

# Introduction to the Mishnah

## Part 1 - What's the Mishnah, and what does "Mishnah" mean anyway?

The Mishnah. Surrounded by urban legends, everyone seems to have an opinion about it - but few have actually read it. Jesus kept it, the Romans outlawed it, the Talmud is commentary on it, and Judaism today is based on it.

The Mishnah and the New Testament come from the same Jewish world - and they have more in common than you would think. Welcome to my new series, [Mishnah Snapshots](#) - looking specifically at how the Mishnah sheds light on the New Testament. These startlingly personal glimpses of Yeshua of Nazareth through the lens of ancient Jewish law won't just give you a new perspective on the Bible - they'll make your relationship with Yeshua, and with his Jewish people, better than ever. If you like explosions, you're going to love these lessons - because we're going to be blowing urban legends out of the water at every turn.

Before we start looking at these specific intersections between the Mishnah and the New Testament, we're going to take a couple lessons to talk about what the Mishnah is all about: *What exactly is the Mishnah - and what does the word "Mishnah" mean, anyway? How was the Mishnah developed...and why? What did Yeshua think about the Mishnah? And, what do YOU think about the Mishnah?*

### What is the Mishnah?

Essentially, the Mishnah is the earliest historical record of how the Jewish people interpreted and applied the Torah. Much of the Mishnah is case law - a legal question is raised, differing opinions are noted, and finally a majority decision is reached. Sometimes a precedent is also listed - either the specific situation prompting the question, or a case illustrating it. This is called a *ma'aseh*, from the verb *asah* - to act or do. The plural of *ma'aseh* is *ma'asim*.

As a side note, this gives us a fuller understanding of the Acts of the Apostles, which in Hebrew is called the *Ma'asei ha'Shlichim* - the *ma'asim* of the *shaliachs*. Notably, the book of Acts contains several precedents and legal decisions arrived at by the sages of the early Messianic community.

The Mishnah is divided up into 6 orders and 63 tractates, which are further divided into 525 chapters and 4224 verses. An order is called a *seder*, plural *sdarim*. A tractate is a *masechta*, plural *masechtot*. A chapter is a *perak*, plural *prakim*. And a verse is a *mishna*, plural *mishnayot*. A verse is also called a *halacha*, plural *halachot*.

Throughout the Mishnah, a distinction is made between the written Torah and the oral Torah. The written Torah is referred to as the *Torah she'bichtav* - "the Torah which is in writing". Rulings which come directly from the Torah are called *mi'd'Orayta* in Aramaic, and *min ha'Torah* in Hebrew, both of which mean "from the Torah".

The oral Torah is referred to as the *Torah she'b'al peh* - "the Torah which is on the mouth". And rulings which come from the Rabbis are called *mi'd'Rabbanan* - Aramaic for "from our Rabbis".

You may have heard it said that the Jewish people don't differentiate between the written and oral Torah, or that the two are placed on the same level. Well, now you know that ain't true!

The big takeaway here is that the Mishnah is how Israel interpreted and applied the Torah. And your bonus takeaway? That stuff about the Jewish people clumping the oral and written Torah together is an oral - er, I mean, urban - legend.

### What does *Mishnah* actually mean?

The word *Mishnah* doesn't actually mean "oral law" - it literally means "repetition". *Mishnah* comes from the verb *shanah*, from which we also get the number two - *shnaim*. This probably refers to how the *Mishnah* was originally transmitted. It was taught word of mouth and repeated until memorized. This verb is behind the following two Hebrew words translated in these verses as "repeating" and "copy".

"Now as for the **repeating** of the dream to Pharaoh twice, it means that the matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about." (Genesis 41:32)

וְעַל הַשְּׁנוֹת הַחִלּוּם אֶל-פְּרַעֲהַ פְּעַמַּיִם כִּי-נִכּוֹן הַדְּבָר מֵעַם הָאֱלֹהִים וּמִמֶּהָר הָאֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ

"Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a **copy** of this Torah on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests." (Deuteronomy 17:18)

וְהָיָה כְּשִׁבְתוֹ עַל כִּסֵּא מַמְלָכְתּוֹ וְכָתַב לוֹ אֶת-מִשְׁנֵה הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת עַל-סֵפֶר מַלְפְּנֵי הַכֹּהֲנִים הַלְוִיִּם

Considering that *Mishnah* is related to the Hebrew word for two, it's probably not surprising that *Mishnah* also means "second", as is visible in the following verse.

