



MBS049

A MESSIANIC BIBLE STUDY FROM ARIEL MINISTRIES



THE ADULTEROUS WOMAN



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*But when they
continued asking him,
he lifted up himself,
and said unto them,
He that is without sin
among you, let him first
cast a stone at her.
John 8:7*

NOTES

The story of the adulterous woman, found recorded in John 8:1-11, is an incident that occurred during the Feast of Tabernacles. The background to this particular story is the major area of conflict between Yeshua (Jesus) and the Pharisees: the authority of the “traditions of the elders.” The Pharisees felt that the traditions of the fathers, which had been developed for about four centuries by this time, were as sacrosanct as the Law of Moses itself. They felt one had to keep the Law of Moses, but one also had to keep these traditions of the elders.

But Yeshua repudiated the traditions of the elders and would not go along with that teaching. He clearly affirmed that He intended to fulfill all the Law and all that the Prophets wrote. He intended to fulfill the Law of Moses perfectly, and indeed, He was the only Jew who ever lived that kept the Mosaic Law perfectly.

Over and over again, the Pharisees came and accused Jesus of violating the traditions of the elders, but this made absolutely no impression upon Him because He readily admitted violating Pharisaic traditions and Pharisaic law. Over and over again, He affirmed Himself to be the keeper of the Mosaic Law and intended to fulfill it by keeping every commandment that applied to Him.

What happened in the story of the woman taken in adultery is the first attempt, the one and only real attempt, to have Yeshua say something against the Law of Moses. If they had gotten Him to say something contrary to the Law of Moses, this would negate His own claims to be keeping the Mosaic Law. So they chose this particular incident to try to get Him to say something contrary to the Law of Moses.

The stage is set in John 8:1-4: *...but Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and the Pharisees bring a woman taken in adultery; and having set her in the midst, they say unto him, Teacher, this woman has been taken in adultery, in the very act.*

It was while Yeshua was teaching in the Temple Compound and was surrounded by a large audience that they chose to bring up this situation (v. 2). The reason they chose this particular moment was to try to discredit Him before the masses. The masses knew He did not go along with Pharisaic traditions; He had repudiated those traditions many times. To merely accuse Him of violating tradition would make no impression upon Him, nor would it discredit Him before the masses because He had made public His view concerning Pharisaic traditions. However, Jesus had also made public His statements about keeping the Law of Moses: that the Mosaic Law was obligatory upon them all, and that both He and they were bound to every jot and tittle of the Law. This was true until the death of the Messiah, when the Law came to an end. Thus, as He was teaching the masses, they brought this case before Him in order to try to discredit Him both in the eyes of His disciples and in the eyes of the masses.

They brought this woman to Yeshua and accused her of adultery (v. 3). To let Him know that there was absolutely no doubt concerning her guilt, they claimed that she had been caught in the very act of adultery (v. 4). She was not merely being accused of adultery; she was caught in the very act. Therefore, there was no shadow of a doubt that she was guilty. But by saying this, they gave themselves away because one cannot be caught in the very act of adultery unless there are at least two people involved. One can be singularly accused of adultery, but to be caught in the very act of adultery requires two people, not just one. The question is: Where is the male counterpart to this adulterous relationship? The male counterpart was not brought before Jesus, as he should have been. Obviously, this was a setup. In fact, that is the point the Gospel writer makes in verse 6.

Verse 5 states: *Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such: what then say you of her?*

They wanted to be able to discredit the Messiah's claims that He kept the Mosaic Law and to have a basis for accusing Him before the masses, so this time they raised the issue of the Law of Moses and not of Pharisaic law. They pointed out that it was the Law of Moses, which commanded the stoning of such people. But then they turned to Yeshua and asked Him, "what then say you of her?" The Greek is far more emphatic. The way the Greek text reads in the original is something like this: "The Law of Moses said so-and-so but YOU, what do YOU say?" "In other words, In contrast to the Mosaic Law, YOU, what do YOU say we should we do to this adulterous woman?"

Verse 6a states: *And this they said, trying him, that they might have whereof to*

accuse him.

They said this so that they would have a basis to accuse Him, not in violation of Pharisaic law but the Mosaic Law. At this point Jesus did not respond.

Instead, verse 6b states: *But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground.*

It is amazing how many commentaries on the Gospel of John begin to go into a somewhat lengthy dissertation at this point, trying to discover exactly what it was that He was writing on the ground, as if after two thousand years there is something left in the dust that they could decipher! The fact that John did not reveal what Yeshua was writing points out that the key issue was not in the writing. In the Greek text the emphasis is not on the writing, but on the finger. Literally it reads: “with the finger he wrote on the ground.” The emphasis is clearly on the finger and not on the writing itself.

