

On Authority

Dear Marc,

Thank you for your comments. I was thinking neither to advocate nor to oppose Kent Hovind's views, but merely to let people who had had some earlier exposure to his videos etc know what had happened after all. There seemed to be a dearth of information after the news that he was no longer coming to South Africa last November (2006), and people might like to hear from *him* where he had been coming from.

In addition, I felt we need to remind one another that what has happened with very little respite in the past is still happening today (although in a very mild form so far to the Hovinds), and will certainly continue to happen increasingly and with increasing intensity as the last days draw closer.

Most of those reading the two emails I sent out seem to have accepted the information on that basis, whether they agreed or disagreed with Hovind, and have not felt it necessary to comment (I have had one or two responses thanking me for the links). However you have commented, to the entire mailing list, as was your right, and I think a rejoinder to the same audience would be correct. And I must ask your pardon, and that of the others listed, for taking so long to compile this reply. Internally I have had to struggle with many concepts, externally I have had many other demands on my time, and to cap it all the document-in-preparation disappeared off my hard drive when it was about 10 pages long and I had to start again from scratch, covering a lot of new ground but being very frustrated because I knew I was missing a lot of the previous content. None of my search attempts could locate the original. Eventually, just before I printed the draft of the second document for proof-reading, it popped up again in a directory where it really shouldn't have been, and I was able to integrate the two strains of research. I hope that the wait has been worth it for any readers who might be interested, certainly the effort has been worth it for me.

Just a note on style: when feeling the need to make a comment on the side - and I do, frequently - I have tended to tab it in, to mark it off from the main line of thinking, and then to tab out again to the previous offset when the comment is complete. It is the textual equivalent of the stage "aside", if you like.

I must start by stressing that I do largely agree with you, as far as you go, and in particular thanking you for the warning that you end with; but I feel your brief analysis is a rather one-sided over-simplification of a very fundamental concept in our faith, the concept of *authority*. I would like to try to develop a more comprehensive and balanced view of *authority* from the scriptures, because it seems to me that such an important concept should be understood as well as we can manage, so that we may behave righteously. Succeeding in this should help us to follow Paul's advice more closely and effectively than by merely taking it at face value.

There are, I think, many people who liked what Hovind had to say about Creation. They need to realise that you may like to *say* that same message, but you cannot *live* that message without running into conflict at some stage with a secular authority that in practice is almost certainly, in some degree or another, in conflict with the Torah of the Almighty. This these people may not like, but it is they who are inconsistent rather than Hovind. Maybe Hovind is wrong in the particulars, maybe he is right. It is not our duty or prerogative to judge him, but certainly we can learn some serious life-lessons from his history. By trying to understand where he is coming from, we may gain some understanding of what we are heading towards. And we may come to appreciate his willingness to stand for his beliefs.

To turn to Paul *in the first place* for our principles is a risky business, as I have come to understand over the past decade or so. Too many times I have thought I understood a principle that seemed to be clearly and unmistakably stated by Paul, but on more careful investigation I have found that what he seemed to be saying wasn't at all what he was really getting at. My perspectives and frame of reference had been so shifted over to the Greek/pagan paradigm that is characteristic of most Xtianity that I had two chances of hearing Sha'ul clearly, and I believe this is also true of most Xtians that I know. (To a lesser extent this is true of Peter also.)

Paul comes into the line of scriptural revelation very near to its end, and he is in the position of a commentator and interpreter and applier of principles that have been established long before. Sure, he throws light on some previously hidden or obscure truths, but this light enhances, not overturns, the truths that were previously established. He often uses language that is highly metaphorical, and no one insists that we take it literally because it is clearly intended in a non-literal way. Also we should note that Paul did not write his letters as *introductions* to doctrine, he wrote to assemblies and individuals who had already received instruction and generally a great deal of instruction, maybe many months of it, and he was now trying to fill up some of the gaps and imbalances that he had become aware of.

In general, actually, the revelation that YHWH has given us in the Scriptures reminds me of an enormously, incredibly complex movement in a classical music symphony, both contrapuntal and harmonic in design, with many themes appearing and recurring and being referred to briefly or being treated in a new way for a few bars or an entire section, being blended with and offset against other themes. It is all perfectly balanced and incredibly rich and worthy of great study, in the large and in the minute, but above all the symphony needs to be **listened to**, from beginning to end! And as in listening to a great piece of music, the most important instance of a particular theme is its *Statement*, the initial appearance. This provides the composer with the working material that he builds into the subsequent *Development*, usually the bulk of the work, where he explores its potential. The Statement is literally *toonaangewend*. We need with any Scriptural doctrine to go back to the beginnings to find its initial appearance, then work forward noting subsequent re-appearances and how they are treated in their context and what each reappearance contributes to the development of the theme and our understanding of it. Finally, as one nears the end of the entire masterpiece, one encounters the *Recapitulation* where the theme is restated in all its glory, with perhaps some of the adornment that has been attached to it along the way, before the ending which has the audience on its feet in admiration and stirred in every fibre of their beings and jubilant in praise of the Composer and all the musicians who have brought His concept into reality. In this *Symphony of the Scriptures*, it is clear that the *Statement* of all the themes must be found in the 5 Books of Moses; the *Development* follows for many pages after that; I would reckon the *Recapitulation* as starting with the book of Hebrews and progressing through James, Peter, John, Jude and Revelation, with John the Beloved Disciple being accorded the unique privilege of penning those two closing chapters which I dare not read too frequently, they are so precious and deeply moving that I only take them out on special occasions.

To minimize the risk of misunderstanding scriptural principles, we need to first meet them in embryo and in full flower in the Pentateuch; see how they were implemented, varied or ignored in the nations of Judah and Israel and how they will be implemented in the prophetic future; turn to Yahusha haMashiach for an authoritative restatement of intent and perfect demonstration of implementation; and then look through the Apostolic Commentary with a framework of reference established into which we can set the writings of Sha'ul, Yohachanon, Ya'acov and Yehuda, rightly dividing the word of truth. Taking the short-cut that begins after Malachi (more properly 2 Chronicles, in the Hebrew canon), maybe even jumping in only after Acts, is never to be recommended.

So Paul's letters are in general not a good **starting** point for doctrine, people who start with Paul are likely starting in the wrong place and pointing in somewhat the wrong direction. Supplementary teaching is not generally good, balanced, normal teaching! Indeed, many of Paul's quotations from the Tanak, as we have them, are not verbatim and may actually seem to contradict the original writings, like the inversion of a theme in counterpoint, unlike the quotes by haMashiach. There is a duty on the reader to contextualize, to interpret, to understand. The same, in my view, is true of passages like Romans 13, where it is impossible for Sha'ul to mean literally what he seems to say and yet uphold the Tanak. Therefore it behoves us, alerted by the apparent disjunct between Hovind and Romans 13 in regard to obedience to earthly government, to start not by dismissing Hovind, but by asking "What does Romans 13 mean in relation to the rest of Torah?" When that is settled, then only can we ask "Is Hovind in step with the Scripture or not?"