He had him ride in his **second** chariot; and they proclaimed before him, "Bow the knee!" And he set him over all the land of Egypt. (Genesis 41:43)

וַיַּרְכַּב אֹתוֹ בְּמַרְכָּבַת הַמִּשְׁנָה אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ וַיִּקְרְאוּ לְפָנָיו אֲבָרָךְ וְנָתַן אֹתוֹ עַל כָּל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם

You may be wondering, why is the *Mishnah* referred to as "second"? The preface to the *Mishnah* published by Judaica Press in 1964 answers, "The *Mishnah* is second in importance to the Torah".

So your first big takeaway is that the Hebrew word *Mishnah* means both repetition - I repeat, it means repetition - and secondly, it means second. The second meaning is that it means second.

And a bonus takeaway? While the *Mishnah* was the Jewish law that was originally communicated orally, *Mishnah* doesn't literally mean "oral law" - that's something of an urban myth.

## Part 2 - How was the Mishnah developed?

The Mishnah already existed as hundreds of legal decisions and interpretations before Yeshua's time. It began to be more systematically arranged under Hillel, who was president of the Sanhedrin and the leading Jewish sage at the time of Yeshua's birth. One of the sayings Hillel was most famous for was, "don't do to others what you wouldn't have them to do you." Sound familiar? The Mishnah continued to be transmitted word of mouth for another two hundred years until it was written down under the leadership of *Yehuda HaNasi* - Judah the Prince - in the late 100s.

While the core of the Mishnah remained the same, it *was* flexible and *did* develop over time as fresh verdicts were reached in response to new legal questions. I opened this introduction by saying that Jesus kept the Mishnah. It's important to qualify this by pointing out two things. Firstly, Yeshua didn't keep the Mishnah in its final codified form but rather as it existed in his time. And secondly, there was a small number of specific rulings that he took issue with. Interestingly enough many of these rulings didn't even make it into the final redaction of the Mishnah. More on that later.

The Mishnah was written in Hebrew. The style of Hebrew it was written in is slightly different than the style the Bible was written in just five hundred years earlier. This proves that Hebrew was still a living language in Yeshua's time, and disproves the urban legend that Hebrew wasn't spoken in the Second Temple era. This style of Hebrew is usually called "Mishnaic Hebrew" in English. In Judaism it's either called by the Aramaic term *lishna d'Rabbanan* - "the language of our Rabbis" - or by the Hebrew term *lashon chachamim* - "the language of the sages".

After the Mishnah was put into writing commentaries on the Mishnah were written down for another three hundred years, mostly in Aramaic. These commentaries were called the *Gemara*, which comes from the verb *gamar* - to complete or finish. You could say that the Mishnah is commentary on the Torah, and the Gemara is commentary on the commentary. The Mishnah and the Gemara together are called the *Talmud*. Talmud means study, and comes from the verb *lamad* - to learn. Lamad is also the root of *talmid*, disciple.

Your big takeaway here is that the Mishnah started out oral and developed over hundreds of years before finally being written down. Your bonus takeaway? That stuff about Hebrew being a dead language in the time of Jesus is an urban legend.

### Why was the Mishnah developed?

To understand the reason for the Mishnah you need to understand four things about the Torah.

Firstly, the Torah was given as compulsory civil law - *not* optional religious law. It's almost impossible for us to grasp this concept because we live in a secular society that practices the separation of church and state.

Secondly, the Torah was given to a community - *not* to individuals. Again, this is extremely difficult for us to wrap our minds around because Western society and Protestant Christianity are both highly individualistic.

Thirdly, the Torah gives general instructions but leaves out the practical details. It is literally impossible to keep the commandments without 'fleshing them out' with traditions.

One example of this third dynamic would be how the Torah commands Israel to live in sukkahs for seven days, but doesn't actually define what a sukkah is. Not surprisingly, there's an entire tractate in the Mishnah dedicated to this question named...wait for it...*Sukkah!*

Another example would be how the Torah requires farmers to leave the corners of their fields for the poor to glean, but doesn't specify a minimum quantity. Legal questions relating to laws such as this are tackled in the second tractate of the Mishnah, *Pe'ot*.

Fourthly and finally, the Torah was given with an explicitly stated expectation - that legal questions would arise which the written Torah doesn't clearly address, and that these questions would need to be decided by nationally recognized judges. The Torah is clear in stating that the decisions made by these judges would be binding and authoritative.

