

# Defending Hebrews

by Yoseph Viel

[www.messiahalive.net](http://www.messiahalive.net)

The primary purpose of the book of Hebrews is to convince a group of Messianic Jews not to deny Yeshua as the Messiah and return to a form of Rabbinical Judaism that fails to include the Messiah. It attempts to explain why Messianic Judaism is better than Rabbinical Judaism.

There has been a movement afoot recently to try and attack the credibility of the book of Hebrews. In many cases, the criticism has unfairly mis-characterized the book of Hebrews as erroneous due to several faulty approaches. Among them are...

1. **Accepting the Greek text of Hebrews as authoritative, rather than the Hebrew version that the Greek was translated from.** History tells us that the book of Hebrews was written in Hebrew, and we DO have a Hebrew manuscript of it that has been preserved, despite the claims of some to the contrary.
2. **Failure to understand the Torah correctly.** Some criticism of the book of Hebrews is that it contradicts Torah, when the problem is with the critic's failure to understand Torah.
  1. Often this is a result of reading Torah in English, rather than studying it in the original Hebrew.
  2. Sometimes it is a case of looking in the wrong part of Torah.
  3. The use of false contradiction - that is, things that may *seem* to contradict, but don't, is another problem.

I'll detail each of these problems later. In other cases, the book of Hebrews refers to things understood to be part of Jewish tradition, but not recorded in the Scriptures.

The most widely circulated such criticism of Hebrews was published by Monte Judah in November/October of 2005. In this article, I will try to refute many of the arguments Monte Judah puts forth as well as arguments I have heard from others. Some of what I will say is a response to OTHER critics, and not directed at his comments. However, I don't have at my disposal any other well-documented articles, though I have heard of some circulating.

Before I get started, let me simply say I have nothing against Monte Judah personally and I have heard many good things about him. I don't know much about him myself but I have heard mostly good things about him from others who have followed his ministry. I simply respectfully disagree with his point of view on the book of Hebrews and have in the past engaged in debates / discussions with a number of scholars I have a high level of respect for.

## The Hebrew vs Greek version

The Book of Hebrews has been criticized based on a number of verses that read differently in the Hebrew text than they read in the Greek text. Among them are...

- "In that he saith, *a new covenant*, he hath made the first old. Now that which **decayeth** and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." (KJV of Hebrews 8:13)
- "In that he says "New", he has made the first old; but that which grows old and aged [is] near disappearing" (Darby's translation of the Greek Hebrews 8:13, quotations added for modern English reader)
- "When He said, "A new covenant", He has made the first **obsolete**. But whatever is becoming **obsolete** and growing old is ready to disappear" (Monte Judah's quotation of Heb 8:13, source of wording not given)
- "And because that which said "new covenant" was antiquating the first to me to that which put on age<sup>8:13-1</sup> and came full in days<sup>8:13-2</sup> where He drew near<sup>8:13-3</sup> that which He longed for. " (Hebrew version of Hebrews 8:13)  
{| <sup>8:13-1</sup> or "*worn with age*" <sup>8:13-2</sup> "*came full in days*" (בא בימים) is a Hebrew idiom to describe something possessing longevity (See

Gen/Ber 24:1, Y/Josh 13:1, 23:1, 1 Kings/Mel 1:1, etc)<sup>8:13-3</sup> The Hebrew text COULD be interpreted as saying "*He sacrificed/offered that which he longed for*", but the Greek text invokes the concept of "nearness" in the way it translated this text.}]

I'm not sure what translation the word "obsolete" came from, but it is not the best choice of words to represent what the Greek says. Numerous English translations of Hebrews 8:13 seem to add an English-based commentary on how growing old is a bad thing that is not at all implied by the Greek text. However, the Hebrew version is not describing something that is obsolete (no longer useful), but something well worn, tested over time, and something in which age is considered a positive thing. The difference between the Greek "ready to vanish away" and the Hebrew "drew near that which he longed for" can be attributed to a misreading of the text. The Hebrew text says "כָּמָה"="kamah"="long for", while the Greek text reads the equivalent of "כָּלָה"="kalah"="vanish away" and/or "כָּמַשׁ"="kamesh"="wither". Someone's bad handwriting may be to blame here.

Now some people have claimed that "new" here should be "new priesthood", not "new covenant". The problem with this idea is that it is commenting on Jer 31, which it quoted just prior to this, where it says "new covenant". And the term "new covenant" is used in Hebrews 9:15, 10:29, and 12:24. Furthermore, the "first priesthood" was the heavenly priesthood of Yeshua. The "new priesthood" was the Levitical one. So the "new priesthood" argument introduces more problems than it solves. In fact one of the problems with how people have understood Hebrews is that they have reversed which priesthood was "new".

Another verse used to discredit Hebrews is 7:12, where Monte writes...

"He wrote that there must be changes to the Law of Moses (Heb 7:12) because the priesthood has changed from Levite to Melchizedek." (M. Judah, Sept/Oct 2005 article)

I disagree. Let's compare the Hebrew and Greek versions...

- "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb 7:12, KJV)
- "It was said (announced) therefore according to this that in order for a difference (*nishtanah*) of the chair<sup>(office)</sup> of the kohenhoo (priesthood), by necessity, you need to announce a difference (*nishtanah*) of the Torah (Teaching)." (Hebrew version of Hebrews 7:12)

While the Greek and Hebrew versions are a little different, the biggest difference here is in the interpretation. But first, let me examine the two texts.

The Greek word translated "change" (*metathesis*) by the KJV can also be translated as "move", thus the Greek could be saying...."For the priesthood being moved, there is made of necessity a move also of the law." The Greek version seems to suggest a "change" or "moving" (*metathesis*) between the earthly priesthood and the heavenly priesthood of Yeshua. Many Christians have trained people to see this as a "change" FROM the Levitical TO the heavenly, but perhaps its really talking about FROM the heavenly TO the earthly. Because the earthly was patterned after the heavenly and the heavenly existed before the earthly one. Yeshua did not take over the earthly Levitical priesthood - it was a mere rehearsal of the heavenly priesthood He had always possessed. In other words, Monte has read this as saying...