So I would like to go back a bit further into the Scriptures to learn about this enduring and fundamental principle of *authority* before trying to understand what Paul had to say in his time and context, and before trying to understand its application in ours. Much though I would like to have the time and the competence to exegete every relevant passage of scripture in this regard, I simply do not. So I will just pick a few passages which I trust will throw light on most sides of this issue. In this I will be guided, although not entirely restricted, by Hebrews chapter 11, the Honor Roll of Faith, which it might be useful to keep open on the screen alongside this e-mail. It will soon lead us to an interesting acknowledgement:

In the Tanak we have numerous examples of people who in the service of YHWH Elohim acted contrary to the ordinances of those whom we see as being in authority over them.

(As usual, I'll mainly be quoting either from The Scriptures or from Young's Literal Translation.)

Encouraged by Heb 11:3, let's start at the very beginning, a very good place to start indeed. *In the beginning, Elohim created the heaven and the earth.* Here we are introduced to authority, supreme authority, the authority of unsurpassed might and power, the authority that can say to nothingness *Become a universe*, and it jumps into being and to attention. Surely there can be no resistance to such authority? How can the creature conceivably resist the creator? But there it is, just a couple of chapters later, a cunning plan to subvert mankind from their blessed privilege of willing obedience to YHWH, the privilege of free will, of good sense, and it uses exactly those Points of Access commented on by John in his first epistle: it *looks good*, it is surely going to be *good to consume*, and you know what? It'll make us *better off* than we are now. Like, better people even.

Let's take a moment to consider the state of Adam and Eve before this temptation. Not only were they absolutely fantastic beings, and the crowning glory of an entire creation that Elohim had declared to be *very good*, but they had been commissioned to undertake a gigantic task, and had therefore been equipped with every necessary capacity, *including the necessary authority*, to perform it. How could the Deceiver get them to imagine they could become better off? Let me answer that: By distracting Eve's thought from the unique, set-apart Name of their creator which she would never aspire to assume, and pointing it in the general direction of His attribute of greatness. And this is exactly Satan's own fall - to want to replace YHWH with another as Elohim. Misdirecting her from the essential significance of the matter under discussion by hiding the Creator's Name - and Adam knew it well, as we see from its repeated use in Genesis 2, and communicated it to his wife, as we see from her use in Genesis 4:1 - Satan offers her what seems like quite a reasonable option, which she could aspire to in some degree if she didn't think too hard: Authority without hierarchy, without submission to the One Being Who is and will always be without external restriction.

And the plan is effective, horribly so. Man opens up the door marked *Disobedience*, walks through it into an authority vacuum - and lands up in the Flood. The only people to survive are those who by faith are obedient to the specific instructions, the authority, of YHWH. In doing this, Noah (Heb 11:7) *by belief,.... condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to belief.*

Noah's son Ham is cursed (in his son Kena'an, actually, consider the Fifth Commandment, Ham himself had already been blessed), for doing what? Something that goes against the Torah of the Fall, against the realization that looking on another's nakedness, and letting another look on yours, is no longer innocent except for one that you are entitled to "know". (Romans 5:20 refers). The spotlight falls on Kena'an's son Nimrod, because our first scriptural record of a large formal authority structure is that of Nimrod, Noah's great-grandson-by-Ham who is noted in Genesis 10 as setting up a reign which covered a pretty large area, including the city of Ur where Shem's descendant Terah (Abram's father) eventually lived. To get this into perspective, we need to unpack those slightly puzzling verses

Gen 10:8 And Kush brought forth Nimrod, he began to be a mighty one on the earth.

Gen 10:9 He was a mighty hunter before יהוה, therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before יהוה."

Gen 10:10 And the beginning of his reign was Babel, and Erech, and Akkad and Kalneh, in the land of Shinar.

Gen 10:11 From that land he went to Ashshur and built Nineweh, and Rehoboth Ir, and Kelaḥ

Gen 10:12 and Resen between Nineweh and Kelaḥ, the great city.

And I must warn you, there is a lot to unpack. Let's take a peek behind the tapestry.

In verse 8 Nimrod is not yet an *el*, a mighty one, instead - as Young points out - he began to be a *hero*. A valiant, excellent hunter, of spreading fame. As Strong will verify, at this stage he was a *gibbor tsayid*, a brave ambusher or chaser. Initially (and this is repeated, so there can be no mistake), he was a *gibbor* hunter *before YHWH*. That "before", *paniyim*, is a complex word, it can convey diametrically opposed meanings ranging from *beseeking* to *impudent against*. No wonder the translators sit on the fence. Consider the whole background, and take your pick of meanings. Was Nimrod initially an El-fearing, brave man who sought the aid and guidance of YHWH in his hunts, or did he exult in his own talent, the adrenalin rush, the satisfaction when a plan comes together, his ability to nail a given animal without reference to a higher power? I don't know for sure, I do have an opinion, but I am sure that that *gibbor tsayid paniyim YHWH* wasn't included, let alone repeated, just to fill up the word count. It calls for our attention and careful consideration. Perhaps we need to use the full spectrum of meanings for *paniyim* to describe Nimrod's attitudes as he developed in experience?

What you have to understand is that every outstanding hunter is an outstanding technologist, an outstanding goal-directed technologist. He brings every scrap of available information to bear on the problem at hand: *how do I achieve the goal of having that particular beast lying dead on the ground before me, rather than vice versa?* And there is no room for failure, you have got to succeed, every time.

You could draw an interesting comparison with Thomas Pakenham's assessment in *The Boer War* of the young Paul Kruger: *The veld had bred in him the unusual qualities that made a man a successful leader in hunting lions or black men: the mixture of animal strength and human cunning, of self-reliance and faith in the Lord, and the steely will, strong but flexible, equally serviceable in advance and retreat.*

So maybe Nimrod was, initially, one who consistently committed his way to YHWH as an outstanding goal-directed technologist. What was he hunting? You don't get that kind of reputation from nailing the odd rabbit for the lunchbox or a bokkie for the potjie, it has to be more serious game than that - although a bit of venison would never go amiss. Nimrod must have been a big game hunter of outstanding valour and method and accomplishment to generate this kind of reputation. I imagine that he may have been a prototype of the Hercules of Greek mythology, who made his name by ridding areas of dangerous man-threatening beasts as well as doing feats that were beyond the competence of other mortals.