We're going to read this entire passage, and I want you to notice these two things for yourself – how the written Torah needed to be interpreted and applied in specific situations, and how the written Torah required judges with legally binding authority to do this: *If any case is too difficult for you to decide, between one kind of homicide or another, between one kind of lawsuit or another, and between one kind of assault or another, being cases of dispute in your courts, then you shall arise and go up to the place which Adonai your God chooses. So you shall come to the Levitical priest or the judge who is in office in those days, and you shall inquire of them and they will declare to you the verdict in the case. You shall do according to the terms of the verdict which they declare to you from that place which Adonai chooses; and you shall be careful to observe according to all that they teach you. According to the terms of the torah which they teach you, and according to the verdict which they tell you, you shall do; you shall not turn aside from the word which they declare to you, to the right or the left. The man who acts presumptuously by not listening to the priest who stands there to serve Adonai your God, nor to the judge, that man shall die; thus you shall purge the evil from Israel. Then all the people will hear and be afraid, and will not act presumptuously again. (Deuteronomy 17:8-13)* Now. Having read that, it's very important to understand that in Yeshua's time, and in the centuries following, those judges were the Rabbis quoted in the Mishnah.

It's a relatively common belief that those evil Rabbis 'threw their additions into the Torah, and out came this Mishnah!' Hopefully you've come to see from this discussion that the development of the Mishnah was a far cry from adding to the Torah, and that it would be more accurate to say that the Mishnah is an extension of the Torah, a fleshing out of it - not unlike the New Testament, actually. Hopefully you've also been able to see that the Jewish people literally couldn't keep the Torah without developing the Mishnah because the Torah is compulsory civil law given to a community, requiring traditions and an ongoing authoritative legal system.

You may not agree with all the decisions in the Mishnah, and that's ok - the sages didn't either. And, as we'll soon see, neither did our Master Yeshua! What's important is that you understand the need for some sort of Mishnah, that you respect the process through which these decisions were made, and that you remember that the Torah wasn't given to you - it was given to the Jewish community. More on that last point later.

So your big takeaway here is that we need the Mishnah. And your bonus takeaway? That the Mishnah wasn't all about adding to the Torah - that's an urban legend.

### **Part 3 - What did Yeshua think of the Mishnah?**

Our focus at Holy Language Institute is on following Yeshua in a Hebrew way, together. So the most important question for us in this discussion is - what did Yeshua of Nazareth think of the Mishnah?

The answer is, Yeshua kept the Torah as interpreted by the Mishnah, and taught his disciples to do the same. The exception was the rare case in which a tradition conflicted with a commandment, which was something he took strong issue with. But don't take my word for it! Let's look at what the Bible says.

#### **What did Yeshua's apostles think of the Mishnah as it existed in their time?**

For starters, we can infer Yeshua's stance on the Mishnah by examining his disciples' posture towards it - remembering that Yeshua's disciples represented him, speaking and acting in the name of the one who sent them and carrying on the teachings and traditions of their holy Master.

One indicator of what Yeshua thought of the Mishnah is how Luke mentions "a Sabbath day's journey". This term isn't even used in the written Torah, but it is discussed and defined in the Mishnah. "Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, *a Sabbath day's journey away*." (Acts 1:12)

Notice that Luke, who wrote this, was one of Paul's closest travelling companions and ministry partners. This also suggests that Paul had a similar attitude towards the Mishnah...unless he just wasn't able to get through to Luke, even after all those years.

Another indicator would be how the Day of Atonement is referred to as "the Fast". This is another term that isn't used in the written Torah, and is a product of Mishnaic interpretation. "When considerable time had passed and the voyage was now dangerous, since even *the Fast* was already over, Paul began to admonish them." (Acts 27:9)

And again, we can take this, not only as evidence of Yeshua's positive stance towards Mishnaic interpretation, but also as evidence of a supportive stance on the part of Paul towards traditional Jewish application of Torah.

#### **What did Yeshua think of the Mishnah as it existed in his time?**

Yeshua also kept Jewish traditions that weren't commanded in the written Torah, but are mentioned in the Mishnah.

One example would be how he always said a blessing before eating. The practice of blessing God before meals isn't actually commanded in the Torah - it's a tradition rooted in the Mishnah! "When He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed; and breaking it, He began giving it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight." (Luke 24:30-31)

Another example would be how he went up to Jerusalem for Chanukah, the festival of Dedication mentioned in John 10:22: "At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; it was winter, and Yeshua was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon." (John 10:22-23)

I've heard the objection that the text doesn't explicitly say Yeshua was celebrating Chanukah. But stop and think about it for a second. Why would John, decades later, even mention Chanukah if he was against it? And why would Yeshua hike several days from Galilee to Jerusalem in the dead of winter to be there for a holiday he had nothing to do with? Yeshua and Yochanan were both traditional Jews, remember?

