

The Tumbleweed

A Biblical Discourse Regarding "The Elders"

Let us for a moment consider that even a casual believer with perhaps only a rudimentary understanding of G_D, as portrayed in the Holy Scriptures, realizes that first and foremost G_D is a supreme being of power and order ... a G_D who has a plan for EVERYTHING!

Let us consider for just a moment:

The Great Signs and Wonders ...

The Evening and Morning ... one Day ...

Seven Days in a Week ...

Twelve lunar cycles in a year ...

The Great Flood ...

The Calling of Abraham ...

The Everlasting Covenant ...

The Festival cycle - Three Pilgrimages | The Holy Days-Appointed Times | The Sacred Sabbath | The New Moon | The Seventh Year Shmittah | The Fiftieth Year Yovel ...

The Eternal Law ...

The Rhythm of the Seasons ...

The Agricultural & Land Regulations ...

The Tabernacle Pattern ...

The Priestly Order (Levites) ...

The Wilderness Encampment - Twelve Tribes ... Clans ... Families

The Officers' Charge - Ten's; Hundreds; & Thousands ...

The Seventy Judges ...

Jerusalem's Walls & Gate Layout

The Redemption of the first born ...

The Male circumcision on the Eighth Day ...

The Prophets ...

Messiah Yeshua's Manifestation and Victory ...

In fact for Israel ... the real question boils down to this: "What has not been declared as being under G_D's plan and order?"

Naturally this is indeed a rhetorical question and Holy Scriptures ... from Genesis through Revelation give us the answer ... **"Absolutely nothing is outside of G_D's plan for Israel and all Creation!"**

With this truth being declared let us not meander down the rabbit hole and ponder why G_D allows wickedness and evil to permeate throughout His creation ... let us just admit that G_D is G_D and we are mere mortals ... HE has HIS plan and it is surely playing out to establish HIS will!

The point of focus that this commentator wants to explore herein however is the order of things within the community ... by G_D!

Oh we are all well aware of: the Priests, the Prophets and the Judges ... as revealed within the first five books of Holy Scripture. And we are certainly aware of Israel's desire to have an Earthly King like the other nations ... and how G_D allowed it (Book of Samuel). But we also see another "people group" ordained by G_D ... the Elders! Hmmm ... the Elders!

But before we review this people group let us first take a gander at what is revealed about the community and people in general:

Genesis 6:3 And the LORD said: 'My spirit shall not abide in man forever, for that he also is flesh; **therefore shall his days be a hundred and twenty years.'**

Psalms 90:10 **The days of our years are threescore years and ten (70 Years), or even by reason of strength fourscore years (80 years); yet is their pride but travail and vanity; for it is speedily gone, and we fly away.**

Exodus 38:26 a beka a head, that is, half a shekel, after the shekel of the sanctuary, **for every one that passed over to them that are numbered, from twenty years old and upward**, for six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty men. (Men of fighting age)

Leviticus 27:1-7 And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying: Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them: When a man shall clearly utter a vow of persons unto the LORD, according to thy valuation, then thy valuation shall be for the male from twenty years old even unto sixty years old, even thy valuation shall be fifty shekels of silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary. And if it be a female, then thy valuation shall be thirty shekels. And if it be from five years old even unto twenty years old, then thy valuation shall be for the male twenty shekels, and for the female ten shekels. And if it be from a month old even unto five years old, then thy valuation shall be for the male five shekels of silver, and for the female thy valuation shall be three shekels of silver. **And if it be from sixty years old and upward: if it be a male, then thy valuation shall be fifteen shekels, and for the female ten shekels.**

Numbers 4:1-3 And the LORD spoke unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying: 'Take the sum of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, by their families, by their fathers' houses, **from thirty years old and upward even until fifty years old, all that enter upon the service, to do work in the tent of meeting.**

Leviticus 25:8-11 And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and there shall be unto thee the days of seven sabbaths of years, even forty and nine years. Then shalt thou make proclamation with the blast of the horn on the tenth day of the seventh month; in the day of atonement shall ye make proclamation with the horn throughout all your land. **And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof; it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.** A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be unto you; ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of the undressed vines.