Knowing how the predators operate, he is able to advise people on how to protect themselves. You can almost hear the gears working in Nimrod's brain: *I've got all these people depending on me for protection, and my reputation and my position on top of the heap depend on always succeeding. How can I maintain this esteem, let alone grow my influence? Quick, a lateral thought please!* And the lateral thought is this: *Safety in numbers! Herd the people together into a meaningful critical mass for security and economic purposes, let them each contribute a little bit of spare capacity to the common good for building up common defence bulwarks - hey, look, that city-concept really works! Forefather Cain had a pretty good take on things, what a great guy!*

To people who were desperately tired of huddling in their miserable wattle-and-daubs every night listening to nature red in tooth and claw approaching with earth-shuddering roars subsiding into hot stinky snuffles and scritch-scritchings to find a weak place in the flimsy primitive walls - to these people a clean-up operation in their locality by Nimrod the mighty hunter was quite literally a lifesaver; and who would not want him to stay on there in case of further incursions by predators from other areas? Many must have been the inducements offered to get him to extend his visit. He was the hero, no arguments. Call Nimrod with some justice *Soldier against humanity's enemies*. Honour him. And pretty soon, Nimrod is running the first protection racket. *Do as I say, submit to my authority, and I'll protect you from the wild beasts. You've got any problem at all, call on good ole' Mr Nimrod to sort it out.* And he gives value for money with his technology. (It would be a long time later - Leviticus 26, 2 Kings 17 - that the spiritual rather than technological problem was explicitly highlighted.) Before you can say "The terror by night" (and it is very interesting to study Psalm 91:5 with the aid of Strong's) Nimrod is expanding his area of influence. And becoming impressed with his own technological nous and competence. Well on his way to becoming an *EL*.

Now the Scripture hints that at least some of Cush's sons landed up in North-Eastern Africa, ranging maybe from Egypt to Ethiopia as fertile settling-places for those wanderers who moved South and West after the flood, and this may well have been Nimrod's first stamping ground. Nimrod got around quite a bit. And it appears he knew of other areas where other relatives had settled in an independent migration from the Ararat region, and piecing together scraps of information it seems that he put together the first naval armada, sailed across the Red Sea and headed up the Persian Gulf to spread his authority a little by armed conquest in the area of the "Seven Cities". Perhaps at a guess the Cushites weren't quite prepared to go along with Nimrod to the lengths that his dawning ambition proposed, and he figured that Mesopotamia would be more fertile ground for his imperial dreams. Here it appears he met Semiramis, a madame or inn-keeper at the time, whose CV later had to undergo some politically correct and mythologically inspiring revision (e.g. *Botticelli, The Birth of Venus*.)

Pretty soon Nimrod - and this is Scriptural fact - had a whole string of cities, a *kingdom* in fact Dr Young? maybe even an empire, stretched out to the North and North-East from the Persian gulf across much of Mesopotamia, an area of perhaps half a million prime square kilometres, including much of the length of the Euphrates and the Tigris Rivers.

Just as a city needs a more sophisticated social structure than does the isolated rural extended family, you need to shift up yet another level or two to run an empire or farflung kingdom with many cities scattered over a large piece of countryside. So Nimrod becomes the first person designated in Scripture as constituting a widespread civil authority structure, over which he is the reigning king. It appears to be with perfectly understandable and laudable intentions, he was as I say delivering value for money. To exercise his rule and keep order he had to develop an authority structure, a new level of regulation and administration, and we may be sure that he did a pretty good job of it. He had the charisma and the cunning to be a prototypical politician, in his own unpleasant but often-copied way.

To quote from a student of earth's ancient history,

The Hebrew historian Flavius Josephus, in the Antiquities of the Jews, depicts Nimrod as a tyrannical leader, demanding complete dominion and control over the people.

As Josephus writes: "He persuaded them not to ascribe it to [YHWH], as if it was through his means they were happy, but to believe that it was their own courage which procured that happiness. He gradually changed the government into tyranny - seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of [YHWH], but to bring them into a constant dependence upon his power." He likely rose to power by being a mighty protector over the land with his fearless gift of hunting and killing predatory wild animals that were a threat to human civilization, therefore receiving the title "mighty hunter before [YHWH]" (Gen. 10:9).

But where does all this lead to? It leads straight into Genesis 11 and the tower of Babel, where people united in intention and understanding and speech, wise in their own eyes, think that they can establish a super-society that is insulated from external force, so much so as to be independent of the authority of YHWH. In fact, YHWH now becomes a threat to their society and the authority which is built into that society. The society has reacted against using *the fear of YHWH* as its constitutional base.

Are we surprised to discover that there was something rotten in all this? With the discovery of his political talents and technological genius came a creeping pride that pushed out whatever dependence Nimrod had previously placed in YHWH (please remember, he didn't know anything about "G-d", his revolt wasn't against "G-d", it was against YHWH.). So successful was he, so effective his technology, that his loyal followers and citizens concluded they didn't need to be in a subservient, dependent relationship with the Almighty any longer, and planned the tower of Babel, apparently as a precaution against a replay of that appalling flood that had done away with so many cool types - with well-known results. But before that denouement, Nimrod was the ruling authority over a large chunk of prime real estate, including Ur of the Chaldees, where a certain Terah was resident.

What is YHWH's long-term answer to this rebellion? (I'm not referring to the obvious immediate expedient of confusing their speech, which is almost a red herring in this analysis, and is steadily being overcome in our own day and age.) It is, my friend, the nation of Isra'el, a nation unlike any other, which is to be a theocracy governed by the Torah of YHWH their Elohim. It is to be a placeholder for the Kingdom of Heaven. And so we need to trace the steps of Terah.

Even though we do not have a full timeline for Nimrod, we do know that Shem himself still had another 200 years to live when Avram was born, and so it's not unreasonable to believe that Nimrod himself, two generations younger than Shem, was still the ruling authority over Terah and Avram and Lot.

Although this is not explicit in Scripture, the traditions have it that Shem actually slew Nimrod because of the evil of his reign, leading to the whole Semiramis/Tammuz/Nimrod triad. Semiramis herself is identified in mythology as the "Mother of the gods". Between Nimrod's overweening pride and Semiramis' wanton ways and her fertile - mental - production of mythic beings to worship, based perhaps on folktales about the beings mentioned at the start of Genesis 6, it is not surprising that the whole of Nimrod's empire was quickly turned to idolatry. One might say that Semiramis gave Nimrod religious power, while Nimrod gave Semiramis political power.

An often-unnoticed implication is that Nimrod's reign saw the flourishing of polytheism. Certainly in *Gan Eden*, as in the Ark, monotheism was dominant. So it makes more sense to be alert to the depicted decline of religious insight from monotheism into idolatry and polytheism at this time, than to imagine that mankind was nobly striving upwards towards inventing monotheism.

In such a context, it seems all too reasonable that Terah was an idol-maker and seller, benefiting materially from the popular culture whatever his own secret thoughts may have been. Certainly

(Josh 24:2) Terah was an idol-worshipper. But Terah had a son, Avram. Avram became convinced that there was only one Mighty One, and persuaded his father to depart from idols. (Again, the traditions tell us that Avram suffered terribly for his monotheism at the hands of Nimrod, and that Nimrod was then slain by Shem.)

Make of that what you will, it does not stand in the Scripture. If it is true, it would appear that Avram did not accept his father's authority without question in every issue of faith and practice. And perhaps herein lies the explanation of the curious route Terah chose...

With economy of words we are told in Genesis that Terah left Ur, down almost on the Persian Gulf, with his family *to go towards the land of Canaan*, although he never got that far. It appears that instead of heading more-or-less due west across the top of the Syro/Arabian desert, like the route followed by Ezra many centuries later, he moved north-west along the length of the Euphrates river right up to Haran, lying beneath the forbidding Taurus Mountains of the north, not too far from Mount Ararat, leaving quite some southing to be made along the third side of the triangle, close to the Mediterranean seaboard, before reaching Canaan. In the process Terah traversed the entire long axis of the empire of Nimrod.