Yet one more example of our Master's fundamentally positive attitude towards Mishnaic Judaism was how he used the Water-Drawing Celebration of Hoshana Rabba on the seventh day of Sukkot to point to himself in John 7:37-39. This ritual is nowhere to be found in the written Torah, and was developed as an extrabiblical tradition.

In addition to keeping the Torah as interpreted by the Mishnah, Yeshua also instructed his disciples to do the same. For instance, regarding the tithing of the smallest garden seeds, which is a Mishnaic interpretation, he said: "You tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the Torah: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but *these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.*" (Matthew 23:23)

We also have these more general instructions: "The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses - therefore all that they tell you, do and observe. But do not do according to their deeds, for they say things and do not do them!" (Matthew 23:2-3) If that doesn't clinch it, I don't know what does!

### **What about the Shem Tov Hebrew Matthew?**

A relatively well-known Karaite teacher has pointed out that there's one manuscript of a Hebrew version of the Gospel of Matthew from the 1400s in which this passages reads as "all that *he* tells you, do and observe". Based on this one manuscript he claims that the Master was telling his disciples to only obey Moses according to how they read him, rather than obeying Moses in accordance with the legal decisions of the "judge who was in office in those days".

Thankfully, this is easily falsifiable from the perspectives of both logic and textual criticism.

From a logical perspective, it would have been against Torah for Yeshua to tell his disciples to disobey the "judge who was in office in those days". It would also have been inconsistent with the many Scriptures I just showed you indicating that Yeshua followed Jewish tradition. Not to mention that this proposed alternate reading would render the reasoning in the entire quote defunct - read it for yourself and you'll see what I mean.

From a textual perspective, this aberrant reading is found in only one - possibly two - of seven manuscripts of the Shem Tov Hebrew Matthew, with the other six manuscripts reading the traditional way. The manuscripts of

the other two Hebrew Matthews - Munster and Dutillet - also read the traditional way. So do both of the Aramaic versions of the New Testament - the Old Syriac and the Peshitta. Not to mention the thousands of Greek New Testament manuscripts.

At first glance the idea that Yeshua taught his disciples to only follow the written Torah is appealing. But as you can see, this teaching is a lie. It misrepresents Yeshua and the movement he started. This false teaching isn't just a harmless little lie, either - it's dangerous. It's distancing people from the Torah as Yeshua practiced it. It's damaging their relationship with the Jewish people. And it's destroying the testimony for Messiah that they could have to the Jewish community.

Having established the fact that Yeshua's default was to follow Jewish tradition, it's important to note that there were two dynamics that did cause him to take issue with specific traditions.

One was when traditions not originating in the Torah were touted as commandments. The other was when traditions caused people to break commandments. Yeshua addresses both of these errors in Matthew 15 and calls them "commandments of men".

I encourage you to read Matthew 15 for yourself and notice two things. Firstly, Yeshua didn't write off all Jewish tradition as "commandments of men". He challenged specific Mishnaic interpretations for specific reasons.

Secondly, notice he didn't actually use the term "traditions of men". That term isn't actually used in the Bible. It's ironic that some people write off Judaism as all those "traditions of men", but do so using a term that isn't in the Bible and is itself a tradition of men! Traditions aren't bad. In fact, as we learned in the previous lesson, you can't keep the Torah without them. Likewise, there's nothing wrong with "traditions of men" as long as you're not giving them the same authority as the commandments and as long as they're not causing you to break commandments.

So having said all that, the big takeaway here is that Yeshua kept the Torah as interpreted by the Mishnah as it existed in his time, and taught his disciples to do the same.

And your bonus takeaways? All those traditions of men in the Mishnah aren't a bad thing. That's an urban legend. And don't listen to Karaites. They're urban legends.



## Part 4 - What do you think of the Mishnah?

In the previous three lessons we looked at what the Mishnah's all about and at the process through which it was developed. We also looked at what Yeshua and the authors of the New Testament did with the Mishnah as it existed in their time. In this last discuss I'm going to talk with you on a more personal level - just in case you need some time to process, or have questions or objections.

So how about you, what do you think about the Mishnah? And not just on a cerebral level, either - what are your gut feelings in response to the information we looked at in these introductory talks?

