of the Jewish system of interpretation (midrash) in contrast to the so-called "obvious" flaws in the Protestant system of Biblical interpretation.

NEXT, we are asked to consider how pleasing to God it would be if we would just observe a few of the feasts of the Old Testament:

They say, "After all, they were instituted by God!". Having gone that far, it is only another inch away to have an altar of incense in



your own church, and while you're at it, why not blow a shofar to announce the beginning of the next revival?

(All of these things are now and already being done by some supposedly orthodox Protestant churches).

BUT WAIT! If you are going to attempt to be faithful to a more primitive and "purer" exercise of your faith, you might as well go all the way.

- Whatsoever you do, do with all of your might, right?
- Don't you think it would be good if you men would cover your head when you are in worship, as they do in every synagogue and in many "messianic" congregations?
- And don't forget that we are already being reminded that Jesus Himself wore a prayer shawl. You do want to look like Jesus, don't you?

Now that you have entered the realm of serious reverence and observation of the "holy",

- don't you think that you should honour Yeshua by His correct name? Oh! That might be Yehoshua or Yehoshea; SORRY, I can't remember what they're calling Him this week.
- And while you're at it, G-d is the proper spelling for the title of deity; please do not transgress by actually spelling it out like so many irreverent slugs have done in the past: how pretentious of them that they dare to pronounce the "ineffable vowel"!

Have you heard yet what those Christian scholars have done to your Bible? They HAVE LIED TO YOU!

- They didn't tell you that your New Testament was originally written in Hebrew (not Greek): and THAT (of course) is why you don't really understand it! Don't worry, you will soon be able to get your own copy of the New Testament that has been reconstituted back into the Hebrew from the Greek and then retranslated back into English for you.

- And don't forget: Sabbath starts at sun-down on Friday.

Hey! How did that camel get into my tent?

### BUT IT'S ONLY THE CAMEL'S NOSE!

As I began to look into this matter, and read some of the information available on the internet, I decided to carefully examine an article on the subject, written by Jacob Prasch, who is a leading advocate for "Midrashic Interpretation". Mr. Prasch is a highly educated and well respected man with many friends and supporters. Although he claims to be an outspoken opponent of the Hebrew Roots Movement, per se, it is his stated agenda to reintroduce into Christendom the Midrashic system of Biblical interpretation.

WHY?

Because he judges the Protestant system to be deficient and fundamentally flawed. The rest of this article shall be a critical analysis of Jacob Prasch's article entitled, An Explanation of Midrash, which was published on the internet, Last Update: 27-09-97

[www.cw.co.za/moriel/](http://www.cw.co.za/moriel/)

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and spit upon (Isa 50:6; Mat 26:67; 27:26-30). The Psalmist sees the actual manner of His death, that it was by crucifixion, "They pierced My hands and My feet" (Psa 22:16). His being reckoned with criminals and making intercession for His murderers were alike foretold (Isa 53:12; Mark 15:27; Luk 23:34). So clear did the vision of the Psalmist become that he sees Him mocked by the passers-by (Psa 22:6-8; Mat 27:39-44). He sees the soldiers parting His garments among them, and casting lots for His vesture (Psa 22:18; Joh 19:23,24), and giving Him vinegar to drink in His thirst (Psa 69:21; Joh 19:28,29). With quickened ear he hears His cry in the hour of His anguish, "**My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?**" (Psa 22:1; Mat 27:46), and His dying words, "**Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit**" (Psa 31:5; Luk 23:46). And, taught by the Holy Ghost, the Psalmist writes the words, "**Reproach hath broken My heart**" (Psa 69:20). John tells us that though the soldiers brake the legs of the two thieves to hasten their death, "**when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs: but one of the soldiers pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.... For these things were**

**done, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken. And again, They shall look on Him whom they pierced**" (Joh 19:32-37; Ex 12:46; Psa 34:20; Zech 12:10). Isaiah tells us that "though they had made His grave with the wicked"—that is, intended to bury Him in the place where they buried malefactors [criminals]—yet it was ordered otherwise, and He was actually buried "with the rich in His death." "**For there came a rich man of Arimathaea named Joseph... and begged the body of Jesus... and laid it in his own new tomb**" (Isa 53:9; Mat 27:57-60).