OK ... to begin we see how G_D numbered ... ordained some discrete parameters. We see man in a post-flood world being ultimately limited (in time) to an age of 120 years. We see David reveal in Psalms 2,000 years later that man's longevity in a general sense had been significantly reduced ... by at least an order of 50 years ... or an entire Yovel/Jubilee!

We see G_D in the wilderness define the age of battle (20 years and upwards). We see G_D restrict the age of Priestly servitude from 30 to 50 years. We see G_D declare that the valuation for community members less than 20 years of age and older than 60 years of age was for lack of a better term ... discounted!

It should be noted as well that the sages, despite the fact that there is no prescribed age limit for military service in Holy Scriptures, have discerned the restrictions on military service to be generally 50 or 60 years of age!

We also see within G_D's Sacred Festival Cycle where the Yovel ... the Jubilee is extremely important for Israel ... the people ... and just perhaps we can discern a sense of relationship between the Yovel and a person's life journey ... a person's walk with the G_D of Israel?

Ultimately however ... what we should be able to discern is that G_D has plans for the community and it is also clear that G_D does not expect the elderly population to ... for lack of a better term ... be laboring as are their younger brethren.

If we consider David's inspired declaration that man's limitations (in general) are 70 years or per chance 80 years if a person is blessed with strength from G_D, then naturally this idea of the individual person's 50th year ... their jubilee takes on added importance ... yes?

So does it appear that G_D supports a "retirement plan" ... at 50 years of age ... at 60 years of age? Hmm!

Just what is it that G_D is revealing about the community in terms of His rhythm and order ... in terms of His order of design? More specifically what is G_D revealing to us about the nature and role of the elders within the believing body ... within Israel?

As always ... let's go to the Sacred Text to see what we can learn ...

Exodus 3:16-18 **Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them:** The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, hath appeared unto me, saying: I have surely remembered you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt. ... And they shall hearken to thy voice. And thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him: The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, hath met with us.

Exodus 12:21 **Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them:** 'Draw out, and take you lambs according to your families, and kill the passover lamb.

Exodus 18:12 **And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt-offering and sacrifices for God; and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God.**

Exodus 24:1 And unto Moses He said: 'Come up unto the LORD, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off;

Numbers 4:13-15 And if the whole congregation of Israel shall err, the thing being hid from the eyes of the assembly, and do any of the things which the LORD hath commanded not to be done, and are guilty: when the sin wherein they have sinned is known, then the assembly shall offer a young bullock for a sin-offering, and bring it before the tent of meeting. And the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands upon the head of the bullock before the LORD; and the bullock shall be killed before the LORD.

Numbers 11:16-25 And the LORD said unto Moses: 'Gather unto Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tent of meeting, that they may stand there with thee. And I will come down and speak with thee there; and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone. ... And the LORD came down in the cloud, and spoke unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and put it upon the seventy elders; and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied

Numbers 16:23-25 And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying: 'Speak unto the congregation, saying: Get you up from about the dwelling of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.' And Moses rose up and went unto Dathan and Abiram; and the elders of Israel followed him.

Numbers 19:11-12 But if any man hate his neighbour, and lie in wait for him, and rise up against him, and smite him mortally that he die; and he flee into one of these cities; then the elders of his city shall send and fetch him thence, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die.

Numbers 21:1-8 If one be found slain in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it, lying in the field, and it be not known who hath smitten him; then thy elders and thy judges shall come forth, and they shall measure unto the cities which are round about him that is slain. And it shall be, that the city which is nearest unto the slain man, even the elders of that city shall take a heifer of the herd, which hath not been wrought with, and which hath not drawn in the yoke. And the elders of that city shall bring down the heifer unto a rough valley, which may neither be plowed nor sown, and shall break the heifer's neck there in the valley. And the priests the sons of Levi shall come near--for them the LORD thy God hath chosen to minister unto Him, and to bless in the name of the LORD; and according to their word shall every controversy and every stroke be. And all the elders of that city, who are nearest unto the slain man, shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley. And they shall speak and say: 'Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen

it. Forgive, O LORD, Thy people Israel, whom Thou hast redeemed, and suffer not innocent blood to remain in the midst of Thy people Israel.' And the blood shall be forgiven them.