Why is the emphasis on the finger? The Law of Moses had a total of six hundred thirteen commandments. Of these six hundred thirteen commandments, six hundred three of these were written with ink on parchment scrolls, but ten of the six hundred thirteen commandments were engraved on tablets of stone. Among the ten that were, graven upon the tablets of stone was the commandment that said, “You shall not commit adultery.” Furthermore, these ten were commandments engraved with the finger of God, according to Exodus 31:18, 32:15-16; Deuteronomy 4:13, 9:10. With the emphasis on the finger, the point being made was this: He is the author of the very commandment that said, “You shall not commit adultery.” It was His finger that engraved this commandment into the tablet of stone. He knew exactly what the Law said on this particular issue. Furthermore, He knew everything the Law of Moses had to say about the issue of adultery, the punishment of adultery, and what the Law had to say about the proper procedure to follow concerning the stoning of someone that was guilty of adultery. His finger wrote the Law; His finger knew all that the Law required on this point.

Based on that particular knowledge, Yeshua responded in the manner that He did in the next few verses. While He was writing with His finger, they kept pressing for an answer. In verse 7, Yeshua responded: *But when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.*

As they pressed for an answer, Jesus finally told them, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” What He was not teaching here is, “If you are sinlessly perfect, then throw the first stone at her.” If that is what He was teaching, it would have been impossible to execute anyone under the Law of Moses. Yet the Law of Moses clearly taught two things: first, no one is sinlessly perfect; and second, it was mandatory to execute people for certain capital offenses. If Yeshua were teaching that only if one is sinlessly perfect is

he to cast the first stone, He would be teaching something that would contradict the Law of Moses.

That was not His point. The point He was making was this: If you are going to judge this woman on the basis of the Law of Moses, then you must take into account everything the Law of Moses said concerning this sin and concerning the execution of the one guilty of this sin.

According to the Mosaic Law, a person can be condemned to death only at the mouth of two or three witnesses. Because they said they caught this woman in the very act, they had the two or three witnesses, which the Law demanded. But the Law also taught that the ones who were to cast the first stone in the act of execution were these two or three witnesses. The Law said something else: the witnesses upon whose testimony a person was condemned to death and who were to be the ones to cast the first stone must not be guilty of the same sin (Deut. 13:9, 17:2-7). When Jesus said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her," He meant that the two or three witnesses responsible for casting the first stone must not be guilty of that same sin. Only if this was true could they proceed with the execution.

Then verse 8 states: *And again he stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground.*

Having made this statement, Yeshua once again stooped down to the ground, "and with his finger wrote on the ground." What He had taught them was this: "I am in favor of keeping the Law of Moses in its entirety. If we deal with one specific issue of the Law of Moses, we must obey everything that the Law of Moses said about that particular issue: we have to have two or three witnesses, and it is the two or three witnesses that must cast the first stone, but they themselves must not be guilty of that same sin." Then He again with His finger wrote on the ground, reemphasizing that He was the author of the Law.

Verse 9a states: *And they, when they heard it, went out one by one, beginning from the eldest, even unto the last ...*

The response was that one by one the accusers walked off, starting with the older ones and then the younger ones. The clear implication is that none of these accusers were innocent of that same sin. Furthermore, it might very well have been that standing among the accusers was the one with whom she was caught in the very act. The woman was left alone.

Then in verses 9b-11, we read: *... and Jesus was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the midst. And Jesus lifted up himself, and said unto her, Woman, where are they? did no man condemn you? And she said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said, Neither do I condemn you: go your way; from henceforth sin no more.*

When Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you" (v. 11), He was not

excusing this woman's sin. The issue here was that of the Mosaic Law. Since under the Mosaic Law a person could be condemned only on the basis of two or three witnesses, and since the witnesses had walked away without following through by casting the first stone (v. 10), there was no basis of condemnation whatsoever. So in keeping with the Law, He said, "Neither do I condemn you." On the basis of the Mosaic Law, there were no grounds for condemnation. But He did not excuse her sin, for she was guilty. He told her, "go your way; from henceforth sin no more."

This was the one and only time when the Pharisees had tried to get Yeshua to speak in contradiction to the Law of Moses and in this, they had failed. Once again, He was shown to be the One keeping the Mosaic Law while they were disobeying it.

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that when Jesus was obeying the Mosaic Law, He was obeying it because He was a Jew. The Law was not given to Gentiles. But having perfectly obeyed the Law, He obeyed the Law also as our substitute, especially for those who are Jewish believers. When Yeshua died, He died bearing upon Himself the penalty of the Law. Obviously, He was not guilty of violating the Law, so the penalty of the Law under which He died was not for His own sin, but as a substitution for others. Jesus died a penal, substitutionary death. He was able to be our final blood sacrifice, our substitute, because He, and He alone kept the Mosaic Law perfectly.✠

NOTES**IF YOU ENJOYED THIS
BIBLE STUDY,
DR. FRUCHTENBAUM
RECOMMENDS:**

*MBS009, 016, 020, 028, 031,
032, 035, 036, 040, 043, 044,
048, 056, 060, 061, 069, 070,
075, 076, 094, 099, 127, 134,
183, 185.*