But the vision of the prophets stretched beyond the Cross and the tomb, and embraced the resurrection and ascension and final triumph of the Saviour. David sings: "**Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show Me the path of life: in Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore**" (Psa 16:10,11). And Isaiah, after he has prophesied the humiliation and death of the Messiah, closes the same prophecy with these remarkable words: "**When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin,**

**of the earth shall see the salvation of our God"** (Isa 52:10).

The picture of a victorious, triumphant Messiah was a familiar one to the Jews of our Saviour's time. So engrossed were they with this side of the picture that they did not recognise Him when He came, and John the Baptist said, "**There standeth One among you whom ye know not!**" "**Had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.**" But they ought to have known it, for the prophets who foretold His glory had spoken in no less certain tones of His lowliness, His rejection and His sufferings. "**Behold,**" says Isaiah, "**my Servant shall deal prudently, He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high**" (Isa 52:13)— when suddenly, what does he see in the next verse? "**As many were astonished at Thee, His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.**" And how shall we picture the astonishment of the prophet as the vision of the fifty-third chapter dawns upon him with all the majesty of the suffering Messiah? From the root of Jesse was to spring up a tender plant who was to be rejected by Israel. "**He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief**" (Isa 53:3).

As the prophet's steadfast gaze is fixed upon the future, he sees this Holy One led "**as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep dumb before her shearers, so He openeth not His mouth**" (Isa 53:7; see Mat 27:12-14). He sees Him dying a death by violence, for "**He was cut off out of the land of the living**" (Isa 53:8). Daniel takes up the same thought and tells us, "**Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself**" (Dan 9:26). And now once more a chorus of the prophets unite their voices to tell us the manner of His death. The Psalmist sees that He is to be betrayed by one of His own disciples— "**Yea, Mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat My bread, hath lifted up his heel against Me**" (Psa 41:9). Zechariah tells us of the thirty pieces of silver that were weighed for His price, and adds that the money was cast to the potter (Zech 11:12,13; Jer 19; Mat 27:3-10). He also sees the sheep scattered when the Shepherd was smitten (Zech 13:7; Mat 26:31,56). Isaiah sees Him taken from one tribunal to another (Isa 53:8; Joh 18:24,28). The Psalmist foretells the false witnesses called in to bear witness against Him (Psa 27:12; Mat 26:59,60). Isaiah sees Him scourged

I noticed just today that this article has been updated again as of Jan.31, 1999. The title has also been changed to "Midrash", but reemerges substantially the same. I will send the original article as downloaded from the Moriel web site to anyone that requests it.

**ALL QUOTES**, unless otherwise identified are from Jacob Prasch's article.

### **JACOB PRASCH'S EXPLANATION OF MIDRASH**

*"The clearest set of guidelines in Midrash are the Seven Midrash attributed to **Rabbi Hillel**, the founder of the Pharisaic School of Hillel, where **Rabbi Shaul** (St. Paul) was educated as a rabbi by **Rabbi Gamaliel**, the grandson of Hillel."*

He begins his presentation of midrash by letting us know of his intimate knowledge of the subject and personalities involved. The only problem with the experts he presents is that (excepting Paul the apostle) they are all exponents of the Pharisee's school of interpretation that Jesus repudiated. Paul the apostle is now being called "Rabbi Paul": a title never assigned to him in the New Testament. Prasch continues by explaining a little

about the midrashic method:

*"Midrash makes heavy use of allegory and typology to illustrate and illuminate doctrine, but never as a basis for doctrine. It sees multiple meanings in Bible texts found in strata, but this is very different in certain fundamental respects from the gnostic and Alexandrian uses of figurative interpretation associated with*

*Philo and Origen, reflecting more of Hebraic, rather than Hellenistic philosophical world-view and view of theology."*

- In other words, Jacob would recommend Midrash because it is superior to the Alexandrian and gnostic hermeneutic?

BUT WAIT A MINUTE: what in the world do these things mean?

- Does Alexandrian refer to the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament translated in Alexandria)?

- Does it refer to certain heretics that once lived in Alexandria?

- But.....aren't most Old Testament quotations in the New Testament taken from the Septuagint?

- Weren't those heretics completely repudiated at the Council of Nicea?

- ...and what does Prasch mean by Gnosticism?

### **How many of you who are reading this can tell us exactly what Gnosticism is?**

Quite simply, Gnosticism is an archaic word for mysticism.

### **But what is mysticism?**

Mysticism (in it's Christianized form) holds that the plain and universal (i.e. the Bible) cannot be understood rightly without a prior knowledge of something which is neither plain nor universal. Gnostics insist that you cannot understand the Bible unless you know "their secret" first.

- But for most of you, isn't this Midrash being presented to you as the "secret key" of "right interpretation" that you NEED and don't yet have?

Regarding midrashic interpretation of prophecy, Jacob asserts:

*"Midrash interprets prophecy as a cyclical pattern of historical recapitulation (prophecies having multiple fulfillment), with an ultimate fulfillment associated with the eschaton, which is the final focal point of the redemptive process."*

The fact that Jacob presents this as a new concept is astounding. Multiple and partial fulfillments of prophecy have long been noted amongst Christian Scholars. This is, from my perspective, the most troubling aspect of midrash, in that the significance of prophecy as predictive and destined for a very specific and literal fulfillment, is diminished under the idea that prophecy is essentially a description of cyclical patterns of spiritual realities.