Numbers 22:13-19 If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her, and lay wanton charges against her, and bring up an evil name upon her, and say: 'I took this woman, and when I came nigh to her, I found not in her the tokens of virginity'; **then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth the tokens of the damsel's virginity unto the elders of the city in the gate. And the damsel's father shall say unto the elders:** 'I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hateth her; and, lo, he hath laid wanton charges, saying: I found not in thy daughter the tokens of virginity; and yet these are the tokens of my daughter's virginity.' And they shall spread the garment before the elders of the city. **And the elders of that city shall take the man and chastise him.** And they shall fine him a hundred shekels of silver, and give them unto the father of the damsel, because he hath brought up an evil name upon a virgin of Israel; and she shall be his wife; he may not put her away all his days.

Numbers 25:7-10 **And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then his brother's wife shall go up to the gate unto the elders, and say:** 'My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of a husband's brother unto me.' **Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him;** and if he stand, and say: 'I like not to take her'; **then shall his brother's wife draw nigh unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face;** and she shall answer and say: 'So shall it be done unto the man that doth not build up his brother's house.' And his name shall be called in Israel The house of him that had his shoe loosed.

Numbers 27:1-3 **And Moses and the elders of Israel commanded the people, saying:** 'Keep all the commandment which I command you this day. And it shall be on the day when ye shall pass over the Jordan unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, that thou shalt set thee up great stones, and plaster them with plaster. And thou shalt write upon them all the words of this law, when thou art passed over; that thou mayest go in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of thy fathers, hath promised thee.

Numbers 31:9-13 **And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, that bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and unto all the elders of Israel.** And Moses commanded them, saying: 'At the end of every seven years, in the set time of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the LORD thy God in the place which He shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Assemble the people, the men and the women and the little ones, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law; and that their

children, who have not known, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over the Jordan to possess it.'

Numbers 32:7-9 **Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations; ask thy father, and he will declare unto thee, thine elders, and they will tell thee.** When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the children of men, He set the borders of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel. For the portion of the LORD is His people, Jacob the lot of His inheritance.

Joshua 8:30-33 Then Joshua built an altar unto the LORD, the God of Israel, in mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the LORD commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of unhewn stones, upon which no man had lifted up any iron; and they offered thereon burnt-offerings unto the LORD, and sacrificed peace-offerings. And he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote before the children of Israel. **And all Israel, and their elders and officers, and their judges, stood on this side the ark and on that side before the priests the Levites,** that bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, as well the stranger as the home-born; half of them in front of mount Gerizim and half of them in front of mount Ebal; as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded at the first, that they should bless the people of Israel.

Joshua 20:1-5 And the LORD spoke unto Joshua, saying: 'Speak to the children of Israel, saying: Assign you the cities of refuge, whereof I spoke unto you by the hand of Moses; that the manslayer that killeth any person through error and unawares may flee thither; and they shall be unto you for a refuge from the avenger of blood. **And he shall flee unto one of those cities, and shall stand at the entrance of the gate of the city, and declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city; and they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them.** And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver up the manslayer into his hand; because he smote his neighbour unawares, and hated him not before time.

Joshua 24:1-2 **And Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers;** and they presented themselves before God. And Joshua said unto all the people: 'Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel: ...

Joshua 24:31-33 **And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, and had known all the work of the LORD, that He had wrought for Israel.** And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in the parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for a hundred

pieces of money; and they became the inheritance of the children of Joseph. And Eleazar the son of Aaron died; and they buried him in the Hill of Phinehas his son, which was given him in mount Ephraim.

Commentary:

The Elders in the early years ...

Well ... it certainly appears that "the elders" were a fundamental and critical component of Israel in the wilderness years and upon entrance to the Holy Land ... agreed?

We see the elders working in union with Moses ... with Joshua ... with the Priests, essentially serving as a fundamental element within the community ... working as an extension of the Holy Servants in various capacities ... as witnesses ... as prophets ... as judges ... as teachers ... as leaders!