"For the priesthood being changed (from Levitical to Melchizedek) there is made of necessity a change also of the law (From using Levites to Yeshua)." (Heb 7:12, KJV with my comments in commas)

...when the more correct understanding would be...

"For the priesthood being changed/different (from the heavenly priesthood that always existed to the earthly Levitical that came afterwards) there is made of necessity a change/difference also of the law (From using the eternal Son to using earthly men subject to death, inheriting priesthood by birth, but not firstborn status as with Yeshua)." (Heb 7:12, with my comments in commas)

The Hebrew version talks about a "difference", which is not necessarily a change. It is discussing the DIFFERENCE between the earthly priesthood and the heavenly priesthood, without necessarily implying that either has changed. It is drawing a contrast between the earthly temple and the heavenly temple and differences between the earthly service and the heavenly service.

G-d had to make the earthly service a little different than the heavenly one in order to make the earthly one persevere. A High Priesthood transferred down by firstborn status exclusively is likely to eventually get broken if only ONE person in the chain apostates. On the other hand, taking the Levites in place of the firstborn gave the Levites a chance to pick a high priest based on merit rather than something he did not earn, and ensure it would be someone of honorable character.

The earthly priesthood did change in Numbers 3, when G-d took the Levites IN PLACE OF the firstborn, who, prior to that time, held the priesthood. However, I believe G-d's firstborn Son, Yeshua, has ALWAYS been the High Priest of the heavenly priesthood and this never changed. Hebrews tells us that the earthly temple and service were "types and shadows" of the heavenly one. They could not symbolize the heavenly service perfectly, but did so to the best of their earthly limited ability.

It's easy to see how the Greek version could have been an innocent mis-interpretation of the Hebrew. When you change something, you make it different, but 2 things can be eternally different without either being changed. Also, the word "nishtanah" comes from the root letters SHIN and NUN, which form several words in Hebrew that can mean "two", "repeat", "change", "second" or "different". The grammatical construction used here is not Biblical Hebrew, but is found in the Mishnah (e.g., the Passover liturgy "why is this night DIFFERENT (nishtanah) from all other nights?" uses this word.) It's also found used in places that clearly do NOT mean "change", such as.....

"How is BET different (*nishtanah*) from all the other letters?" (Midrash of the letters of Rabbi Akiva)

Translating "nishtanah" as "change" in this quote would not make sense here, since "all the other letters" were not "changed" to form BET. BET has always been BET, and has always been different from all the other letters. But it is easy to see how a Greek translator, familiar with Biblical Hebrew, but not familiar with 1st century Hebrew, could have looked at "nishtanah" (which is NEVER USED in the Tanak) and interpreted it by its roots and came up with "change".

Also, the Greek and Hebrew versions don't necessarily disagree. The Greek word for "change" here is "metathesis", which is usually used to referring to something changing *location* not changing nature. The KJV translates this *same Greek word* as "removing" in Heb 12:27. So the Hebrew version is talking about the *difference* between the earthly and heavenly temple service, while the Greek seems to be talking about a *transfer* from the earthly to the heavenly, without being all that specific as to what is being transferred. So it is quite possible that the Greek translators understood quite well that this passage was talking about the differences between the earthly and heavenly temple service and translated this verse as best as they could given that they understood the root letter meaning of the word but not the grammatical construction that was not used in Biblical Hebrew, but the translator may have correctly caught the essence of what was said since he was translated assuming a change in location, not nature.

What is ironic about this is that the earthly priesthood DID change in Numbers 3 from the first-born to the Levites. Torah makes this clear. Up until Numbers/B'Midbar chapter 3, the firstborn of each family comprised the priestly class. So one could simply argue that the Greek version is simply saying that the priesthood was changed BACK TO the original, with Yeshua being first-born over all! I think the main problem here is that many Messianic Jews get hyper sensitive about the whole dispensational issue and we seem to think that any change would "prove" the whole Law is now useless, when that simply is not the case. But we know that the idea of it being changed back is not the correct interpretation simply because of how the Hebrew version of Heb 7:12 reads. The simple case is that the heavenly priesthood never changed even though the earthly priesthood did. The heavenly priesthood cannot change - it will always be in the hands of the Firstborn Son. G-d did change the earthly priesthood in Numbers chapter 3, but this priesthood is DIFFERENT from the heavenly. The biggest problem with the idea that the Greek Heb 7:12 supports the concept that the earthly priesthood CHANGED into the heavenly priesthood is that the heavenly

priesthood always existed, so the earthly could NOT have changed into the heavenly one because that would be like saying the earthly one had pre-eminence, when in reality, it was merely meant as an earthly rehearsal to help us understand the heavenly one that existed BEFORE the earthly one existed.

Another verse used is Heb 9:10, which reads like this...

- "Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them *until the time of reformation*" (Heb 9:10, KJV)
- "only of meats and drinks and divers washings, ordinances of flesh, imposed *until [the] time of setting things right*" (Heb 9:10, Darby's translation, which more literally represents the true Greek reading)
- "to perfections of the heart in food only and in drink and in many categories of washings and in many outward holy things of the body *until the time came of the better.*" (Hebrew version of Heb 9:10)

Now the Hebrew version here doesn't talk about a "reformation" - that is - the first being "fixed" in some way. But simply talks about the time the heavenly service would come into its fullness and be completed. The earthly was merely symbolic of the heavenly temple and service. It was not "reformed". It simply provided a symbol of the heavenly version. The problem here isn't just the difference between the Hebrew and the Greek, but between the Greek and the English. The Greek does not necessarily imply a theological contradiction with the Hebrew, just a different way of expressing it. The English implies something very different. Thus, the criticism is based on a completely English based understanding of the text and failed to even go back to a correct understanding of the Greek, let alone go back to the Hebrew from which the Greek was translated.