- Is this not how so-called "Replacement Theology" came into being?
- Is this not how the future Millennium was replaced by the then present dominion of the Holy Roman Empire once upon a time?
- Is this not how the post-Christian Jews re-explained the "Suffering Servant" of Isaiah 53, so that they didn't need to admit that Jesus LITERALLY fulfilled those prophecies?  
*"Not prediction, but pattern the Jewish idea of prophecy is not prediction, but pattern."*

The "patterns" that midrash would bring to our attention are clearly there, but to use this fact to change the definition of prophecy from predictive to primarily a commentary on the cycles of

history is obviously an attempt by traditional rabbinicism to evade the mountain of predictive prophecy that was fulfilled in Christ.

There may be, and probably is much of interest in midrashic literature, but I would liken it unto ornaments: interesting, even intriguing, but NOT necessary to understanding the Bible. No! We don't "NEED" this Midrash; and especially now, when it has become "the camel's nose" of the Hebrew Roots Movement.

Considering the purely empirical evidence of the providence of God, let me remind you that He has seen to it that the Christian Bible is everywhere and generally available to anyone - He has not seen fit to make the Midrash generally available. Hence, God Himself did not deem it necessary or even sufficiently helpful in our understanding of Scripture.

#### **JACOB PRASCH'S ATTACK ON PROTESTANT THEOLOGY**

*"Midrash incorporates a grammatical-historical exegesis, vaguely similar to the western models of Biblical interpretation that the Reformers borrowed from 16th century Humanism, but it sees this as simply a first step." (underline added by me)*

In the first place, the Reformers defended "**LITERAL-GRAMMATICAL**" interpretation not *"grammatical-historical."* I want you to notice that the author begins his slander by innuendo against the Reformers by suggesting that they were little more than disciples of the Humanists, and that without midrash that

humiliation. **"There shall come forth a shoot out of the stock [stump] of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit"** (Isa 11:1 RV). We have, in this, a glimpse of His lowliness and poverty.

And now the prophets, one by one, fill in the picture, each adding a fresh, vivid touch. The prophet Micah sees the little town where Jesus was to be born, and tells us it is Bethlehem (Mic 5:2; Mat 2:6); Isaiah sees the adoration of the Magi (Isa 60:3; Mat 2:1); Jeremiah pictures the death of the innocents (Jer 31:15; Mat 2:17,18); and Hosea foreshadows the flight into Egypt (Hos 11:1; Mat 2:15); Isaiah portrays His meekness and gentleness (Isa 42:2; Mat 11:29), and the wisdom and knowledge which Jesus manifested all through His life from the time of His talking with the doctors in the Temple.

Again, when He cleansed the Temple, the words of the Psalmist came at once to the memory of the disciples, **"The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up"** (Psa 69:9; Joh 2:17). Isaiah pictured Him preaching good tidings to the meek, binding up the broken-hearted, proclaiming liberty to the captives, and giving the

oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness (Isa 61:1-3; Luk 4:16-21). Mourning was turned into joy when Jesus came into the presence of death. The poor woman **"whom Satan had bound, lo, these eighteen years,"** was loosed at His word. His gospel was indeed the message of good tidings. Isaiah pictured even that sweetest scene of all, the Good Shepherd blessing the little children, for **"He shall gather the lambs in His arms, and carry them in His bosom"** (Isa 40:11; Mark 10:16). Then Zechariah sings, **"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion,"** for he sees her lowly King entering Jerusalem, riding on an ass's colt, another Psalm adds the Hosannahs of the children. **"Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength because of Thine enemies, that Thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger"** (Zech 9:9; Psa 8:2; Mat 21:4,5).

The prophets foresaw something of the character and extent of the Saviour's work. The light that was to shine forth from Zion was to be for all the world; Jew and Gentile alike were to be blessed. The Spirit of God was to be poured out upon all flesh (Joel 2:28). **"All the ends**

who would Judaize the churches, see Philippians chapter 3.

Extract: pages 5-8

## 2... The Testimony of the Scriptures to Christ —

Looking forward into the future from the earliest ages, God's servants saw One who was to come, and as the time approached this vision grew so clear that it would be almost possible for us to describe Christ's life on earth from the Old Testament Scriptures, of which He Himself said, "They testify of Me."

There was one central figure in Israel's hope. The work of the world's redemption was to be accomplished by one Man, the promised Messiah. It is He who was to bruise the serpent's head (Gen 3:15); He was to be descended from Abraham (Gen 22:18), and from the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10).

Isaiah looked forward and saw first a great Light shining upon the people that walked in darkness (Isa 9:2). And as he gazed, he saw that a child was to be born, a Son was to be given (9:6), and with growing amazement there dawned upon him these names, as describing the nature of the child.