Yes, a strange route to choose - unless perhaps he was undertaking a monotheistic missionary journey, a watchman sounding the warning of error and judgement to come to the people who had turned their backs on the One Who had saved all mankind in the Ark, and had given their blanket allegiance to Nimrod and his accompanying plethora of idols. Who knows, perhaps he even sought an audience with Nimrod himself, to tell him the gospel that he had learned from his son. And he might have doglegged to Nineveh, with less extensive success than met his distant descendant many centuries later. (Did Yonah's challenge raise a clanging echo from a folk-conscience in which this record had been tucked safely away to sleep?) There is possibly a slight hint of this missionary activity continuing in Haran in Gen 12:5.

And it is not impossible, as far as I know, that Terah was trying to bring his family under the protective covering of Shem himself, who might well have settled far closer to Ararat than Cush did in the second generation after Noah. If this were the case, perhaps Avram did graduate study in Shem's Academy of Torah Learning.

But that, however plausible, is speculation, and you may feel free to disagree with it. Whether you agree with the point I am about to make I am not sure, so let me open it up to your view: *to my mind the act of moving out from under the authority of a particular system is as much, if not more, a repudiation of the authority of that system as is a deliberate contravention of the ordinances of the system while remaining within its coverage. It is certainly a more thorough and complete repudiation of that authority.*

Terah in moving towards Canaan, even via Haran, was resisting the authority of Nimrod, and it was a gesture which Terah did not bring to completion (the Scriptures are silent on why not - perhaps with his idol-serving history compared to his son's unshakeable monotheism it would not have been appropriate for Terah to be noted as the beginning of the nation that was to be set-apart for the esteem of YHWH. Or perhaps - noting the call to Avram - Terah was reluctant to get too far out of touch with the culture he knew). But it did at least build the springboard to launch Avram in response to the call of YHWH to go to the land which He would show him, which would become the physical locus for a nation that would be Torah-obedient and would be a shining example to the other nations of how to live. This nation, independent, in its own physical territory, would ideally be the earthly, human, voluntary expression of the Kingdom of YHWH. It would be several centuries before it was constituted in loco, but the first step towards it was the repudiation by Terah of the usurping authority of Nimrod. This attitude is remarked on poignantly in *Heb 11:16 But now they long for a better place, that is, a heavenly. Therefore Elohim is not ashamed to be called their Elohim, for He has prepared a city for them.*

Let's take one step back and review: What was the reaction of Elohim to Terah's step of faith/rejection of Nimrod? He called Avram to go further, to the land which He would show him and give to his descendants. We don't see anything of the judgement that we might have expected in terms of Romans 13. (Which suggests that we might do well to reconsider what we understand from Romans 13.) What we do see, in

Heb 11:9 By belief, he sojourned in the land of promise as a stranger, dwelling in tents with Yitshaq and Yaaqob, the heirs with him of the same promise,

Heb 11:10 for he was looking for the city having (the - YLT) foundations, whose builder and maker is Elohim

makes no clear sense to me at all except in the light of the above analysis concerning Nimrod. (Incidentally, the recent Jewish parsha "Toldot" absolutely cries out for this snippet of information from the Apostolic Commentary, so that we may understand that for 15 years Ya'akov was learning Torah and the promises at Grandfather Abraham's knee while Esaw was despising all this religious guff and getting out there and emulating the romantic and mysterious hunter-king Nimrod, that cool wide-spectrum innovator who was related to him via Captain Noah, but whom Grampa had somehow utterly turned against.)

Perhaps we should stop briefly then at the tents of Yitzhak, Rivkah, Esaw and Ya'akov. The honoured patriarch's intention was to confer the usual special blessing onto his firstborn, but this was in conflict with the command of YHWH, which was revealed not to him, but to his wife, and through her to his second son. (BTW, it is clear that Esaw and Ya'akov were not monozygotic twins, conceived at the same instant in a single ovum that then split apart, and so we do have to allow the possibility that Ya'akov may have been *conceived* before Esaw... but this is not strictly germane to this discussion, except that it might be good to wonder just who was being pushy in the birth process: Ya'akov or Esaw? Who was in fact the older in terms of conception, rather than delivery?) Therefore Rivkah and Ya'akov were posed with this joint problem: Should I the wife submit to the authority of my husband in defiance of the clear revelation from YHWH? Should I the son submit to the authority of my father in defiance of that same revelation? Perhaps they consulted Grampa Avraham on the issue.

As I look at it, I think they came to understand that if Yitzhak were to do the normal thing, he would be opposing the Most High, and it was their responsibility to prevent this while upholding Yitzhak's authority. Thus Ya'akov was mentally prepared for the strategic opportunity to buy the birthright from Esaw in a legal and irrevocable transaction as the first step towards legitimately acquiring the blessing of the firstborn which would enable him - and his father - to be obedient to the intentions of the Almighty. Yet he does not do it by deception - he presents Esaw with an opportunity, a challenge, to repent of his material obsessions and to confess to his improper behaviour and disrespect for his elders and his heritage. For the red-bean stew that Ya'akov had prepared was traditionally a dish for the memorial meal at the death of an honoured family member, and the only such person who died at about the right time (when Ya'akov and Esau were about 15 years old) was Avraham himself. So it seems that at the moment when Esaw should have been participating in the funeral formalities and indicating his identification with and acceptance of the oncoming obligations of continuing the patriarchal line, we find him out in the field having sport and hunting game instead. Ya'akov challenges Esaw with the charge that what he has done shows his unsuitness to hold the birthright. Esaw says snappily in effect *Who cares, if I don't get some of that stuff into me right now I'm gonna die and then what good is the birthright gonna do me* and by his disrespect for the honour and lack of faith in the Almighty to preserve him for a few minutes longer judges himself as unworthy of it.

We see Ya'akov later preparing the blessing-meal for Yitzhak, and pointing out to Rivkah the obvious threat to the proper upright outcome of their plan: "*What if my father touches me? Then I shall be like a deceiver in his eyes, and shall bring a curse on myself and not a blessing.*" It is easy to dismiss this as saying it was just the greed and the guilty conscience speaking, but that is a vast misreading of this story and needs us to pass a judgement on the motives and actions of Rivkah and Ya'akov which we are not entitled or authorised by Scripture to pass. No, Scripture's verdict on him is (Gen 25:27) that he was an *ish tam*, an innocent or plain (unpolluted) man, and we would be well advised to note it, it seems unavoidable that Ya'akov was taught in his formative years by Grandfather Abraham. Ya'akov is not suggesting that he *is* a devious deceiver, indeed he is now the legitimate recipient of the blessing for the firstborn, but he is concerned that his father will *think* that he is a deceiver, and in reaction curse him, thus coming into opposition to the intentions of the Almighty. His honour and respect for his father's status and authority shine bright in this story once you clear away the smokescreens. (Someone may ask: *Why didn't he just tell his father what was going on?* The answer is both simple and profound: *Elohim chose to do it this way, without informing Yitzhak.* You can spend a lot of time meditating on that thought.)