Here's another argument...

"In Hebrews 7:28 the writer insisted that this oath (*The Lord has sworn*) was proclaiming that the Messiah was a priest in the order of Melchizedek. Agreed. But then he stated this oath *came after the Law*...How could the writer say that this oath was given *after* the Law? He previously argued how the Messiah is superior, *before* ordained. "  
(M. Judah, Sept/Oct 2005 article)

This is another example of relying on the English translation. Here's Hebrews 7:28 in various versions....

- "but the word of the oath, which was **since** the law, is the Son is perfected forever." (Heb 7:28 in KJV)
- "but the word of the oath, which was **alongside** (*meta*) the law, is the Son is perfected forever." (Heb 7:28, alternate Greek translation)
- "but the word of the oath **concerning/alongside** the Torah made to stand and uphold is, "*You are the Son of Elohim*", which is to be forever complete. " (Hebrew version of Hebrews 7:28)

The Hebrew version has "AL" (AYIN LAMMED) which could mean "concerning"/"about" or "alongside" or "through". The Greek has "*meta*", which the KJV translated "since", but could also be translated "with" or "alongside". Both the Greek "*meta*" and the Hebrew "AL" could be considered in perfect agreement. The Hebrew version does NOT say the oath came after Law. It is ambiguous as to whether the Greek version is intending to say this, but the Greek version of Heb 7:28 doesn't HAVE to be interpreted as the KJV translated it, and we certainly shouldn't throw out a text simply because we disagree with the KJV interpretation of the Greek text when the Greek text could be interpreted to say something different. And one could even use the "alongside" understanding of "*meta*" to claim that the Greek text is confirming the role of the Law as having importance in establishing His Priesthood.

However, personally, I don't think it really matters whether the oath was before or after and there's plenty of room to explain why this is not a contradiction. I could go into detail on that, but why bother if the analysis of the text is wrong to start with?

Heb 7:18 is another verse used to attack the credibility of Hebrews. Let's see how this verse compares in the Greek

and Hebrew versions.

- "For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof." (Heb 7:18, KJV)
- "this is a carrying away of the first because of weakness and that it was not useful for anything." (Hebrew Hebrews 7:18)

Note the difference here: The Greek calls the "commandment" both "weak" and "unprofitable." The Hebrew says the "first" was carried away because of "weakness". Does the Hebrew mean "commandment" when it says "first"? That's up to interpretation. But note how the Hebrew version COULD be referring to the weakness of man, not the weakness of the Law. Now let's backtrack to see what the Hebrew version is saying by "first"....

- "...made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life." (Heb 7:16, KJV)
- "...made after (according to) ordinances of the flesh but after the power of the life that is without an end to it." (Hebrew Heb 7:16)

These two essentially agree, but it's easier for an anti-nominalist to misinterpret the Greek version. "Law" in the KJV here is not talking about the essence of Torah, but how the fleshly implementation of Torah places limitations on the rehearsal of it. The earthly temple service is meant to be a REFLECTION of the heavenly service. It's not a perfect reflection, for the earthly high priest will die and someone new must be chosen. There are limitations to how the earthly service is able to imitate the heavenly service. but *the purpose of the earthly service IS TO IMITATE the heavenly service!!!!* The purpose of it is to teach us about the heavenly service through an earthly rehearsal of it. The manner in which the flesh places limitations on how well the earthly service can mimic the heavenly service is what Paul was referring to here, not the vast uselessness of the sum of all of Torah, as some critics of Hebrew have mis-interpreted it to mean.

The Hebrew version brings this out a little better. Let's take a look....

- "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true" (Heb 9:24, KJV)
- "Messiah did not enter in the sanctuary that was built by hands, which is a likeness of the image for the essence of the true things, **but which is a deviation/variance**" (Hebrew Hebrews 9:24)

By "deviation" or "variance" (omitted from the Greek version), the writer is saying that the earthly temple and earthly service was not capable of perfectly symbolizing the heavenly temple and service due to the limitations of human flesh and the temporal kingdom. For example, prisoners in a city of refuge were set free when the high priest died. This is a picture of how those of us who are prisoners of sin are set free by the death of the High Priest of the heavenly service. But it is not a perfect picture, because the limitations of earthly flesh only allow this to be rehearsed to a certain limited fashion. The need to offer sacrifices again and again to be effective as a teaching tool was another deviation from the heavenly model the earthly service was patterned after.

This is why Heb 8:6 calls the new covenant "better" or "greater" than the first. It does not have the limitations the first covenant has. And even Jeremiah calls the new covenant better in contrast by saying, "*no longer will a man teach his neighbor and a man to his brother, saying, "Know my YHWH". They shall all know me from the least and unto the greatest,"*" Is this better than what we have now? Certainly so! Yet Judah seems to take offense at this by saying,

"Once again, it appears that the author was trying to diminish and devalue the previous covenants and show Yeshua's ministry as replacing them. In Greek thinking *better* is like "new." "

He was not calling the new covenant "better" because it is newer, but calling it "better" because the first covenant was *patterned after* the heavenly, and the "new covenant" is the implementation of the heavenly one the covenant at Sinai was patterned after. It is "better" because "*no longer will a man teach his neighbor and a man to his brother,*

saying, "**Know my YHWH**". They shall all know me from the least and unto the greatest..." It is not better because it is newer, it is better because it is better. I'd much rather have what Jeremiah describes than how things are today, but we have to accept how things are today until the fullness comes.

Heb 10:9 is another verse used to put the book of Hebrews under scrutiny. Let's compare how the Greek and Hebrew versions read here...