- *Wonderful*- Wonderful, indeed, in His birth, for the advent of no other child had ever been heralded by the hosts of heaven. His birth of a virgin (Isa 7:14), and the appearance of the star (Num 24:17), were alike wonderful. Increasingly wonderful was He in His manhood, and most wonderful of all in His perfect sinlessness.

- *Counsellor*- "**Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge**" (Col 2:3).

- *The Mighty God, the Everlasting Father*- There dawned upon Isaiah the consciousness that this promised One was none other than God manifest in the flesh, "**Immanuel, God with us**" (Isa 7:14). As Jesus Himself said, "**I and my Father are One**" (Joh 10:30).

- *The Prince of Peace*- This name specially belongs to Jesus, for "**He is our Peace**." His birth brought Peace on earth, and leaving it He bequeathed Peace to His disciples, "**having made Peace through the blood of His Cross**."

Then the prophet sees the child that was to be born seated on the throne of His father David, and he sees the glorious spread of His kingdom. Though born of a royal house, it was to be in the time of its

*rabbis did according to a method called Midrash.*"

And in contradiction to his stated objections to the Hebrew Roots movement, Prasch says this: "*Something went wrong in the early Church; it got away from its Jewish roots. And as more Gentiles became Christians, something that Paul (in Romans 11) warned should not happen, happened. People lost sight of the root.*"

First of all, it is impossible for ANY student of the Bible to miss the significance of our "Jewish roots". This is absurd. The entire Old Testament constitutes Hebrew History, and I would be willing to bet that most Christians are more familiar with Jewish History than they are of the history of their own nation. and the New Testament has always said that we who are saved, now belong to the commonwealth of Israel.

Second of all, if there has been a diminution of attention to Jewish culture, traditions, or hermeneutic principles, the "fault" can be laid to the charge of Jesus and Paul. Jesus said: (Mat 23:38)

***Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.***

- Would you think from this statement of our Lord, that He was advocating that we should look to the Pharisees for instruction in the Faith?

Paul, in his epistle to the Galatians, discredited the Judaizers, and furthermore leveled a curse against them or anyone who preached any Gospel that was different from the Gospel that he preached. Paul even rebuked Peter for

they had only taken one step which did not carry them far enough and that without the principles of midrash, we are still in the clutches of medieval darkness.

That the reformers insisted upon literal-grammatical interpretation is well known.

Luther pointedly says,

*"I here once more repeat, what I have so often insisted on, that the Christian should direct his efforts toward understanding the so-called literal sense of the Scripture, which alone is the substance of faith and of Christian theology, which alone will sustain him in the hour of trouble and temptation, and which will triumph over sin, death, and the gates of hell, to the praise and glory of God."* (bold and underline added by me)

SOURCE:

George N.H. Peters (Lutheran);  
The Theocratic Kingdom (1884);  
volume 1, page 48 {Kregel Limited  
Edition Library; Kregel Publishers; Grand  
Rapids, Michigan}

Prasch continues his denunciation of Protestant interpretation:  
*"If you look at the way the New Testament quotes the Old Testament, it is clear that the apostles did not use western Protestant methods of exegesis or interpretation."*

Often typical of his style, Prasch makes assertions like this to the effect of displacing historic orthodoxy, without a shred of supporting evidence, except to make statements like the following:

*"Jesus was a rabbi. Paul was a rabbi. They interpreted the Bible in the way other*

being a respecter of persons in his Jewish sympathies (Gal. 2:11-18).

And again: (Rom 10:1-2)

***Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. {2} For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.***

No, not once do we read that Jesus or any of the apostles recommend that we resort to the traditions of the first century Jews for training in biblical interpretation or righteousness. Jesus, Himself, denounced the Pharisees' handling of the Scriptures, and said that they were guilty of: (Mark 7:13)

***Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.***

Regarding training in righteousness, Paul also warns against some of the persistent influences of the Judaizers when he says this: (Col 2:16-17)

***Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: {17} Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.***

Some of the things denounced by this statement include the false requirements of Saturday Sabbath observance; and there are others in the up and coming Hebrew Roots movement who are now insisting that we as Christians should be observing some or all of the Old Testament dietary laws.

It is quite clear that we have been steered away from Jewish traditions and the Jew's religion by our Lord Jesus Christ and Paul, both of whom Prasch wishes to enlist on his side of the argument. He hasn't got a leg to stand on.