There is a principle coming into view here, and indeed it is to be found in Romans 13 and related passages, but it is not coming through very clearly in your admittedly restricted remarks. You have taken one page, I am taking forty-odd, and even then I am giving a lop-sided view of the matter, in order to restore something of the balance in people's minds which is somewhat weighted heavily to the side that you have put forward.

We could find a few more viewsites in Genesis from which to survey our field of research, but let's jump to

Exodus (what a misdirecting replacement of the title, it should be "Names" - *Shemot!*) Here we find the legitimate ruler over all Egypt faced with a demographic problem with significant implications for the nation's security: the Hebrews have bred so fast as to outnumber the Egyptians and now could easily side with any invader to bring about the collapse of the throne. So he concludes quite understandably that the time has come to institute corrective measures to bring the demographics back into balance for the sake of the stability of the state: taking wise counsel he orders that the Israelites be subjected to heavy-duty slave labour, hoping no doubt that they would become too exhausted to reproduce so prolifically. This policy doesn't work, so he decides on a more direct approach - kill the boy babies at birth - and delegates the Hebrew midwives to carry out the policy, *Exo 1:17 But the midwives feared Elohim, and did not do as the sovereign of Mitsrayim commanded them, and kept the male children alive*, which is about as succinct a comment on the entire authority issue as you will find anywhere. Did the midwives suffer at the hand of Elohim for their disobedience to the properly constituted authority? Apparently not:

Exo 1:20 So Elohim was good to the midwives, and the people increased and became very numerous.

Exo 1:21 And it came to be, because the midwives feared Elohim, that He provided households for them.

Pharaoh reacts by declaring open season on Hebrew boy babies, and enlisting his entire populace into implementing his policy:

Exo 1:22 And Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, "Throw every son who is born into the river, and keep alive every daughter."

This involved a direct confrontation between the Mighty One of the Hebrews and the mighty ones of the Egyptians including the river itself and the resident crocodiles, both of which were worshipped by the Egyptians.

The midwives had based their resistance on principle, but what about a certain Levite couple?

Exo 2:1 ... (A) man of the house of Lěwi went and married a daughter of Lěwi.

Exo 2:2 And the woman conceived and bore a son. And she saw that he was a lovely child, and she hid him three months.

The woman's resistance to authority was based on something much more basic, perhaps - the protective and nurturing response of a mother to the precious gift that she had been given by YHWH, the same instinct that Solomon capitalized on in his famous judgement.

And apparently Pharaoh's daughter concurred, opposing her father's directive of Ex 1:22 on, we must presume, grounds of simple humanity - there is no indication that she converted from Egyptian sun-worship. (In this she was perhaps a forerunner of many White people in apartheid South Africa, not even claiming nominal Xtianity, who protected activists from the State on grounds of simple humanity.)

Again we see no trace of retribution from Elohim on any of these people for saving the life of the baby who became known as Moshe. And I will not bore you with the simple, amply-documented fact that Moshe was in enormous opposition to the intentions of the Egyptian state, nor with the direction, help and blessing, indeed commissioning, that he received from YHWH in this. It is this kind of fact that must give us pause before we hasten to apply Romans 13 with a very wide brush.

Moses' biography is rich with insights into *authority*, I shan't even try to mention let alone do justice to all of them here. Both by example and precept Moshe explored the entire gamut of human authority, from both sides of the fence. He appears to have come to a clear understanding of the issues, as recorded in

Heb 11:24 By belief, Mosheh, having become great, refused to be called the son of the daughter of Pharaoh,

Heb 11:25 choosing rather to be afflicted with the people of Elohim than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a time,

Heb 11:26 deeming the reproach of Messiah greater riches than the treasures in Mitsrayim, for he was looking to the reward.

As a *son of the daughter of Pharaoh*, he would have been expected by all around him to support the sun-worship / Pharaoh-worship of Egypt increasingly as he matured, and he clearly came to a point where he repudiated this, and thereby the entire authority structure based on it, in favour of *the reproach of*

Messiah. His killing of the Egyptian taskmaster was not a mere overreaction in the heat of the moment, but was a carefully-assessed choice in the circumstances. He had already determined that he *refused to be called the son of the daughter of Pharaoh*. The killing was a watershed act, but it resulted from a clearly-considered identification. And when he fled from Pharaoh's wrath, it was not in fear, but with a definite rationale:

Heb 11:27 By belief, he left Mitsrayim, not fearing the wrath of the sovereign, for he was steadfast, as seeing Him who is invisible.

Wouldn't it be helpful to hear Moshe comment on Romans 13:1-4? I am glad to say that we do have a comment from One Who is greater than Moshe and Who gave Moshe his instructions, and I'll introduce His comment a little later.

But before leaving Moshe, let's look at an incident much later in his life. Obedient to the command of the Almighty, he has struck the rock at Horeb and water has flowed out for the needs of Israel.

Exo 17:7 And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the 'strife' of the children of Yisra'el, and because they 'tried' הוה, saying, "Is הוה in our midst or not?"

What is the answer to their question? On the one hand, it is the water - and may I point out that in the scriptures water is symbolic of the Torah and its life-giving properties. (The fact that they had received the Torah could not be separated from the contractual commitment of YHWH to be their Elohim.) On the other hand, it is the next incident:

Exo 17:8 And Amaleq came and fought with Yisra'el in Rephidim.

How can being attacked by Amalek answer the children of Yisra'el's question? Before coming to the answer, we have to have some understanding of Amalek and their role *vis-a-vis* Yisra'el, in which we are greatly aided by the recent *parshat* studies on Yaakov and Esaw. Remember that Esaw seems to have been some kind of genetic and spiritual throwback to Nimrod, even though not of his direct lineage, and totally unsuited to become a father of YHWH's chosen people, so not to be mentioned in the same breath as Avram and Yitzhaq. Instead of staying at home to do respect to the memory of the righteous life of his grandfather and to participate in the memorial feast that Yaakov had prepared, Esaw was out in the field doing what he enjoyed, viewing the meal merely as an opportunity to satisfy his material hunger (hear any echoes in 1 Cor 11 or Jude?). And from Genesis 36:16 we understand that the Amalekites were the descendants of the grandson of Esaw (also called Edom); of all the Edomites, with their resentment against Yaakov for the loss of birthright and blessings, Amalek historically became the most persistent and determined of the enemies of the children of Yisra'el. The generation in the wilderness were asking in essence the same question that Yaakov had asked at the brook Jabbok, the answer to which was confirmed by the moral triumph of Yaakov over Esaw the next day. To answer this later generation, YHWH brought them into battle with the heirs of Esaw-the-Technologist, the one who'd showed his political nous by marrying into the ruling clans of the Hittites and then, when he belatedly began realising that there was something in this "blessing" business, by marrying into Yishmael's family, to pick up something of the blessing of Gen 21:18.