- "Then said he, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. " (Heb 10:9, KJV)
- "Thus He said, "*See, I will come to do Your will, Elohim.*" In the clear place He delivered the first for distributions of the second. " (Heb 10:9 in Hebrew version)

The Greek version seems anti-nomial. The Hebrew version does not. In fact, the Hebrew version seems to say the first (covenant) is to teach us about the second. If that were the case, it would provide a basis for why it is valuable to learn from it.

This probably was NOT any kind of intentional change, but an innocent mis-reading. The Hebrew word used for "deliver" here can mean "turn over" or "turn away". It can refer to God turning something over to man (from Him) or it can ambiguously mean what the Greek says. In the second word footnoted, the problem may have been scribal, since the Hebrew reads "הלקיים", but Greek has the equivalent of "establish" = "קיים" in place of this. Thus, this was not a change, but simply an interpretational issue or a combination of how to interpret the wording and a possible scribal issue confounding the understanding as well (or just ink being scraped off the manuscript the first Greek translator was looking at).

### Heb 9:19-23

#### Was blood sprinkled on the book?

Heb 9:19-23 is another passage where a problematic Greek reading is explained by a Hebrew origin. The Greek version of Heb 9:23 says...

"It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these."

Why does the Greek version describe the heavenly temple as being purified with more than one sacrifice, when the sacrifice of Yeshua was a single sacrifice? To understand this, we have to go back to the Hebrew version and compare the context and linguistic differences.

Hebrews 9:19 says this....

Hebrew Version: " he took the life/lives (חיים) of the calves (masculine, plural) " It's plural, because a person's life is usually not singular in Hebrew.

Aramaic: "he took the blood of an heifer (fem, sing)..."

Greek: "he took the blood (αἷμα) of bulls (masc, plur) **and of goats...**"

The "and goats" is in some Greek MSS, but not in all Greek manuscripts. Some, like U1, have it and then crossed it out. The "and goats" is missing from all known Hebrew and Aramaic manuscripts. In the passage being referred to (Exodus/Shemot 24), nothing is said about goats. Monte Judah has criticized the book of Hebrews on the grounds of this variant, but a variant that is only in SOME Greek manuscripts and no non-Greek manuscripts does not discredit the entire book.

The Hebrew here says "lives" (חיים) where the Greek and Aramaic say "blood" (αἷμα). Since "*the life*

of an animal is in the blood" (Lev 17:11), one is a valid interpretation of the other and nothing theological hinges on this differences. When you spell out "lives" (חַיִּים) and "blood" (דָּם), you find they look a lot alike and this could be a scribal variant due to spelling/handwriting, so either handwriting or translation could be the cause of this difference.

The LIFE of a person is generally PLURAL in Hebrew because a person has more than one life. He has a physical life, a spiritual life - his soul has a life...he has many "lives", which is why both the word for "life" and "death" in Hebrew tend to be plural most of the time. The Hebrew word "death" *always* ends the way a feminine plural word would end (וְיָמָּה). "Life" is usually only singular when it is in the abstract (E.G. "To Life") or something similar.

The reason the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek all say "sacrifices" (plural) in 9:23 is because the Hebrew was the original, and it was agreeing grammatically in plurality with "lives" in 9:19. So while a plural "sacrifices" makes no sense in Greek if Yeshua was the only sacrifice, it makes perfect sense in Hebrew thought, because it is matching the Hebrew tendency to discuss life and death of even a single person in the plural.

Also, Heb 9:19 says, "he took the life/blood of the calves with water and purple/scarlet and hyssop and sprinkled [upon] the book and all the people." Some claim this verse discredits the book of Hebrews, because Torah does not record blood being sprinkled on the book. Perhaps these people should take a closer look at the Hebrew instead of relying on an English translation. Ex/Shem 24:8 says,

"And Moshe' (Moses) took the blood and sprinkled on the people , and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant which YHWH cut with you *al hadevrím ha'eleh* (לְהַדְבִּירִים הָאֵלֶּה) "ע)"

The phrase "*al hadevrím ha'eleh*" is translated "concerning all these words" in the KJV. The Hebrew word "al" can be translated either "concerning" or "on" or "through" or "alongside". IF we translate it as "on", we can preserve part of it's ambiguous multiple meanings in English. So by translating this as "on these words", we can see the double meaning the writer of Hebrews may have seen. The English word "on" can mean "about" or "concerning" (E.G., "I'm talking *on* this topic") or it can also mean physically on top of (e.g., I'm sitting *on* a chair).

Hebrew talks of "cutting" a covenant, because you cut flesh to draw blood. Covenants always involve blood in Hebrew thought. Exod/Shem 24:8 says the covenant was "cut (thus drawing blood) with you **on these words.**" This could be interpreted two ways....

- The covenant was cut physically **on** the words of the book, implying the blood that was cut dripped onto the words of the book"
- The covenant was cut **concerning** the content of the book.

Do we have to chose between one or the other? Is it possible this was an intended double meaning? And perhaps it was intended because our G-d is a consistent God, and what He does in one realm He does in another. What He does in the heavenly realm He does in the earthly. This is the whole reason the earthly temple service was set up to imitate the heavenly. Yes, our consistent G-d cut the covenant **physically on** the words of the book **TO SIGNIFY** in the natural physical realm that the covenant was cut **CONCERNING** the words of the book. the writer of Hebrews saw this intended double meaning and wrote about it.

Furthermore, we're told the blood was sprinkled on the altar, and if the book of the Law was sitting on the altar, then it too would have gotten sprinkled by some of the blood. I suspect that this is exactly what

happened from a historical standpoint, and it was done for exactly the reason I stated in the previous paragraph. Now once again, rather than this passage demonstrating that the writer does not know Torah, it actually demonstrates that he knew it very well, because it demonstrates that he drew a conclusion that would be easy to draw if you're reading it in Hebrew, but difficult to impossible to conclude if you are reading it in another language!!!!