And then, Prsach looks to make a great and revered man an offender for a word:

*"Augustine said things like, The only good thing about marriage is having children who will be celibate. The Manichaeans, who said that the first sin was having marital relations, introduced these ideas into the Greek world. That is why, to this day, Roman Catholicism cannot handle sexuality, and why it has so many restrictions and hang-ups, and why Roman Catholics are even hung about marital sex. "People began reinterpreting the Bible, not using the Jewish method of midrash, but using Greek methods."*

The quoted statement of Augustine, is admittedly extreme: but one should consider this statement by Augustine as reactionary to his own past. It is well known that Augustine had a tawdry lifestyle before his conversion; he himself confessed that the temptations of the flesh were for many years a major obstacle between him and the Christian faith. There is no doubt that Augustine does advocate celibacy as a superior state for full-time ministers of the Gospel, but this is in harmony with Jesus and Paul (Matt. 19:11-12, I Cor. 7:1, 7, 32-34) . The Manichaeans have long been identified as an heretical cult; but since when did we need an entirely new system

## CHRIST IN ALL THE SCRIPTURES.

In these terrible days of error and apostasy we need above all to grasp the basics of God's Word, His Truth.

The One Who said,

*"...I am the way, the TRUTH, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"*

John 14:6,

Jesus Christ our Lord, He is paramount in every part of Scripture.

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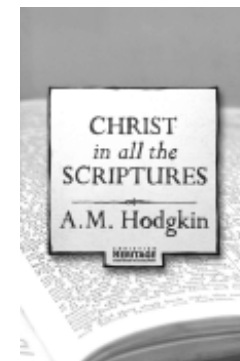
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Today we are being told from some quarters that Israel and the Jews are the main thrust of the Bible. Some blasphemously claim that Israel is the foremost subject of the Bible, more by far than Christ Jesus, the Messiah. Israel is being venerated by some groups as though that nation and the Jewish people are idols. This is wrong, readers. The Church, the Bride of Christ, is NOT to be venerated either, nor should any peoples, churches or nations be glorified. CHRIST JESUS alone is our Lord and He alone is to be adored. Despatch does not really want to enter into controversy about these matters, we have more imperative issues to deal with, but we and other ministries are again being attacked by Jacob Prsach of Moriel Ministries.

Despatch has included for our readers part of the introduction to ***"Christ in all the Scriptures."*** Christ is seen on every page of Scripture, to eyes enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Israel has been used by God over the centuries, and will be the head nation of the world in Christ's Millennial Reign, but let us NOT get confused by those

just drop the word "Midrash" from his preaching and teaching vocabulary.

The fact is, it only takes a little leaven to leaven the whole lump, and Jacob's goal of bringing Midrash into Christendom is the leaven which I must denounce because it smacks of nothing less than the error of priest-craft, in which he presents himself as the expert that we need to learn from before we can rightly understand our Bible. His error also plays well into the Apostasy of Christendom wherein the foundations of our Faith are being systematically called into question and then destroyed.

I have no evidence that Mr. Prasch is conspiratorially working with any segment of the Hebrew Roots movement, so it could be that he is just an unwitting tool of those Judaizers and they will not be content with Christ's "one new man" (Eph.2:15), unless that man is Jewish in culture, tradition and religion.

In any case I think that we had better GET THAT CAMEL'S NOSE

OUT OF OUR TENT!

Report by Richard Engstrom

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of Biblical interpretation to rescue us from heresies that are already condemned by Orthodoxy?

### WHAT IS MIDRASH?

Jacob says:

*"Unless someone has been educated in Judaism, Hebrew, or theology, it is easier to demonstrate midrash than to explain it."* Can't explain it?

- Neither can anyone else, apparently.

After doing a brief survey on the subject, I found that some call it just a collection of homiletics. Jacob Prasch calls it an hermeneutic principle, which is the "scholars" term for, "principles of interpretation". So let's get down to the nub on this matter: Mr. Prasch asserts that historical Christian Biblical interpretation has been flawed, almost from the beginning, because we didn't stick with the Jewish methods of interpretation that Jesus denounced. He says that Jesus Christ, Himself, and Paul, used the midrashic system of biblical interpretation, which he asserts to be superior to the GRAMMATICAL-HISTORICAL system, while ignoring the fact that it is the LITERAL-GRAMMATICAL system of interpretation that defines historic Protestant orthodoxy. *"Midrash uses typology and allegory-symbols-in order to illustrate and illumine doctrine. For instance, Jesus is "the Passover Lamb". The symbolism of the Jewish Passover perfectly illustrates the doctrine of atonement, but we never base the doctrine of atonement on the symbolism. The symbolism illustrates the*

*doctrine, which is itself stated plainly elsewhere in Scripture."*

Typology, allegory and symbols have been understood as literary modes in the Bible from the beginning. We never needed a new principle of interpretation to point these things out.

QUESTION: is Midrash something we have always known, or is it something we haven't yet known?

If it is something we have always known, then why must we introduce a new piece of exclusivist jargon, whose only final result is to nominate a new school of scholars to reign over us? Jacob takes up his attack on the Reformers once again:

*"The Reformers came along and tried to correct what had gone wrong in medieval Roman Catholicism. Unfortunately, although the Reformers were dynamic personalities, they were not dynamic thinkers."*

Having shown that the Roman Catholic system of Biblical interpretation was seriously flawed, which I figure all Protestants agree with, Prasch is now going to show us why the Protestant theologians did no better, by issuing his judgement that these men weren't too bright to begin with.