We see the elders having a fundamental duty in maintaining the tradition, order and testimony of G_D within the community. We see the elders, perched at the gates of the cities, representing the face of Israel ... standing as watchmen ... letting everyone know that from one generation to the next that "ADONAI is G_D and that Israel is G_D's firstborn!"

Honestly it would appear that the text is intuitively obvious and reveals to us that G_D has a special purpose for "the elders" and furthermore it does not appear that G_D is thinking in terms of retirement and a life of leisure, entitlement and limited societal productivity ... agreed?

But let us continue on ... seeing G_D's design; let us briefly review how "the elders" are viewed during Israel's first millennial reign:

Psalms 71:17-24 O God, Thou hast taught me from my youth; and until now do I declare Thy wondrous works. **And even unto old age and hoary hairs, O God, forsake me not; until I have declared Thy strength unto the next generation, Thy might to everyone that is to come.** Thy righteousness also, O God, which reacheth unto high heaven; Thou who hast done great things, O God, who is like unto Thee? Thou, who hast made me to see many and sore troubles, wilt quicken me again, and bring me up again from the depths of the earth. Thou wilt increase my greatness, and turn and comfort me. I also will give thanks unto Thee with the psaltery, even unto Thy truth, O my God; I will sing praises

unto Thee with the harp, O Thou Holy One of Israel. My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing praises unto Thee; and my soul, which Thou hast redeemed. My tongue also shall tell of Thy righteousness all the day; for they are ashamed, for they are abashed, that seek my hurt.

Proverbs 3:13-18 Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that obtaineth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. **Length of days is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor.** Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that holdest her fast.

Proverbs 9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the All-holy is understanding. **For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased.**

Proverbs 8:32-34 Now therefore, ye children, hearken unto me; for happy are they that keep my ways. **Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Happy is the man that hearkeneth to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.**

Proverbs 31:23 **Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.**

Proverbs 1:20-26 Wisdom crieth aloud in the streets, she uttereth her voice in the broad places; She calleth at the head of the noisy streets, at the entrances of the gates, in the city, she uttereth her words: 'How long, ye thoughtless, will ye love thoughtlessness? And how long will scorers delight them in scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man attended, But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also, in your calamity, will laugh, I will mock when your dread cometh;

Ruth 4:7-11 Now this was the custom in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning exchanging, to confirm all things: a man drew off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour; and this was the attestation in Israel. So the near kinsman said unto Boaz: 'Buy it for thyself.' And he drew off his shoe. **And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people:** 'Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I acquired to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place; ye are witnesses this day.' **And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said: 'We are witnesses.**

Lamentations 4:11-16 The LORD hath accomplished His fury, He hath poured out His fierce anger; and He hath kindled a fire in Zion, which hath devoured the foundations thereof. The kings of the earth believed not, neither all the inhabitants of the world, that the adversary and the enemy would enter into the gates of Jerusalem. It is because of the sins of her prophets, and the iniquities of her priests, that have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her. They wander as blind men in the streets, they are polluted with blood, so that men cannot touch their garments. 'Depart ye! Unclean!' men cried unto them, 'Depart, depart, touch not'; yea, they fled away and wandered; men said among the nations: 'They shall no more sojourn here.' **The anger of the LORD hath divided them; He will no more regard them; they respected not the persons of the priests, they were not gracious unto the elders.**

Ezra 1 5:3 - 1 6:8 At the same time came to them Tattenai, the governor beyond the River, and Shethar-bozenai, and their companions, and said thus unto them: 'Who gave you a decree to build this house, and to finish this structure?' 'Then spoke we unto them after this manner [wrote they]: **What are the names of the men that build this building? But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, and they did not make them cease,** till the matter should come to Darius, and then answer should be returned by letter concerning it ... 'Now therefore, Tattenai, governor beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai, and your companions the Apharesachites, who are beyond the River, be ye far from thence; **let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in its place. Moreover I make a decree concerning what ye shall do to these elders of the Jews for the building of this house of God; that of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the River, expenses be given with all diligence unto these men, that they be not hindered.**

Commentary:

Well ... most assuredly we can see from Holy Scriptures that G_D's ordained role for the elders continued in place throughout the Judean Monarchy ... even until the end of the Babylonian Captivity and the rebuilding of the Holy City of Jerusalem by the hands of "the elders" ... on this there is no debate!