## Was blood sprinkled on the tabernacle and the vessels?

Monte Judah writes this...

"The writer also wrote that Moses also sprinkled with blood the tabernacle when it was established. So he makes another mistake.

*And you shall set up the court all around and hang up the veil for the gateway of the court. Then you shall take the anointing oil and anoint the tabernacle and all that is in it, and shall consecrate it and all its furnishings; and it shall be holy. And you shall anoint the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and consecrate the altar; and the altar shall be most holy. And you shall anoint the laver and its stand, and consecrate it. EXO 40:2-11*

Moses did **not use blood to sprinkle the tabernacle and its vessels**. He used anointing oil and he anointed them. He didn't use water, scarlet wool, or hyssop either. ""

Let me tackle each of these issues.

(1) First off, **BLOOD** was used to **CLEANSE**, and **OIL** was used to **ANOINT** or **SANCTIFY**. I'll demonstrate this more later, but what I quoted earlier is drawing a false contradiction here. I can see where someone can easily get confused, but there is no contradiction. I'll spell this out more clearly later.

There's also an interesting passage in the Talmud (Tractate Yoma) that tells us that blood was used when the temple was consecrated on mount Sinai, even though Torah did not command this. It says...

"Rejoined R. Johanan again to Resh Lakish: "It is, according to me, who deduce it from the days of consecration, that the following Boraitha should say, that on the priests on both occasions they sprinkled during all the seven days of preparation, from all the ashes of the red cows which were to be found there, because on the days of consecration there was also sprinkling. But according to you, who deduce it from Mount Sinai, where do you find sprinkling on Mount Sinai?" Resh Lakish answered: "Even according to your theory, are they equal? In the days of consecration the sprinkling was of blood, and here water Rejoined R. Johanan. "It presents no difficulty; because R. Hiya taught the water was later substituted for the blood. But according to your theory, on Mount Sinai there was no sprinkling at all?" Resh Lakish answered: "The sprinkling was an optional improvement."" (Talmud, Tractate Yoma)

This was Oral Torah, not written Torah, but then the writer of Hebrews never says "G-d told Moses to do such-and-such" but only that the sprinkling was done. We see here that there was a debate in Talmudic times as to whether this happened, thus, it probably was not in any written records anywhere, but simply part of Oral tradition. So Heb 9:21 could be referring to Lev chapter 4, chapter 16 or even the sprinkling mentioned in the Talmud viewed as part of the Oral Torah. Josephus also tells us that Moses himself sprinkled blood on the tabernacle

"Moses purified the people after this manner: He brought a heifer.....and her blood sprinkled with his finger seven times before the tabernacle of God" (Josephus, Antiquities, Book 4, Chapter 4, sec 6)

So even if Torah doesn't record it, we find that it WAS the understanding of 1st century Judaism that Moshe' (Moses) sprinkled the tabernacle with blood. I'll have more to say on the Josephus quote later, which answers several other

objections Monte Judah raises.

And Ezekiel describes the future temple as being purified with blood. He writes...

"the first month on the first day you are to take a young bull without defect and purify the sanctuary. The priest is to take some of the blood of the sin offering and put it on the doorposts of the temple, on the four corners of the upper ledge of the altar and on the gateposts of the inner court. "  
(Ezek 45:18-19)

Granted, this is talking about the yearly dedication of the future temple, not the first-time dedication of the temple Moshe' (Moses) setup in the wilderness. But it certainly proves that what Hebrews is teaching is not in disharmony with the Tanach at all.

There is another possible interpretation to this if we accept the Hebrew version of Hebrews as the authoritative witness. There is a difference between the Greek and Hebrew version of Heb 9:21....

- "Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry." (Heb 9:21, KJV)
- The Hebrew text is a bit ambiguous and could be interpreted more than one way. Let me provide two possible translations:
  - "And the tabernacle and all its vessels of service of Elohim were sprinkled in blood while going out through it."
  - "And the tabernacle and all its vessels of service of Elohim were sprinkled in blood while going out by him."

The word "he" isn't really in the Greek text, just implied by the fact that the Greek "*εργαστησεν*" is in the 3rd person. The KJV does make it sound like Moses did this, but the Hebrew version does not necessarily say that Moshe' (Moses) did this, though it ambiguously COULD be interpreted the same way. The Greek version or the second interpretation of the Hebrew version could be referring to the same thing the Talmud and/or Josephus recorded. But there is another possible explanation for the other possible reading in the Hebrew version. This may also be referring to the annual ceremony the high priest performed on the day of atonement, as recorded in Leviticus/Vayikra 16, not what Moshe' (Moses) did in Exodus/Shemot 24.

We find in Lev 4 that it tells us...

"And he shall bring the bullock unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD; and shall lay his hand upon the bullock's head, and kill the bullock before the LORD" (Lev 4:4, KJV)

This will get blood on the door and probably other parts of the temple and whatever is nearby.

"And the priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle of the blood seven times before the LORD, before the vail of the sanctuary" (Lev 4:6, KJV)

No telling what this will get blood on, but likely most everything near the curtain. The menorah and table of shewbread are both near the curtain and within the vicinity of what could get hit by the blood.

"And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times. Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat: " (Lev 16:14-15)

"And he shall go out unto the altar that is before the LORD, and make an atonement for it; and shall take

of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about. And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel" (Lev 16:18-19)

Well, that covers most stuff. And of course when we get to Lev 16:33, we find this...

"And the priest, whom he shall anoint, and whom he shall consecrate to minister in the priest's office in his father's stead, shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen clothes, even the holy garments: And **he shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar**, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation." (Lev/Vay 16:32-33)

How does the priest "make atonement" for all these things? I've explained in the earlier quotes how the previous regulations involve getting blood on temple items mentioned here in Lev 16:33.