And then, he introduces a LIE:

*"The Reformation was born out of something called Humanism.*

*(Note: the first Humanists were not secular, they were Christians.)*

*The best of the Humanists were men like Thomas A Kempis, John Colet, and Jacques Lefèvre. But the greatest of them*

*all was Erasmus of Rotterdam. Luther, Calvin, Zwingli and most of the other Reformers got their ideas from Erasmus."*

There is no question that the movement referred to as Humanism arose before the cataclysmic events of the Reformation, but the proposition that Luther, Calvin or Zwingli got their ideas from Erasmus, is laughable. I know and many know that Luther actually took his cues from Augustine and Hus. This is a patently false characterization which ignores the fact that Luther was a head-on and potent enemy of Erasmus. Apparently Prasch never read Bondage of the Will, which is Luther's vehement diatribe against Erasmus' doctrine. Erasmus lived and died a good Catholic: he never saw any reason to denounce or depart from the RCC on doctrinal grounds.

*"Erasmus and the other Humanists attempted to study and teach the Bible in its plain literal meaning, in order to undo the medieval abuses of Roman Catholicism.*

*They placed the emphasis on reading the Bible as literature and as history, and gave us the system of grammatical-historical exegesis that has been used in the Protestant churches ever since."*

Please note the subtle innuendo against those whose legacy we all still realize the benefit of.

- First, Luther, Calvin, Zwingli and Erasmus are all put into the same basket, as if they all shared the same views and aims. (Luther to Zwingli: "I slap thy spirit on the snout").

- Then they are identified as just

"Humanists". Then it is intimated that they regarded the Bible as just literature and history.

- Finally, their legacy he calls "**grammatical-historical exegesis**", which is indeed in vogue these days, but it is also the system which has been largely a product of the Apostasy of Christendom, in that it is a system of interpretation that denies the present day perspicuity and relevance of the Bible. Prasch presumes upon the ignorance of his audience; that they will not know the difference between **literal-grammatical** and **grammatical-historical**, and he's probably right about much of his audience: but he's not right about the Protestant theologians.

Jacob continues his attack:

*"The problem with the Reformers is that they only went so far. They made rules governing the application of their grammatical-historical system in order to refute medieval Roman Catholicism, and many of those rules are still taught in theological seminaries today.*

*"such rule is this: There are many applications of a Scripture but only one interpretation. That is total rubbish! The Talmud tells us there are multiple interpretations.*

*Who did Jesus agree with?*

*The Reformers? Or the other rabbis?"*

**What impertinence!**

The question is NOT who Jesus agrees with, the question is:

**Who agrees with Jesus?**

By and large, the reformers did, but what about the Rabbis?

asserts, "*is a wrong view of biblical prophecy.*"

Thus, (Hosea 11:1)

***When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt,***

is a prophecy, where the son that was called out of Egypt is no longer a predictive prophecy fulfilled in Christ alone, but just one of those things that keeps happening over and over again throughout history: Abraham came out of Egypt, Israel came out of Egypt, Jesus came out of Egypt, and we who are saved, came out of Egypt. Thus says Jacob Prasch:

*"Very plainly, Hosea chapter 11 is talking about the Exodus, about what happened with Moses. In its grammatical-historical context, it is talking about the Exodus, not about the Messiah."*

It plainly does not matter what Hosea thought he was talking about. What matters is what the Holy Spirit was talking about. It did no violence to the text here to see the word, "son" as a figurative reference to Israel, UNTIL this was fulfilled by the Son of God. Such is the nature of prophecy that many things are hidden right on the surface and in the plain language of the prophecy. So it can be seen, and has been seen by many Protestant theologians that Israel's coming out of Egypt was a typical or partial fulfillment of this prophecy; they didn't need something called midrash to bring this to their attention.

The fact is that there are expositions in Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews that instruct us directly in the

principles of Biblical interpretation, giving us examples of the significance of symbols and allegory.

But Jacob says:

*"It takes the wisdom of the ancients to really understand these things-Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast... (Revelation 13:18)-not the wisdom of the 16th century, but the wisdom of the first century."*

And now, Prasch intimates that HE, understands the significance of the number of the beast - but he's not telling us. And he suggests that unless you study Midrash, you will never know what he knows, and now he lures you to learn midrash so that you can finally understand prophecy rightly.

## CONCLUSION

Last year in our correspondence with Mr. Prasch, we asked him the question: 1. Can a group of sincere, literate, English speaking people in isolation from the rest of the world, come to a COMPLETE understanding of ALL that God deeds to us through the Bible, if all they have in their possession is a KJV without notes (without Midrash, without Eidersheim, without Josephus)?