Well, Esaw wanted the blessing, but he didn't want the discipline of the Torah. In this, he held a position which the Israelites had brought themselves very close to, by toning down their own dependence on YHWH, by supposing that their existence and their circumstances were just the result of "happenstance", natural causes. The question they were asking was being answered at least in part by being forced to recognize that **Amalek** was in their midst, in **their** hearts, in **their** minds. They had departed from following His Torah with their whole hearts and minds and strength. The question was being thrown back at them: not in their formulation of *Is YHWH in our midst?* but as *Are you walking in YHWH's ways?*

And so, in this odd battle against Amalek, as Moshe lifts up his hands carrying the rod, the symbol of the discipline of the Law, the Yisra'elites prevail (= *are strengthened*) in their fighting; but as he becomes weary of upholding Torah and its discipline, so the Amalekites prevail. Then the priests come to Moshe's support, to help him uphold the Torah, *Exo 17:13* and Joshua weakeneth Amalek and his people by the mouth of the sword.

Since *the sword of the Spirit ... is the Word of Elohim*, we may feel that this rather odd phrase that Young translates as *mouth of the sword* may be a hint to us not to ignore the symbolic meaning of this incident in which the people of the accuser (as we would see later, should we read the book of Esther) are repulsed by Yahusha in a preview of *Rev 12:10* And I heard a great voice saying in the heaven, 'Now did

come the salvation, and the power, and the reign, of our [Mighty One], and the authority of His [Mashiach], because cast down was the accuser of our brethren, who is accusing them before our [Mighty One] day and night; *Rev 12:11* and they did overcome him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life--unto death;

We need to know that *by the mouth of the sword* is a phrase that is only found when describing how Israel, or the Mighty One on Israel's behalf, defeats his enemies in battle. When gentiles are at slaughter on the battlefield, it is simply *by the sword* or *with the sword*. There is a strong implication of the coupling of prayer - i.e. recognition of dependency - and proclamation of Torah - i.e. statement of allegiance and obedience - to the victory.

Now I would not spend so much time on this obscure although well-known incident in the history of the children of Yisra'el were it not clear that it has bearing on each succeeding generation until finally YHWH will blot out the memory, let alone the heresy, of Amalek from the mind of all people:

Exo 17:14 And יהוה said to Mosheh, "Write this for a remembrance in the book and recite it in the hearing of Yehoshua, that I shall completely blot out the remembrance of Amalĕq from under the heavens."

Exo 17:15 And Mosheh built an altar and called its name, יהוה Nissi,

Exo 17:16 for he said, "Because a hand is on the throne of Yah, יהוה is to fight against Amalĕq, from generation to generation."

You can interpret that *hand on the throne of Yah* phrase in a variety of ways, but I doubt that any of them lands up anywhere far from the thought that the Almighty has put on Himself an obligation to fight against Amalek - against the thought that things "just happen", life "just happens", the universe "just happened", and so there is no eternal significance in anything that we do, we can choose to do whatever seems good or convenient or pleasing to ourselves - from generation to generation. Note please the restatement of this prophecy in *Deu 25:19* "Therefore it shall be, when יהוה your Elohim has given you rest from your enemies all around, in the land which יהוה your Elohim is giving you to possess as an inheritance, that **you blot out the remembrance of Amalĕq from under the heavens. Do not forget!** The eradication of Amalek requires the active, intentional commitment of Israel in its broadest meaning! I see Hovind as a doughty soldier in this fight.

In any case it behoves us to inquire *Where has Amalek been hiding all this time, where are his successors now, how is YHWH fighting against him in our own generation? And should that fight involve present-day believers in any conscious, intentional way?* - because the remembrance of Amalek is not yet blotted out from under the heavens, to the contrary it is brought out and re-examined at every feast of *Purim*, which "happens", if you do not have the eye of faith, to be the first feast in each Roman calendar year... I see Amalek as underlying the concept of *the sovereign state* in its most absolute form.

As we look through the Tanak and the AC (Apostolic Commentary) we see various occasions where people had a potential opportunity to implement or at least hasten, conversely to delay, the Messianic Age. Clearly the first king of Israel, Saul, was one of these. He was commissioned with eradicating Amalek, and we may well wonder what the shape of history would have been if he had obeyed and been successful on YHWH's terms. Instead, he fell into the same 3-way temptation trap regarding the glitter, the bling, of the Amalekites, spared Agag the Amalekite king - and earned himself the biting rebuke of Samuel, *To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams*. But it goes deeper than this, one needs to pore over the passage in 1 Samuel 15. The next verse contains the statement that I have heard used several times in connection with this topic of *authority*, and I do believe we should understand it in its context before venturing to apply it with unbounded generality. Here it is in 3 flavours - KJV with Strong's numbers, The Scriptures, and YLT:

1Sa 15:23 For rebellion⁴⁸⁰⁵ is as the sin²⁴⁰³ of witchcraft⁷⁰⁸¹, and stubbornness^{6484 [8687]} is as iniquity²⁰⁵ and idolatry⁸⁶⁵⁵. Because thou hast rejected^{3988 [8804]} the word¹⁶⁹⁷ of the LORD³⁰⁶⁸, he hath also rejected^{3988 [8799]} thee from being king⁴⁴²⁸.

1Sa 15:23 "For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and stubbornness is as wickedness and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of יהוה, He also does reject you as sovereign."

1Sa 15:23 for a sin of divination is rebellion, and iniquity and teraphim is stubbornness; because

thou hast rejected the word of Jehovah, He also doth reject thee from being king.'

The word *rebellion* properly means *bitterness*; we should be warned by this against a too-wide application of this statement. Certainly one can get from *bitterness* to *rebellion* as we normally understand it, the latter is often the expression of the former, but to discard the primary meaning in the process is not good. Because if we dig deeper into the statement, we find that its actual shape is rather like this:

For **bitterness** is as the sin (or purifying, expiation) of divination (or a lot), and **pecking-at** is as panting/vanity and family idols.

The specific implication is, YHWH is rebuking Saul for being bitter about His commanded outcome for Amalek, and for trying to push the envelope in regard to what the Amalekite approach to life can bring compared to what YHWH offers. (Let us not forget that Balaam describes Amalek as *the foremost among nations*.) Saul wanted to retain the cultural diversity, the material prosperity, that Amalekism (!) could bring, and to use the material riches of the Amalek-friendly option to placate YHWH, to purify or expiate what he had done in deserting his primary (and only) dependence on YHWH, remember the Sh'ma. Saul, it would seem, viewed Agag as a role-model for his own kingship, and yearned for the status of the Amalekite nation to be transferred to his own nation of Israel, and was prepared to disobey YHWH's instruction in order to fast-track this desired outcome.