(2) Now as to the statement "Moses did **not use blood to sprinkle the tabernacle and its vessels**. He used anointing oil and he anointed them", **Oil** was used to **sanctify/anoint**, and **blood** was used to **cleanse**.

- "thou shalt offer every day a bullock for a sin offering for atonement: and thou shalt **cleanse** the altar, when thou hast made an atonement for it, and thou shalt **anoint** it, to **sanctify** it." (Ex/Shem 29:36)
- "And he shall **sprinkle** of the **blood** upon it with his finger seven times, and **cleanse** it, " (Lev 16:19)
- "he shall **cleanse** the house with the **blood** of the bird" (Lev 14:52)

Sometimes, water is used for cleansing instead of blood, such as a in Numbers/B'Midbar 8:7. But as the writer of Hebrews clearly points out, "**almost** all things were cleansed by blood." He doesn't say **all** things were, but **almost all** things were. Cleansing and sanctifying are two separate things. Oil was used to anoint and set apart/sanctify. Blood (or sometimes water) was used to cleanse things. John/Yochanan 19:34 records that both blood and water poured from Yeshua's side when He was pierced by the soldier's sword. There is no contradiction here.

(3) Monte Judah wrote

"Moses did **not use blood to sprinkle the tabernacle and its vessels**. He used anointing oil and he anointed them. He didn't use water, scarlet wool, or hyssop either. "

I've already discussed the first part and how it is a false contradiction and not a real one. But let's talk about whether Moses used scarlet, wool or hyssop. Torah does not record Moses doing this. The book of Hebrews does. So does Josephus.

"Moses purified the people after this manner: He brought a heifer that had never been used to the plough or to husbandry, that was complete in all its parts, and entirely of a red color, at a little distance from the camp, into a place perfectly clean. This heifer was slain by the high priest, and her blood sprinkled with his finger seven times before the tabernacle of God; after this, the entire heifer was burnt in that state, together with its skin and entrails; and they threw cedar-wood, and hyssop, and scarlet wool, into the midst of the fire; then a clean man gathered all her ashes together, and laid them in a place perfectly clean. When therefore any persons were defiled by a dead body, they put a little of these ashes into spring water, with hyssop, and, dipping part of these ashes in it, they sprinkled them with it, both on the third day, and on the seventh, and after that they were clean. This he enjoined them to do also when the tribes should come into their own land." (Josephus, Antiquities, Book 4, Chapter 4, sec 6)

So Torah does not record Moshe' (Moses) doing this but Josephus does. Josephus doesn't contradict Torah for Torah is silent on this issue. There's no reason that Josephus, the Talmud (and Hebrews) could not both be correct because they simply refer to something not commented on in Torah. There must have been **some** kind of record in the first

century AD of this happening. Now the interesting part to this is that alleged "errors" like this are used by some people to allege that the writer of Hebrews did not understand Torah and was thus a Gentile. In reality, this shows how *only* a Jew could have written this, because a Gentile would not have had access to this information when the book of Hebrews was written. Gentiles had copies of the Torah, but Josephus records what was understood as part of the Oral tradition or possible Hebrew writings that did not circulate among Gentile Christians. Thus, the fact that the book of Hebrews records details that only Jews knew about in the first century AD proves that a Jew must have written the book of Hebrews!

## Was Hebrews "Greek"?

"The book is really an epistle (a letter) entitled to the Hebrews, but as you will soon see, the writing and logic is Greek." (Monte Judah)

I disagree. I've established from several places that Monte's analysis of the book of Hebrews is very dependent on an English translation of a Greek text, which itself was translated from a Hebrew original. I've demonstrated many places where Monte missed observing how the English does not represent the Greek and his article does not explore where the Greek differs from the Hebrew at all. These things must be explored to truly see whether Greek or Hebrew thought prevails in the book. In many places, Judah gained the impression that Greek thought existed simply because of the way the book was translated, and not because of any original thought content in the book of Hebrews at all.

For example, Judah quotes Heb 8:13 and says the Greek definition of "new" is being used in the logic. Of course, I've already analyzed how the English text differs from the Greek here and how the Greek differs from the Hebrew. And when we peel all those misunderstandings back, we not only find that the logic isn't "Greek", but that the wording of the original Hebrew text in using terms like "came full in days" (a good thing) explains how the logic behind the Hebrew thought process was misunderstood.

Another similar comment is this,

"It was written in Greek, quoting from Greek copies of the Scriptures, and using Greek definitions to explain and teach Hebraic things." (Monte Judah, Nov 2005)

Again, I have to disagree and I think these comments are using circular logic. To "prove" it was written in Greek, he quotes an English translation of the Greek version of Hebrews. Well, an English translation of the Greek version of Hebrews SHOULD sound like it has some Greek influence to it!!!! No matter how Hebrew it started out, if it gets translated into Greek and people look to the Greek version, some level of Greek influence will come through in the final product. The only valid way to show it was written in Greek or quotes the Greek LXX is to **COMPARE** the Hebrew and Greek versions, and show the Hebrew could have **ONLY COME FROM** the Greek. Judah never does this, but quoting the Greek version to prove it has some Greek influence in thought is circular reasoning. And the particular examples he chooses, such as the Greek vs Hebrew concept of "new", deal more with what is being read INTO the text than what is really there.

NOT ONCE does the Hebrew version of Hebrews agree with the LXX and disagree with the Hebrew Masoret quotations. If it came from a Greek source text, we would expect that to happen at least somewhere.

## Covenants

- *For where a covenant is, there must of be (of necessity) the death of the one who made it. For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives. HEB 9:16-17*

"There is a major difference between a testament and a covenant." (Monte Judah)

Here's something Monte Judah and I DO agree on. There is a major difference. But the KJV translators seem to confuse them together. In the Greek New Testament, the word "diatheke" is translated "covenant" 21 times in the KJV and "testament" 19 times, almost a dead-even 50-50 split. So while there is indeed a difference between the English concept of a "covenant" and the English concept of a "testament", that distinction is not noticed in the King James or any Bible influenced by the KJV. So we can't blame the writer of Hebrews for the choice of words the KJV chose to make.