Prasch answered:

**"my answer to your first question is no."**

I have friends who express a high regard for Jacob Prasch. I have read other articles by Mr. Prasch that I recommend to others. Therefore it is difficult and somewhat painful to make this report. I wish he would

of the Bible in his day. The assertion that Luther "totally rejected" the Book of Revelation as if he would have it removed from the canon is a gross mischaracterization. I agree that Luther did not pretend to understand the book of Revelation, but then, he wasn't in the Last Days, was he? The fact is, in Luther's day there was virtually no one who presumed to understand the book of Revelation.

It is the unfortunate consequence of historical greatness, that every loose and errant word ever spoken by great men is recorded - but none of us would like to be totally characterized by our own "loose and errant" outbursts. Shall we now denounce Martin Luther and most of what he stood for?

Prasch uses Luther's openly confessed consternation to suggest that Luther's approach to the Bible, and YOUR'S, have fallen prey to the "Protestant mind" which he openly declares to be a fountain-head of error and short-sightedness.

*"When you see people writing out diagrams and charts, saying that they have got the whole eschatological program and all of Revelation figured out, be very cautious. It is sealed up until the appropriate time.*

*"God will unveil it in His way and in His time. And that will be done step by step. The first step is going back to reading the Bible as a Jewish book, instead of as a Greek one."*

Another brick in the wall: Now you are being notified that unless you learn

Midrash, you don't have a gnat's chance of ever understanding apocalyptic prophecy. Furthermore, He has already informed you that you cannot understand Midrash without being educated in Judaism and Hebrew. So here we are: We need Jacob Prasch to explain all these things to us, since he is the only expert on these matters that we know about. Watch Out! The camel's nose is already in the tent, and if you look you can see all those camels lining up behind him.

### ***MIDRASH ON PROPHECY***

*"There are different kinds of prophecy in the Bible. The two kinds that are important in understanding the Last Days are Messianic prophecies and, connected to those, eschatological prophecies.*

*"When we come to consider biblical prophecy, this is very important. Because the Western mind, with its basis in Sixteenth Century Humanism, says that prophecy consists of a prediction and a fulfillment. To the ancient Jewish mind, it was not a question of something being predicted, then being fulfilled. That is a wrong view of biblical prophecy.*

*"Rather, to the ancient Jewish mind, prophecy was a pattern which is recapitulated; a prophecy having multiple fulfillment's. And each fulfillment, each cycle, teaches something about the ultimate fulfillment."*

Now it is precisely upon this point that I most object to the intrusion of this interpretive system of the Jews called Midrash. To view prophecy as consisting of "prediction and fulfillment," Jacob

The rules of literal-grammatical interpretation of Scripture are self-evident: **Before you start looking for other incidental meanings and applications, you begin by receiving the plain conveyance of the words according to all the normal rules of definition and grammar, which include the universal rhetorical devices of metaphor, allegory, simile, symbol, type, and etc.**

The historical-grammatical view (by its title) implies that a knowledge of the setting in which the words were spoken is necessary to rightly grasp the object and import of the words. In other words, only a first century Jew really knew what Jesus meant. The "grammatical" component of this system infers that figures of speech in the Bible are now detached from their original reference points, and cannot be understood without being retranslated according to the new principle of "dynamic equivalence". The "grammar" in this system does not refer to the grammar of the language to which the Bible was translated, but to the grammar of the language the translation was made from. Prasch's Midrashic system is precisely the "historical grammatical" school - for he implies that without an intimate knowledge of first century culture and Hebrew grammar, we cannot fathom the intended meaning of the words and phrases in the Bible.

The Reformation assertion that ***"there are many applications of a Scripture but only one interpretation,"*** is indeed reactive against the errors of Romanism, but is also just as reactive

against the Midrashic hermeneutic. I have read with my own eyes the proposition by rabbis that there are at least 40 interpretations of every Scripture and as many as 75 different interpretations. Anyone who spends their time looking for 40 interpretations of a verse of Scripture, is, in all probability, only trying to avoid the obvious.

### ***EXAMPLES OF MIDRASHIC INTERPRETATION***

#### ***EXAMPLE ONE:***

#### ***THE SIGN OF JONAH***

*"Jesus said, A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah*

*(Matthew 12:39).*

*"What was "the sign of the prophet Jonah"? In one place Jesus says it was this, that "as Jonah was three days and nights in the stomach of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40).*

*"But, at the same time, He says that it was the fact that the men of Ninevah repented at the preaching of Jonah (Luke 11:32).*

*The Gentiles would repent when the Jews didn't, that is also the sign of the prophet Jonah. He gave two equally co-valid interpretations of what that sign is.*

*"So, where Protestant hermeneutics say that there is only one interpretation, all the rest is application-it is out of step with Jesus."*

Here it is again, a straw man called

**“Protestant hermeneutics”.** It is inconceivable that any honest scholar would disagree that the repenting of Nineveh was also a sign of Jonah as was his three days and three nights in the stomach of a huge fish. Jacob’s indictment that the “Protestant hermeneutic” forecloses against receiving both the resurrection and the repentance of the Gentiles as the one true interpretation of this prophecy is groundless. It is apparent to me that Jacob Prasch has an agenda, and that agenda is to subtly bring historic Biblical scholarship into disrepute while suggesting that we should acknowledge the inherent superiority of Jewish hermeneutics (and of course, become students of those who teach these things).