But in the inspired writings of David and Solomon we see more clearly the work of G_D in the elders. We see David imploring G_D to keep him strengthened ... to keep him purposeful in his advanced age so that David could witness to G_D's glory in his own life.

We see from Solomon, the wisest of men, how within the elders the wisdom of G_D is to manifest at the very gates of the cities ... how the elders are blessed with increased days and years so that Israel could be watched over!

We see further how Israel refused the order of G_D ... how Israel failed to heed the priests and elders ... as Israel became secularized ... as Israel drifted away from the ways of old ... drifted away from G_D - and they were harshly punished for doing so!

Yet ... when it came time for restoration ... when it came time to be returned from Babylon ... G_D used the elders to not just make a point but to re-establish the Holy city itself. And how much sense does this make? How poignant is it that HaSHEM used the elders and priests to spearhead the construction of the great walls and gates of the city? Hmmm ... it would appear that there is most assuredly a message from HaSHEM herein!

Ultimately we should conclude without difficulty that G_D's ordained order for the elders is clearly evident and in many respects realize that the role of the elders is far more than simply serving as a societal linchpin. It would appear that the elders are in fact an integral and foundational component of Israel - serving to provide the mortar that binds the families and communities of Israel together ... as an extension of the Priestly, Judicial, and Monarchical authorities Biblically established.

But yet again ... let us continue on and take a look at this elder dynamic at the time of Yeshua!

Luke 7:1-10 Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. **And when he heard of Yeshua, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant.** And when they came to Yeshua, they besought him instantly, saying, that he was worthy for whom he should do this: For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. Then Yeshua went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Yeshua heard these things, he marveled at him, and turned him about, **and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.** And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.

Matthew 15:1-9 Then came to Yeshua scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, **why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?** For they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, **why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?** For God commanded, saying, honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; and honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, **this people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.**

Mark 8:27-31 And Yeshua went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, whom do men say that I am? And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, one of the prophets, and he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Mashiah. And he charged them that they should tell no man of him. **And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.**

Mark 11:27-30 **And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders,** And say unto him, by what authority doest thou these things? And who gave thee this authority to do these things? And Yeshua answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? Answer me.

John 9:19-23 And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? How then doth he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: **But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.** These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Mashiah, he should be put out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, **He is of age; ask him.**

Matthew 26:57-60 **And they that had laid hold on Yeshua led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.** But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end. **Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Yeshua, to put him to death; But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none.**

Mark 15:1 **And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Yeshua, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate.**

Matthew 27:3-10 **Then Judas, which had betrayeth him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.** And they said, what is that to us? See thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, the field of blood, unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, **And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.**

Matthew 27:19-23 **When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him. But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Yeshua.** The governor answered and said unto them, whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them, what shall I do then with Yeshua which is called Mashiach? They all say unto him, let him be crucified. And the governor said, why, what evil hath he done? **But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.**

Matthew 27:39-43 **And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.**

Commentary:

Not surprisingly at the time of Messiah we find that the elders of this generation, like in days gone by, to have a position of honor and esteem. We find the elders, also not surprisingly, clearly in league with the Jewish Religious establishment ... the Priests, Pharisees and Scribes.

But ... we assuredly do not find the elders of this generation to be manifesting the cry of wisdom at the city gates. Instead we find these elders to be the keepers of tradition and the policeman of halakha

(religious practice) ... we find the elders to be ignorant of true Torah practice - preferring the rites, practices and beliefs that they have contrived ... in league with the politicized Priesthood and self-righteous Pharisees! ... We find the people to be actually in fear of the elders - afraid to withstand what they deem to be righteous and acceptable. These elders do not present the picture of humility depicted by Abraham and Moses ... these elders are not operating like the Patriarchs!

And of course we know that it would be a very short 40 years until Messiah's declaration regarding the destruction of the Temple came to fruition ... essentially ending the first millennial reign of Kingdom Israel!

