

Jews & Christians on Mesorah – From the Mishnah to Eusebius

מסורת חכמינו לפי המשנה ומקורות נוצריים מן המאה הד' לפי הספירה

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1) The Mishnaic Perspective

Mishnah, *Avot* 1:1-4, 6, 8, 10, 12 (ed. ca. early 3rd century CE)

<p>משה קבל תורה מסיני ומסרה ליהושע ויהושע לזקנים וזקנים לנביאים ונביאים למסורה לאנשי כנסת הגדולה...שמעון הצדיק היה משירי כנסת הגדולה...אנטיגנוס איש סוכו קבל משמעון הצדיק...יוסי בן יועזר איש צרדה ויוסי בן יוחנן איש ירושלים קבלו ממנו...יהושע בן פרחיה ונתאי הארבל קבלו מהם...יהודה בן טבאי ושמעון בן שטח קבלו מהם...שמעיה ואבטליון קבלו מהם...הלל ושמאי קבלו מהם</p>	<p>Moshe received the Torah from Sinai and conveyed it to Yehoshua, and Yehoshua to the Elders, and the Elders to the prophets, and the prophets conveyed it to the Men of the Great Assembly...Shimon the Righteous was among the remnants of the Great Assembly...Antigonos of Sokho received it from Shimon the Righteous...Yose b. Yoezer of Zeredah and Yose b. Yohanan of Jerusalem received it from him...Yehoshua b. Perahia and Nitai of Arbel received it from them...Yehuda b. Tabai and Shimon b. Shetah received it from them...Shemaiah and Avtalyon received it from them...Hillel and Shamai received it from them...</p>
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2) Eusebius' Goals

Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.1.1 (ca. early 4th century CE)

The chief matters to be dealt with in this work are the following: [a] The lines of succession from the holy apostles, and the periods that have elapsed from the our Savior's time to our own...[b] The names and dates of those who through a passion for innovation have wandered as far as possible from the truth, proclaiming themselves the founts of Knowledge falsely so called while mercilessly, like savage wolves, making havoc of Christ's flock. [c] The calamities that immediately after their conspiracy against our savior overwhelmed the entire Jewish race...[d] accounts of martyrdom]

Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.2.1

My account of what follows will therefore be complete if I begin my exposition of [Jesus'] entire story with the basic and essential points of the doctrine. By this means, both the antiquity and the divine character of Christian origins will be demonstrated to those who imagine them to be recent and outlandish, appearing yesterday for the first time.

3) Christian מסורה?

Eusebius 1.4.6, 8

With regard to all these men who have been witnessed as righteous, going back from Abraham himself to the first man, one would not be departing far from truth in calling them Christians in practice if not in name...They cared nothing for bodily circumcision – nor do we; nor for keeping of Sabbaths – nor do we; nor for abstentions from certain foods...nor do these things matter to Christians now.

4) Jewish Discontinuity in Eusebius

Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.10.3

[Jesus] began his mission in the high priesthood of Annas and continued until the reign of Caiaphas, the period covered does not stretch to four complete years. For, at that time the ordinances of the Law were already obsolescent and the rule was no longer operative under which the duties of God's service were hereditary and lasted for life; the Roman governors bestowed the high priesthood first on one, then on another, and the office was held for not more than a single year.

5) Jewish Discontinuity in Eusebius Part II: Interpretation of Bereshit 49:10

Genesis 49:10 (ca. 13th century BCE)

<p>לא יָסוּר שֵׁבֶט מִיְהוּדָה, וּמַחֲקֵק מִבֵּין רַגְלָיו, עַד כִּי-יָבֹא שִׁילָה, וְלוֹ יִקְהַת עַמִּים</p>	<p>The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute shall come to him (?), and the homage of the peoples be his.</p>
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Genesis 49:10, Septuagint (LXX) Version (cited in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.6.1)

There shall not be wanting a ruler from Judah, nor a leader sprung from his loins, until he come for whom it is reserved (i.e. ψ) [and he is the expectation of nations].

Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.6.8

[W]ithout question in [Herod's] time that the advent of Christ occurred; and the expected salvation and calling of the Gentiles followed...in accordance with the prophecy [LXX Gen 49:10]. As soon as the rulers and leaders from Judah – those of Jewish stock – came to an end, not surprisingly the high priesthood...was plunged into immediate confusion.

6) Anti-Pauline Christianity? The *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies*

Epistle of Peter to James (prefaced to *Homilies*) 2.3-4 (ca. early-mid 4th century CE, Syria)

Acts 15:7, 10-11 (ca. 80-85 CE)

Some from among the Gentiles have rejected my legal preaching, attaching themselves to certain lawless and trifling preaching of the man who is my enemy. Some have attempted these things while I am still alive, to transform my words by certain intricate interpretations towards the dissolution of the Law – as though I myself were also of such a mind but did not freely proclaim it: God forbid!

After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: “...Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.”

7) Christian מסורה in the *Homilies*

Homilies 8.6.1-5 (ca. early-mid 4th century CE, Syria)

...Jesus is concealed from the Hebrews who have taken Moses as their teacher (*apo men Hebraiôn ton Mōusên didaskalon eilêphotôn kaluptetai ho Iêsous*), just as Moses is hidden from those who have believed Jesus (*apo de tôn Iêsou pepisteukotôn ho Mōusês apokruptetai*). Since there is a single teaching by both (*mias gar di' amphoterôn didaskalias*), God accepts one who has believed either of these. To believe a teacher is for the sake of doing the things spoken by God.

And our lord himself (i.e. Jesus) says that this is so: “I thank you, Father of heaven and earth, because you have concealed these things from the wise and prudent, and you have revealed them to sucking babes” (cf. Matt 11:25/Luke 10:21). Thus God Himself has concealed a teacher from some (i.e., Jews), who foreknew what they should do (*tois men ekrupten didaskalon hōs proegnōkosin ha dei pratein*), and He has revealed (him) to others (i.e., “pagans”), who are ignorant about what they should do (*tois de apekalupsen hōs agnoousin ha chrê poiein*). (*Hom.* 8.6.1–

8) The *Homilies* on the Pharisees

Matthew 23:1-3 (ca. 80-90 CE)

1Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, **2**“The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat, **3**so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice.

Homilies 3.18.1-19.1

...“Ask you father, and he will tell you; your elders and they will declare to you” (Deut 32:7). It is necessary to seek this father [Adam, here a prophet] and to make further search for these elders [the Jews]! But you have not sought out concerning the one to whose time belongs the kingdom and to whom belongs the seat of prophecy, even though he himself (i.e. Jesus) points this out himself, saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in the seat of Moses; all things that they say to you, hear them.” “Hear them,” he said, “as entrusted with key of the kingdom, which is knowledge, which alone can open the gate of life, through which alone is the entrance to eternal life. “Truly,” he says, “they possess the key, but those wishing to enter they do not suffer to do so.” On this account, I say, he himself – rising from his seat like a father for his children proclaiming the things which from the beginning were transmitted in secret to the worthy, extending mercy even to the Gentiles, and having compassion for the souls of all – neglected his own blood.

Homilies 3.47.1

The Law of God was given, through Moses, without writing (*agraphos*) to seventy wise men, to be handed down, so that the government might be carried on by succession.