! Samuel 15:23 is not asserting a quantitative comparability between rebellion in general and witchcraft in general, it is pointing out the qualitative equivalence between bitterness against the lot that YHWH has assigned to a believer, and using it as an excuse for choosing a different outcome, i.e. lack of faith, disobedience. Bitterness leads to goedpratory, rationalising, of the outcome that you prefer and choose. *Surely I deserve better than this. Surely this isn't what the Father intends for me.*

No parent of a teen or pre-teen needs an explanation of *pecking-at* - is there any of us that has not responded to a practitioner of this trait with *In your dreams, my dear, you can wish as much as you like but you're not going to get it. Not from me.* And perhaps warned the child against the danger of letting something blingy become an idol. *But I'll never be happy unless I get one of those* - this is just another form of idolatry. Hear Sha'ul rather as he says *I have learned to be content in whatever state I am.*

The next major surfacing of Amalek occurs in Babylon, under Ahasuerus, as we are told in

Est 3:1 *After these events Sovereign Ahashwērosh promoted Haman, son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and exalted him and seated him higher than all the princes with him.*

As the direct descendant of Agag, Haman is the current embodiment of the hatred of Amalek for YHWH's people, and indeed for YHWH's kingdom and way of doing things, deriving via Esau back to Nimrod, and he is the consequence of Saul's disobedience (the night of 1 Sam 15:11 is believed to have been the needed opportunity for Agag to procreate a new line of descendants). Ahasuerus, ruler over 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia, could pick the cream of a huge crop for his administrators, so we may reasonably believe that Haman was not without skill in managing a great empire. He is legitimately given great status and authority by the emperor. What does Mordecai do about the king's command? He refuses to obey it, giving as his reason, apparently, in response to repeated questioning, that he is a Yehudite. This almost certainly was intended to refer to the earlier incident involving Hananyah, Misha'ēl, and Azaryah, who simply said "We do not worship your mighty ones"; to which Nebuchadnezzar responded by issuing a decree throughout the empire against anyone speaking wrong against the Mighty One of Hananyah, Misha'ēl, and Azaryah. (Those names are worth a word study in themselves!) So it may be that Haman was flouting this earlier decree, or perhaps Mordecai was saying *You cannot expect me a Yahud to do obeisance to one who is set to destroy my people and to bring my Mighty One's Name into dishonour.* In any case, the outcome in the end was as with the three young men earlier: the "civil disobedience" implementer was entrusted with **greater** responsibility in the authority structure of the empire.

Interesting that the Babylonian emperors did not fear that these people who had refused to obey a law of the land would become a threat to the maintenance of law and order! The emperors seemed to be great enough to understand that men with unshakeable primary allegiance to YHWH and His Torah would be meticulously reliable in upholding those parts of the operations of the state that would not offend against that Torah, and quickly warn of any other other part that *would* offend against that Torah. This paradox we must bear in mind when we confront Paul again in Romans 13. How else can we understand Daniel's long and untarnished service to successive, violently opposed rulers? Was Daniel a career political lackey, bending to whatever political breeze might be blowing at the time. *Daniel!!!!* Not quite!

We could go on through the Tanakh finding many an example to substantiate my case. We could write

many pages on the book of Daniel, we could spend much time in the four books of Kings and Chronicles. And wandering through the list of Heroes of the Faith in Hebrews 11, we could visit many more Tanak people, learning from each of them. But I want to focus your attention on

Heb 11:14 For those who speak this way make it clear that they seek a fatherland.

Heb 11:15 And yet, if they had indeed kept remembering that place from which they had come out, they would have had the chance to return.

Heb 11:16 But now they long for a better place, that is, a heavenly. Therefore Elohim is not ashamed to be called their Elohim, for He has prepared a city for them.

If we are believers of the order of these heroes, we are seeking a fatherland where our Elohim has prepared a city for us. And there is no city without an administration, a legal basis, and an authority structure. We long for a better place, we cannot be satisfied by that which surrounds us. The bling of this world and all its structures is about as appealing as the scale that builds up inside your kettle. Our faith inherently chides those who base their administrations on anything but Torah. We need to put *that* into Romans 13 and smoke it.

In my opinion the only person named in Hebrews 11 who was not in some degree recorded as resisting some form of apparently legitimate authority was Enoch. These were people *Heb 11:33 who through belief, overcame reigns, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions...*

And the glowing commendation of these people is found a few verses later:

Heb 11:37 They were stoned, they were tried, they were sawn in two, they were slain with the sword. They went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being in need, afflicted, mistreated,

*Heb 11:38 **of whom the world was not worthy** - wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes of the earth.*

May I sound my familiar note in regard to the *faith* in Heb 11:33? Surely this is *emunah* being camouflaged yet again by the Greek *pistis*! They overcame reigns by their faithfulness to that which they had learned about Elohim, and had implemented in trust that He would see them through.

We don't even need to look at the prophets - the Nebi'im - one by one. As a group they are renowned - and approved by Yahusha - for opposing the legitimate authorities for their illegitimate activities. For rebuking those who are supposed to bring forth *right-ruling* but fail to do so.

Will you excuse me if, leaving the Tanak and moving towards the Brit Chadasha, I pause briefly in the Apocrypha? In the "Silent Centuries"? Because it is here that the the most dramatic and obvious incident of resisting authority after Moshe is recorded. I refer of course to the Maccabean Revolt, commemorated annually in Channukah which was observed and given status by One no less than Yahusha Himself. Like the exodus from Egypt, it was a watershed event essential to the revelation and perpetuation of *the faith once delivered to the saints*. (Note here that *saints* means *morally blameless*, unquestionably in view of Jude's contextual remarks those who upheld Torah, thus including the entire TNK subroster in Hebrews 11.) No Channukah-event implies no more Torah implies no Messiah, as we view the history.

I commend to your careful consideration the summary verses from Hebrews 11:32 to the end of that chapter. There is a large component of not submitting unquestioningly to the civil authority! But let us not jump ahead too quickly, having absorbed some background information let us now spend time with our Perfect Example, and hear from Him who spoke nothing that He did not hear first from His Father. Well, maybe we should start with His *father...*

Arriving at the Apostolic Writings, we are introduced early to Yoseph the Carpenter, declared to be a *righteous man*, which as we know means that he was Torah-abiding, a lover and a doer of the law of YHWH. Consider his perplexity as he ponders (Matt 1:18) the various cases described in Deuteronomy, chapters 5 and 22. Let a modern rabbi illustrate one of the possibilities (and remember, please, that *married* in that time and culture included what we would call *engaged*):

Did she or didn't she? (Only her hairdresser knows for sure!) A married woman, guilty of adultery, is forbidden to her husband and they must divorce. (She is also forbidden to marry the adulterer.) If a man suspects his wife, then he can warn her, in front of witnesses, "not to be alone with Bob."

If two witnesses then testify that she was later alone with Bob (even if they don't know exactly what occurred during that seclusion), the married wife becomes suspected ("Sotah") and is forbidden to her husband.

Must he apply this to his fiancée? Clearly there's *something* wrong! What must he do, as the injured party, and therefore with an obligation to the Almighty? Under the Mosaic law, he should expose her to contempt, censure and possibly stoning by the community. But where is the guilty man who should, for justice to prevail, equally be exposed and judged? Perhaps, as Indian families in South Africa do many centuries later, he can deal with this problem of the pregnancy and the illegitimate child by sending the expectant mother far away, out of everyone's sight and mind, until the birth is past and the baby somehow kept below the horizon, maybe an adoption, hmm? But this too is not upright, this pretence!