Different translations render this a bit different...

- "Where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it..." (Heb 9:16, NASB)
- "where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator..." (Heb 9:16, KJV)
- "In fact, making an agreement of this kind is like writing a will." (Heb 9:16, CEV=Contemporary English Version, HIGHLY PARAPHRASED!!!)

Now most people in English speaking societies interpret Heb 9:16 in light of the American idea of a "last will and testament" and possibly never think twice about the idea that there is a different meaning to this. In fact the more an American would read this, the more convinced he is likely to be that this is what Hebrews is talking about here. But it is not. It's about the Hebrew concept of a covenant, not the Greek/Roman/American concept of a testament. And to ancient Hebrew thought, this still makes sense, it just makes a different sense.

A contract is when two people promise to do something for each other. Sometimes contracts establish business relationships, such as landlord/tenant or business partnerships.

A **covenant** is when two people enter into a relationship for the sake of the relationship, and the relationship IS what they expect to get out of it. You can sue someone for violating a contract, but there's no real grounds to sue someone for violating a covenant relationship, because it simply is what it is and it is worth what it is worth. That relationship is valued by the character of the person. A woman can't sue her husband on the grounds he doesn't love her enough. No court can force that kind of compliance. In fact, the very act of bringing a lawsuit would destroy the very foundation of trust that a covenant relationship must have to be of any value. This is why the only lawsuit that it makes any sense to file concerning a covenant relationship would be a divorce from it. On the other hand, if someone you have a covenant relationship with dies, then there might be valid grounds for a legal action to establish your right to inherit from their estate if there was any debate over who gets what. You may need to prove you were married to someone or that someone is your son/daughter/father/etc to establish inheritance rights.

In fact, when two unrelated men entered into a covenant in ancient Judaism, this also established inheritance rights. G-d did not take the throne away from Saul's family and give it to David's line. David actually **inherited** the throne from Saul by entering into a covenant relationship with Saul's son Jonathan. The prophets validated his position, but had they not, David might have had to go to court to prove that he had established a covenant with Jonathan to claim any legitimate inheritance rights in the family. Of course, since the king was the chief judge, there'd be no place for David, in his particular case, to file a legal grievance. But as long as the one you've entered into a covenant with is still alive, there's no reason to sue for anything because a relationship is worth what it is worth.

So in ancient Hebrew thought, there is a DIFFERENT reason for saying what is said in Heb 9:16 than there would be by today's modern "testament" standard. Heb 9:16 makes one sense if we interpret it the Greek/English way. It makes a different sense if we interpret it the ancient Hebrew way in which inheritance rights are established by law, rather than choice as recorded on a piece of paper. It makes sense either way, but it makes a different sense one way versus the other. One would not conclude that this HAS to be related to the Greek/English concept of a "last will and testament" unless they were either unfamiliar with ancient Jewish custom of covenant making or they simply biasly refused to accept the idea that this is anything else. But there is certainly no problem here.

It is similar to the concept of a "last will and testament" in that it is talking about inheritance rights from someone you had a covenant relationship with. It is different because it is NOT talking about a document the deceased filled out while still alive to specify who he wanted to receive what. And when you get to Heb 9:18, the idea that it is

talking about the Greek/English idea of a "last will and testament" falls apart because Heb 9:18 makes no sense in that light, even if I can interpret the prior 2 verses that way. Heb 9:18 says...

"THEREFORE, even the first covenant was not confirmed without blood" (Heb 9:18)

From the standard of a Hebrew covenant, this makes perfect sense. But from a Greek/English standpoint of a testament, it makes no sense at all. Paper and ink, not blood, is used to establish a "last will and testament", but blood, not paper is used to establish a Hebrew covenant. A Hebrew covenant must be "cut" (thus, drawing blood).

## Side Notes

Some of the criticism launched at the book of Hebrews is almost trivial, but deserves explaining. One basis for attacking Hebrews is this...

"Wait a minute, the Mosaic Covenant is not the first covenant. The covenant with Adam was the first.  
" (Monte Judah, Sept/Oct 2005)

While true, let's backtrack to the context. In Heb 8:8-et seq, Hebrews quotes Jeremiah and says...

*"Behold, the days are coming," spoke YHWH, "and I will cut with the House of Yisrael (Israel) and the House of Yehudah (Judah) a new covenant, not like the covenant which I cut with their fathers in the day I seized them by their hand to take them out of the land of Egypt...." (Heb 8:8...)*

Here's a context is selected in which Jeremiah compares the "covenant which I cut with their fathers in the day I seized them by their hand to take them out of the land of Egypt" with the "new covenant". And while that covenant was not the "first", it is the first mentioned in this particular context of comparison, which is how the writer is intending it. The writer was not ignorant of the fact that several covenants came before the "covenant which I cut with their fathers in the day I seized them by their hand to take them out of the land of Egypt", he was simply speaking according to the context under which he quoted. Jeremiah talks and compares TWO covenants, and the writer refers to the one at Sinai as the "first" and the new covenant as the second, which is totally appropriate given the context.

## Wrong part of Torah

Heb 9:3-4 is another verse used to attack the credibility of Hebrews. It reads like this...

- "And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; Which had the golden censer..." (Heb 9:3-4a, KJV)
- "Yet behind the second veil was the enclosure which was called the Holy of Holies. In the midst of it was the gold tray/censer (*machtat zahab*)..." (Hebrew Hebrews 9:3-4a)

The word "machta" is translated a number of different ways. The KJV translates it as "snuffdish" (Ex 25:38, 37:23, Num 4:9), "firepans" (Exod 27:3, 38:3) and "censer" (Lev 10:1, Num 16:17, 17:2). Meridian's Dictionary translates it as "shovel".

