

*Preface*  
*by Avi Ben Mordechai*

I had the privilege of meeting Nehemia Gordon in Jerusalem during the 2003 Hebrew festival of Sukkot. Although Nehemia is not a believer in Yeshua, he was speaking to a group of Torah-observant believers about some research he did on Matthew 23. Initially, I was not even planning to attend the lecture, but as divine destiny had it, I took a seat in the room and sat down to listen to him explain the subject for about two hours. After he presented his findings, I walked away awestruck. I had previously studied the Hebrew version of Matthew, but the manner and precision with which Gordon approached the subject was new. I found Gordon's methodology to be nothing short of scholarly. He had everything well documented, from ancient sources in their original languages of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, but presented them in a manner understandable even by someone without a background in these languages.

Gordon starts off with the words of Yeshua in Matthew 23:2–3 that “the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat; all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do.” On the

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surface this appears to be a New Testament commandment to obey the teachings of the Pharisees, tempered with a warning to avoid hypocrisy. Such a commandment coming from the mouth of Yeshua, appears to support the idea that today's Rabbis, who are an extension of the ancient Pharisees under a different label, must be obeyed.

In many Messianic circles, the question of Matthew 23:2–3 and how it pertains to Rabbinic (Pharisaic) authority has caused considerable division and disagreement. Some believe Yeshua was clear in what he said; that Rabbinic (Pharisaic) Judaism is valid and binding. For others, it is not so clear, believing his words to be, at the very least, misunderstood, or worse yet, corrupted. So, who is right? What is the correct way to understand Matthew 23:2–3, and what should be done with the Torah? Should it be followed? Obeyed? Or shunned?

Gordon answers these questions by placing Yeshua into his Hebraic context and allows Yeshua's own words to sparkle within their original Semitic setting. Gordon has opened the door to something that is going to have huge positive and long-lasting repercussions on present and future Messianic thought: something, in fact, that will leave its mark of truth on the hearts and minds of countless numbers of people!

Prepare yourself for a challenging ride of a lifetime, as you understand Yeshua and the New Testament through the lens of a strict Scripturalist. It is time for an accurate account of the real truth about the Hebrew Yeshua and the Greek Jesus. Enjoy!

Avi Ben Mordechai

Author and Lecturer in Understanding

Yeshua in a First-Century Hebraic Context

Millennium Communications

Jerusalem, Israel.

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