### "I'm overwhelmed"

You might be feeling a little overwhelmed, like a kindergarten kid that just got dumped in a grade 12 class. We're scared of what we don't know, and this is all new to you. The idea of studying thousands of pages of boring legal debates doesn't exactly excite you. Like, there was a reason you didn't go to law school. And it's not like you have the time for it, either - you haven't even read through the whole Bible yet! (Thanks Chronicles.) Not to mention that after work and family, you barely have enough energy to heroically drag yourself to your computer and turn on Netflix, never mind studying the fine points of ancient religious law in a foreign language.

If you're the overwhelmed guy, let me encourage you with a couple things.

Firstly, be encouraged that all growth is organic, and happens gradually. Trees don't grow in a day. You didn't read through the Bible in a day. Your wife didn't train you to put the toilet seat down in a day. It was a slow process. So the important thing here is for you to place yourself on a trajectory of slow growth, and remove any factors that could halt the process.

One of the biggest practical things you can do to place yourself on that growth trajectory, is to create some kind of regular learning habit. Maybe daily, maybe weekly. An example of this from the Jewish world is the *daf yomi*, or daily page, in which hundreds of thousands of Jews around the world study one page of Talmud a day, and then finish with a big celebration called the *siyyum ha'shas* about every 7.5 years when the 2,711 pages are completed. This practice is relatively new, by the way, and was only started on September 11, 1923.

Another big thing you can do to help that growth process is decide which sources of information you're going to expose yourself to. So take pains to find ministries and fellowship that will help you grow in your relationship with the Jewish community, and your understanding of traditional Judaism. First Fruits of Zion is a ministry that comes with our highest recommendations, and of course you also have your tribe at [holylanguage.com](http://holylanguage.com).

For your first tastes of Mishnah, I encourage you to just keep going with this [Mishnah Snapshots](#) series. Don't get me wrong - if you really want to understand the Mishnah I do recommend that you get yourself an English copy with notes and read through it. But consider yourself warned - the Mishnah is massive, complex, and technical.

You may end up getting bored and find yourself staring out the window thinking about squirrels. Or you may feel like it's too spiritually dry and begin experiencing temptations to secretly read Psalms instead. If you're reading an English translation, you may also end up missing many of the places where the Mishnah sheds light on the New Testament, because some dots can only be connected in the Hebrew.

So while I do recommend that my more serious students go through the Mishnah for themselves, I think you can see why I'm recommending that you start with Mishnah Snapshots - they're short, they're focused on helping you grow in your relationship with Yeshua and your understanding of the New Testament, and you can just sit there and watch while somebody else does all the thinking for you...just like Netflix!

One more thing about that. If you're looking for a copy of the Mishnah, we have the whole thing on PDF in Hebrew, with an English translation and commentary. You can get it for yourself from the Resources page at [holylanguage.com](http://holylanguage.com). This is the version I'll be doing future Snapshots from.

### **"I'm Jewish"**

So back to your reactions to Mishnah. Some of your feelings will also depend on your religious background. So for instance if you're like most Jewish people, most of this wasn't news to you. You're probably comfortable with the idea of the Mishnah, even though you haven't studied much Talmud and mostly just learned by osmosis the practical stuff you need to get by in the Jewish community. Deep down inside, you know it's our traditions that have enabled us to survive for the last two thousand years, and you respect them - even if you don't keep them all.

### **"I'm Christian"**

If you're coming from a Christian background you probably never read a page of Mishnah in your life, and you may have never even heard of it. If you did know of it there were probably some urban legends mixed in. If you're just now realizing that, you may be wondering how much misinformation about Judaism you accidentally absorbed. You may also be wondering if those misunderstandings could have negatively affected your relationship with the Jewish community...maybe in ways you weren't even aware of.

Let's go a little deeper. If you're coming from a Christian background, the emotions you're experiencing in response to this study probably depend on whether you believe that Christians should keep the Torah or not.

If you don't believe that Christians are obligated to keep the Jewish law, it's going to be much simpler for you. You're probably just happy to be learning more about the Jewishness of Jesus and his Jewish religion. You might also be surprised at the number of urban legends that Christians have accepted at face value. And maybe you feel sad to discover how far the Church has drifted from her Jewish roots.

## **"I'm Hebrew Roots"**

If you do believe that Christians should keep the Torah, I'm going to go out on a limb and guess that you're feeling threatened in at least one of several ways.