Monte Judah claims this contradicts with Exodus/Shemot 40, but it does not. First off, Exodus/Shemot 25:38 records a gold tray/censer (*machtat zahab*) in the Holy Place for the menorah. There were several bronze ones for the altar of incense. On most days, incense was burned on the altar of incense. But on the Day of Atonement, things were done a little different. It was put on a golden censer and taken directly into the Holy of Holies. This is recorded in Lev 16:12, where it says...

"And he shall take a censer (*machta*) full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD,

and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil: And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not: " (Lev 16:12-13, KJV)

Tradition tells us that the gold censer (*machtah*) used on the Day of Atonement was NOT the same as the golden censer near the menorah nor was it the same as the various bronze censers used with the altar of incense. A bigger and heavier one was used that was only used on this special day. What the writer of Hebrews is describing for us in Heb 9:3-4 is the temple on the Day of Atonement. The altar of incense is not mentioned in Heb 9, but it was not used on the Day of Atonement. The golden censer that was carried into the Holy of Holies was used in its place.

The fact that the writer of Hebrews was painting for us a picture of the Day of Atonement is seen just a few verses later where he says...

"And when this was ready, the kohanim (priests) went in the exterior every season in the tent of the meeting for all services of Elohim. Yet in the tent of the meeting, the High Kohen (Priest) entered the interior **only one time during the year** ....  
(Hebrew Heb 9:6-7)

So immediately after the description of the temple, the writer of Hebrews draws a contrast with how the temple was on normal days and how it was on the Day of Atonement. Now why did the writer of Hebrews focus so much on the Day of Atonement in Heb 9:3-4? the answer to that can be found in the next passage that follows...

"And in this it appears through the hand of the Ruach HaQodesh (Holy Spirit) that the matter had not been revealed of the way of the holy things the whole time that first tabernacle was standing. which was a likeness of the present period that the kohen (priest) brought near sacrifices and burnt-offerings which were not by their hand at that time to bring a passing of service of Elohim. " (Heb 9:8-9)

The bringing of the incense into the Holiest Place speaks to us of how the typical daily temple service was only a foreshadow of the reality and the heavenly service. We know from Revelation 5:8 that this incense represents the prayers of the believers, and the writer of Hebrews wanted to remind the reader that we have a direct line of prayer to the Almighty through the Atoning work of Yeshua - something an High Priest who rejects Yeshua would not have. He was trying to bring to mind to the reader that this was as good as it got for the earthly priesthood - to have that once-a-year when it is brought into the Holy of Holies. But our prayers, which is what the incense represents, goes daily to the throne of the Almighty.

The earthly rehearsal was done this way to remind us that in order for our prayers to pierce the heavenly veil, we need the sacrifice of the Messiah. We need what the Day of Atonement symbolizes.

So the gold censer being referred to in Hebrews 9 was not the gold censer referred to that was next to the menorah nor was it one of the bronze censers normally kept with the altar of incense. It was a special censer used only for the Day of Atonement (much like we have special dishware / silverware only for Passover).

In Monte Judah's criticism of this passage, he says this...

"the passage in Revelation 8:3-5 sheds more light on the matter. The passage contains both the words "altar" and "censor" together. The Greek word for "altar" (*thusiasterion* #2379) is the same word used in Hebrews 9:3"  
(Monte Judah, Yavoh, 2005)

Monte made several factual mistakes. One is that the verse in question is Hebrews 9:4, not Hebrews 9:3. Also Rev 8 uses the word "altar" (*thusiasterion*) while Hebrews 9:4 uses the word "censor" (*thumiaterion*). They are very similar in Greek, but they are not the same word. Monte Judah's criticism was based on it being the same, and he incorrectly

quotes Hebrews 9:4 as saying that the altar of incense is in the Holy of Holies, when it does not say that. Monte may have been relying on a faulty translation, though he doesn't claim which one he used. The NIV says "altar of incense" here, but most of the better translations (KJV, Darby, YLT, others) correctly read "censer".

## Heb 6:1

Another verse used to discredit Hebrews is Hebrews 6:1. Here is how it reads in various versions...

- "Therefore leaving the *principles* of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God" (Heb 6:1, KJV)
- "Wherefore, leaving the word of the **beginning** (αρχη) of the Christ, let us go on [to what belongs] to full growth, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and faith in God" (Heb 6:1, Darby, more literally representing the Greek text)

Note how the KJV translated "αρχη" as "principles", when "beginning" makes more sense here, and gets rid of at least *part* of the problems with how the text reads. And even the KJV admits this could be wrong, since a 1611 footnote to the KJV has the Darby translation! The 1611 KJV has this footnote: "or the word of the beginning of Christ." However, this correction doesn't fix all the problems though. It's still talking about "leaving" something important, just not leaving everything important as the KJV suggests. Here's the Hebrew version...

"Therefore now set aside (or "permit") to speak (or "the word/matter") concerning the beginnings of *the life of* the Messiah but only from the testing in maturity again to establish the foundation of repentance of dead works [and] of faith in Elohim."

The Hebrew version is a bit ambiguous and could be interpreted to say "let us permit to speak...", since "set aside" can mean "permit" in Hebrew thought. It can also mean "leave", as the Greek has. It could also be interpreted to say "let us set aside the word/matter...", which would be in basic agreement with the Greek and Aramaic texts. דבר can mean "speak", "word" or "matter", the last of which is the Greek understanding of the text. It is possible the writer meant to say "let us permit/set-aside to speak..." and due to the ambiguity in the Hebrew text, it was interpreted as "let us leave the matter..." when it was translated into Greek. So it's easy to see how this ambiguous Hebrew text got translated different the way it did, but it makes more sense when we interpret it differently than how the Greek translators translated it.

I hope you have enjoyed this article and invite you to visit me at my web site at [www.messiahalive.net](http://www.messiahalive.net)