*“Another rule of Reformed Hermeneutics says that, if the plain wording of Scripture makes sense, seek no other sense. Take it at its face value, full stop. That is also total rubbish!”*

I have never read nor heard anyone propose that the riches of Scripture are confined to a single sense. This is just another blow against the straw man that Jacob has erected to do battle with. Obvious to anyone who reads it: the admonition to receive the plain wording of Scripture, is a polemic against the practice of many to evade the plain language of the Bible.

#### EXAMPLE TWO:

JOHN 1-3

*“A First or Second Century Jewish Christian reading John’s Gospel, chapters*

*one, two and three, would have said it was the new Creation narrative-the story of the new Creation.*

*“He would have seen that God walked the earth in Genesis, and now God walked the earth again in the new Creation in John.*

*“He would have seen that the Spirit moved on the water and brought forth the Creation in Genesis, and now the Spirit moved on the water and brought forth the new Creation in John.*

*“He would have seen that there was the small light and the great light in the Creation in Genesis, and now there was the small light-John the Baptist-and the great light-Jesus-in the new Creation in John.”*

Does anyone object to this interesting view of the first 3 chapters of John?

I don’t. But neither do I for a minute believe that early Jewish Christians thought that this view was the primary purpose and intent of these chapters.

The primary message of these chapters is the identity, eminence, and pre-existence of Jesus Christ the Son of God, and the promise of life through Him and Him alone. Having received the primary and plain sense of these Scriptures, we are not in any way prevented from recognizing the harmony and unity of the Old and New Testaments: we have no need of something called “Midrash” in order to see these Divinely inspired features .

If Midrash was presented by Mr. Prasch as nothing more than worthy reading because of the many insightful expositions

that can be found there, I would have no objection whatsoever to his recommendation. But, he doesn’t stop there, and actually intimates that unless our principles of interpretation are abandoned in favor of Midrashic principles, that we are in danger of seriously misapprehending what our Bible intends for us to understand. Jacob says:

*“By reading the Bible as literature and history, as the Humanists did, you only see part of it. The Humanists were reacting to medieval Scholasticism and the Gnosticism that much of Roman Catholicism is based upon. Nonetheless, their approach prevents people from seeing much of the depth of Scripture.”*

There is no doubt that the Reformers were reacting to the Gnosticism and medieval Scholasticism of Roman Catholicism: but their reaction was against simple and generic infidelity to the Bible. The oft quoted Reformation formula “Sola Scriptura - Sola Fide” admits to no need for a Jewish hermeneutic or an historical perspective. Prasch’s intimation that the Reformers’ solution to the errors of those times was that the Bible ought to be read as “literature and history” characterizes those Reformers as impotent fools who had no idea what the problem really was.

The “Humanists” were certainly guilty of Mr. Prasch’s charge, but by inferring that the Reformers were no different than the secular Humanists, this well informed and usually astute scholar is bearing false witness. He knows that the common conception of what a Humanist is today, has little in common

with what it meant to be a Humanist in the sixteenth century. By failing to make the distinction between social-political Humanism and contemporary Religious Humanism, Mr. Prasch appears to be playing to the prejudice of his audience in order to make the Reformers appear all the more unreliable and trivial.

Jacob continues to antiquate the usefulness of the Reformers’ influence: *“Using the grammatical-historical method, the Reformers were able to discover truths such as Justification by Faith and the Authority of Scripture. But that is all they could see; they could not go beyond it.”*

While still insisting that their principle of Biblical interpretation was grammatical-historical instead of **literal-grammatical**, he accuses them further of being hopelessly short-sighted. Never mind that the truths of Justification by Faith and the Authority of the Scriptures, WERE the particular controversies of the Reformation. Never mind that until these crucial matters were agreed upon that there was no point in introducing other and distracting subjects.

Now Mr. Prasch goes after Martin Luther in particular:

*“Martin Luther considered Romans to be the Images book of the Bible. He totally rejected the Book of Revelation. Yet the Book of Revelation is the book for the Last Days. Luther admitted that you cannot understand it with a Protestant mind.*

*“What is wrong? Is the Book of Revelation wrong? Or is the Protestant mind wrong?”*

Yes, Martin Luther considered Romans to be the most pertinent book