So ... do we then simply look back with forlorn eyes and drink the Kool-Aide that claims judgment has come to Israel ... that the Holy Priesthood and been abandoned ... that the Everlasting Covenant has been done away with by the New Testament ... that the Church has taken Israel's place ... that the elders no longer have a place of prominence in G_D's design?

HEAVEN FORBID!

Acts 11:27-30 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: **Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.**

Acts 14:21-23 And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of Elohim. **And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.**

Acts 15:1-6 And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all

things that Elohim had done with them. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. ... **And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.**

Acts 16:1-4 Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek. **And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.**

Acts 21:15-18 And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem. There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge. And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. **And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.**

1 Timothy 5:1 **Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; the elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity. ... 5:17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.**

Titus 1:5-6 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: **If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.**

James 5:13-15 Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? **Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:** And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

1 Peter 5:1-5 **The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder,** and a witness of the sufferings of Mashiach, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of Elohim which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over Elohim's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. **Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder.** Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for Elohim resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

Commentary:

Well bless my soul ... it surely appears, like in all other aspects of faith, that the Apostles had no intent that traditional Jewish life or order, as prescribed by HaSHEM would be radically changing. No sir ... not at all since we see where the prophets and elders appear to be alive, well and in a position of prominence within the B'rit Chadasha communities. ... Or most assuredly this would appear to be the intent of Yeshua's disciples!

So pray tell beloved children of G_D ... what happened?

Why ... along with the secular olam hazeh (the temporal world) do most of our purportedly believing communities look upon the elderly as: feeble; weakened; not-so-sharp; not to be taken seriously; not to hold positions of authority; not to be honored?

Quite honestly in this commentator's experiences this modus operandi can even be sadly observed throughout numerous so called Torah submissive communities!

Somehow the modern believing communities apparently can't understand that G_D's order of things is not an ala-carte menu ... that HIS order of things is comprehensive ... that HIS patterns were given for a reason and that HIS patterns will prevail ... just as HE revealed.

So ... what can we say in the interim ... hmmm?

Now ... knowing from the Gospel accounts that the elders are indeed in league with the religious establishment of Yeshua's day ... we perhaps can get a better picture as to what The Baptist and Yeshua mean in the following passages:

Matthew 3:7-12 **But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.**

Matthew 16:1-5 The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, when it is evening, ye say, it will be fair

weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, it will be foul weather today: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? **A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.** And he left them, and departed. And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.

Matthew 23:29-33 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchers of the righteous, and say, if we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. **Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?**

Luke 20:9-18 Then began he to speak to the people this parable; a certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time. And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty. And again he sent a third: and they wounded him also, and cast him out. Then said the lord of the vineyard, what shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him. But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, this is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them? He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, **Elohim forbid. And he beheld them, and said, what is this then that is written, the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.**

Commentary:

Since Messiah discusses "these people and this religious establishment" in terms of "a generation" ... and knowing that active priests by definition are not elders ... it very well could be that the generation is being defined by the single age group we can account for ... "the elders".

When we consider that the rebuilding of Jerusalem was spearheaded by the elders ... it does not seem to be a far stretch that Messiah's reference from Isaiah regarding the stone rejected by the builders ... was directly meant for the very people group designed to recognize Him and usher in the great rebuilding project. (Just thinking a bit here beloveds) Hmm!

So perhaps this commentator is out on a limb here ... then again maybe not ...

Ephesians 2:13-22 But now in Mashiach Yeshua ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Mashiach. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto Elohim in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. **Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of Elohim; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Yeshua Mashiach himself being the chief corner stone;** In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of Elohim through the Spirit.

Revelation 21:9-14 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, **and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from Elohim,** Having the glory of Elohim: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; **And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:** On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. **And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.**

Revelation 4:1-4 After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. **And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold**

Commentary:

Well it surely seems that the notion of the elders as being integral to building and playing a key role in the Jerusalem restoration project ... might not be so far-fetched given the additional B'rit Chadasha revelations concerning the elders. In fact it would appear that after disqualifying themselves from being

"appointed elders" ... that generation of elders confronting Yeshua was supplanted by the generation coming up behind them ... as duly appointed elders! ... Or at least this would appear what the Sacred Text declares!