You may be feeling like your lifestyle is threatened. Believing that you should keep the written Torah is one thing - but believing that you should keep it the way the Jewish people keep it? That sounds way harder. You probably already have your own simple way of keeping the Torah, and the idea of having to learn new things and change your traditions - facts or no facts - it's just too much.

Or you might feel like your identity is threatened. You have visions of men with black hats and curlicue hair dancing through your mind right now, and all you can think about is how you don't want to join the fashion show. You're concerned that if you start going down this path, even in your mind, you're going to end up becoming a Jew.

You can't help but imagine what your family and friends would think. I mean, you're already weird enough. If that's you, you probably reassured yourself that you're a Gentile and that you don't need to become Jewish. Or you may have found yourself whispering that you're one of the lost tribes of Israel and that Judah was just one of the tribes. And definitely not your tribe.

Or maybe you're still struggling with those urban legends you believed for all those years. The conspiracy theories are still there in the back of your mind, telling you that the Jews had it all wrong and that the Rabbis were the bad guys in the story. You don't trust the Jews, and you just feel fear.

If that's you, I want to encourage you to remember what we learned in our previous couple lessons - that the Torah was given to the Jewish community. That means it wasn't given to individuals, and it wasn't given to the nations. If you stop and think about it, that's actually really good news! It means you're welcome to join the broader Jewish community in living out the Torah, but you don't need to know everything, because the community has that covered. It also means you don't need to reinvent the wheel and hammer out your own Mishnah, because - again - you're part of a community that did that a long time ago. Talk about a huge burden lifted off your shoulders!

## **"I'm One-Law"**

If you subscribe to One-Law or Two-House teachings, you may find it hard to take that as encouragement. If you subscribe to Three-French-Hens or Four-in-a-Row teachings, you may also find it hard...just joking. Those last two aren't real teachings. But anyways. Let's talk about One-Law and Two-House objections for a minute.

If you believe there's one law for both Jews and Christians and that both are equally obligated to the Torah, you may object to my suggestion that non-Jewish believers should respectfully join the broader Jewish community in how they keep Torah instead of making up their own version of it.

If that's you, my big question is - what's your alternative? As I see it, the only other option will end up taking you down a path of distancing yourself from the Jewish community, demonizing the Rabbis and traditional Judaism, and acting like the Torah was entrusted to you instead of the Jewish community.

Of course, the problem with this approach is that historic Christianity already beat you to it, and it produced some very uncool fruit like replacement theology and antisemitism. If you left the church shouldn't you leave those pathologies behind also, rather than creating new Messianic versions of them?

### "I'm Two-House"

If you believe you're from the lost tribes of Israel, you may have also found yourself objecting a minute ago - after all, it wasn't the Jewish people at Mount Sinai, it was all Israel! Right? Let's look at a Scripture that answers that question. "What advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? Great in every respect. First of all, that *they were entrusted with the oracles of God.*" (Romans 3:1-2)

Firstly, notice that Paul acknowledges the ongoing validity of Jewish identity. Secondly, notice that Paul refers to Jewish identity in an overwhelmingly positive way. And then thirdly, notice that Messiah's emissary clearly states that the Torah was given to the Jews. And not just given, but entrusted to the Jewish people. If Paul was comfortable with that terminology and the idea behind it, don't you think we should be too? So it's ok to say that the Torah was given to the Jewish community. Because according to Paul, it was.

Please also consider the fact that the Jewish people are the only ones who have preserved the Torah for the last 2,500 years. And that 'Rabbinic Judaism' is the only religion that has, at its core, preserved the Torah as Yeshua practiced it. You may be tempted to point to the Karaites at this point, but stop and think about it for a second. The Karaites rejected the Mishnah that Yeshua accepted, and made up their own version of Torah - similar to what both the Sadducees and the Samaritans did. If your objective is to walk as Yeshua walked and keep the Torah as he kept it, then the Karaites are irrelevant.

So if you identify with the lost tribes my invitation to you is to stop repeating the sin of Jeroboam by separating yourself from Judah and making up your own Torah, and let yourself become one in the Father's hand already.

So having said all that, here's my final encouragement. Say "bye Felicia" to all the replacement theology, veiled antisemitism, and conspiracy theories about the rabbis. Be free in the realization that the Torah was entrusted to the Jewish community. Be affirmed that through Messiah you've been brought near to the Jewish community, and are invited to respectfully study and keep the Torah alongside us.

And keep going with these [Mishnah Snapshots](#) lessons and you'll grow, grow, grow!