But once again ... what about now ... what about when Yeshua returns ... do we honestly believe that the patterns regarding "the elders" will not apply ... do we believe that Messiah will return without formally establishing a people group comprised of "the elders"? Hmmm!

Now in pondering an observation that this commentator has made over the years regarding the greater Messianic Jewish Movement ... a movement that seems to be dominated by people being called from all walks of life ... but also people being predominantly in the mid-forties to mid-fifties age group ... could it be ... could it be that Messiah is sending us a message?

Could it be that Messiah is readying a believing body that will not be lacking an identifiable and qualified people group of elders? A people group, certainly over fifty years of age and more likely over 60 years of age that "has the faith of Messiah Yeshua AND keeps the commandments of G_D?"

And if by chance ... and if you the reader would receive it ... that this could be the case - then the ramifications are staggering and potentially point to a sooner than expected return of Messiah Yeshua! ... WOW!

But in all honesty beloved children of G_D ... the real issue to be dealt with is what is going on in the so called body of Messiah ... where are the elders ... where is the prominence ... where is the accountability?

This commentator asks because the Biblical text is clear regarding the integral nature of this people group. So ... do we simply not have elder believers in our communities? Or are our elder community members not as spiritual or educated or passionate as the younger brethren?

Or per chance is the problem not with the elders but with the "religious establishment" ... with the priests and rabbis? Hmmm!

Could it really boil down to a matter of pride ... the unwillingness by religious leaders to submit to G_D's plan? Hmmm!

Yes beloved children ... it would appear that the so called body of Messiah has some serious problems and in the case of the purported Torah submissive Messianic communities ... well there seems to be no less of a problem ... in general terms of how the elders are dealt with!

So I will leave you all with this issue to ponder! And don't think for a moment that this is a self-serving commentary because this commentator does not think of himself as a tumbleweed ... at least not yet anyway!

Hmmm ... a tumbleweed? You might ask!

A tumbleweed is a structural part of the above-ground anatomy of a number of species of plants, a diaspore that, **once it is mature and dry, detaches from its root or stem, and tumbles away in the wind.** In most such species the tumbleweed is in effect the entire plant apart from the root system, but in other plants a hollow fruit or an inflorescence might serve the function. Tumbleweed species occur most commonly in steppe and arid ecologies, where frequent wind and the open environment permit rolling without prohibitive obstruction.

Apart from its propagules (that is, its seeds or spores), the tissues of the tumbleweed structure are dead; **their death is functional because it is necessary for the structure to degrade gradually and fall apart so that the propagules can escape during the tumbling, or germinate after the tumbleweed has come to rest in a wet location.** In the latter case, many species of tumbleweed open mechanically, releasing their seeds as they swell when they absorb water.

And what might the tumbleweed have to do with the topic of the elders?

Well beloved children of G_D consider for a moment how upon the end of formal servitude (being burdened - laboring) the elder is freed from the roots of formal productivity ... no longer engaging in the things needed to be actively productive in society ... unyoked from all the agendas that permeate their lives ... free to simply be blown hither and thither as The SPIRIT leads ... free to wander and encounter the wet places awaiting the seeds that they have to offer!

Just like the tumbleweed our elders today are viewed as dried up and dead. Oh yes they may be functionally dead in terms of transparent productivity but as we see in G_D's plan this is by design and this is because they have reached a level of complete maturity wherein they can now be used by G_D ... in a very special manner!

So ... do we view our beloved tumbleweeds with honor and respect knowing how important they are ... knowing what G_D is working through them? Or do we look upon them without the eyes of faith and see a dried up functionally dead weed?

Do we view the passing tumbleweed with disdain or do we use the tumbleweed to give us insights as to: which way the wind is blowing; the nature of the journey they traveled; what things were like in days gone by; how HaSHEM has blessed them with the gift of Messiah Yeshua in their lives?

The answer is critical because if there are no wet receptors ... then all the tumbleweeds (and their vast stores of wisdom and tradition) will simply blow away into obscurity! And if this be the case who then will tend the gates of cities and communities?

Now let us chew on this for a while!

Shalom Aleichem,

P. R. Otokletos