Nevertheless, Yoseph is mentally assessing this option even though it represents on the face of it a rejection of the general tenor of the specific Torah authority on such situations. Thus he passes the tests of commitment to his wife and of the Torah that by the testimony of two or three witnesses a matter shall be established and of the second commandment (of two, not of ten) and discovers to his relief in his dream that he is indeed fulfilling the first, great commandment in a very special and particular way. (I wonder just how much this vital snippet of family history, told fondly to a young boy by His mother who knows how many times and discussed over the carpenter's workbench with his righteous dad, *Dad, why did you take Mom to be your wife even though she was going to have a baby before you married her?* prepared Him for dealing with the woman taken in adultery...)

(The Magi, at the instruction of Father's messenger, disobeyed the order of Herod to report back to him once they had found the Child, I am glad to say.)

Yahusha Himself in His ministry did not show an unremitting submission to every kind of authority, as first shown in the famous incident when He sat, as it were a *bar mitzvah*, in the Temple amazing the teachers with His questions, understanding and answers while His parents were understandably expecting Him to be travelling back safely in the communal party to Nazareth from the feast. *Luk 2:48 And having seen Him, they were amazed. And His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? See, Your father and I have been anxiously seeking You."*

There is a subtle rapier-duel going on here in the Greek, I don't know whether it would show up as or more clearly in the Hebrew which I am sure is the language the conversation was conducted in, or whether it is the construct of a clever translator (I would love to have some learned comment on this). "Son" here is the word *teknon* which essentially means *the due product of a process*, rather than the obvious *huion* which simply means *child* with a preferred gender meaning in this context of *son*. Miriam is saying in translation *Just remember where you come from and who brought you up and consequently who you are responsible to!* In this she was of course overlooking one essential fact - that Yoseph was not His natural father, which is what gives weight to His riposte: *Luk 2:49 And He said to them, "Why were you seeking Me? Did you not know that I had to be in the matters of My Father?"* In other words, "Mom, remember that in terms of what you've told me so many times there's another process going on of which the process you're referring back to is only a sub-plot, subservient to the main agenda".

(I'd better quote from a Jewish observer quickly:

"Bar mitzvah does not appear in the bible (i.e. Tanak), which gives the age of 20 as the time when adult obligations begin. However, by the first century CE adulthood was universally held to begin at 13 for boys and 12 for girls, a view codified in the Talmud, which states, "At age 13, one becomes subject to the commandments." The earliest reference to any ceremony to mark this change dates from the Second Temple period, when a special blessing was recited for 13-year-old boys who had completed their first Yom Kippur fast. But until the Middle Ages, the religious distinction between a 10-year-old and a 13-year-old was strictly theoretical. Children were regularly counted for the purposes of creating a minyan, the quorum often needed for certain prayers, so that reaching the age of 13 was not associated with any particular rituals or celebrations.

)

He says, *You're right, Mom, but you're wrong!* In this, He laid down here the ground-rule for His attitude to authority. He had pointed out the primary authority in His life, to which the claims of all other kinds of authority would have to bow, and from which they would either derive their validity or their negation. And they should not have been surprised, after all He was in attitude and effect *bar mitzvah*, "son of the

commandment". But then they'd never come across another "son of the commandment" who took this status quite so seriously. So, like many earthly authorities, *Luk 2:50 ... they did not understand the word which He spoke to them.*

Now - how does He handle the conflict, the tension in this situation? Does He insist that He must stay in the Temple *midrashing* with the teachers to everyone's great illumination and benefit? Certainly not!

Luk 2:51 And He went down with them and came to Natsareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these matters in her heart.

To understand this, we need to examine His response to Yochanan the Immerser, in Matthew 3 (YLT):

Mat 3:13 Then cometh [Yahusha] from Galilee upon the Jordan, unto John to be baptized by him, Mat 3:14 but John was forbidding him, saying, 'I have need by thee to be baptized--and thou dost come unto me!'

Mat 3:15 But [Yahusha] answering said to him, 'Suffer now, for thus it is becoming to us to fulfil all righteousness,' then he doth suffer him.

Why did Yahusha need to be immersed? Yochanan was immersing for repentance, and he immediately understood that he needed to express his own need of repentance by being immersed by Yahusha, and that Yahusha had no need for any repentance whatever. But repentance is and was not the only reason for immersion - for us immersion is a deed symbolising our identification with Yahusha in His death, burial and resurrection, by which righteousness is imputed to us (Rom 4:11); and as Avraham needed to be circumcised to establish the identifying mark of the Hebrew people, those who are committed to obedience to the Torah, so Yahusha needed to be immersed to establish the identifying mark of those who are committed to the death of the old life of sin and the moral and spiritual resurrection needed to live the new life of obedience to Torah in the Ruach of Set-apartness.

So in His immersion Yahusha did something that was open to misunderstanding, and not primarily for His own benefit, but for the benefit of people who did not understand its significance at the time. Through His identification with us and taking our sins in His body on the tree, He "filled up" all righteousness, i.e. He enabled the extension ("imputing") of His righteousness to us. His immersion was an acted out picture of how this **would** take place - by His death, burial and resurrection - just as the immersion of a believer is an acted out picture of how the righteousness of the Messiah **has been** imputed to him - by identification with that same death, burial and resurrection. This is the import of that *thus* - meaning this is the symbol of the manner in which all righteousness will be completed - in which righteousness will be extended to all receiving the free gift.

In the same way the 12-year old Yahusha did something that was open to misunderstanding, in going back to Nazareth and being subject to His parents. He did this because the time had not yet come for Him to start His ministry, He was still in the stage of preparation, and would be according to Torah until age 30. He accepted their authority not because it was ultimate, it wasn't, but because for that time it agreed with the general prescriptions of Torah which enjoined respect and honour for parents and prohibited Him from embarking on His public ministry at such an early age. Did He neglect the 5th commandment once His ministry had started? No, we see Him on the stake on Golgotha *still* upholding Torah in regard to Miriam as He delegates the disciple whom He loved to take His mother into his care.

In all His living I believe He set the pattern for our subjection to authorities earthly and heavenly and so we need to consider the behaviour of our Perfect Example very carefully before pulling out Paul's summary statement and pointing it at anybody. Let's look at His behaviour and teaching in regard to the following four classes of earthly authority:

1. Familial

We see Him refusing to give undue priority in Matthew 12 to His family, who seem to have been pulling rank in their desire to gain access to Him. But this is no surprise after

Mat 10:32 "Everyone, therefore, who shall confess Me before

men, him I shall also confess before My Father who is in the heavens.
Mat 10:33 "But whoever shall deny Me before men, him I shall also deny before My Father who is in the heavens.
Mat 10:34 "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword,
Mat 10:35 for I have come to bring division, a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law -
Mat 10:36 and a man's enemies are those of his own household.
Mat 10:37 "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.
Mat 10:38 "And he who does not take up his stake and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

So He denies the family any primacy over and against the relationship with the Father Who is in the heavens. Family relationships, however precious, are irrelevant in this assessment of loyalty and submission. Yet, as I have remarked, He scrupulously maintains the esteem and care due to His mother, even when in agony on the execution-stake.

2. Ecclesiastical

Perhaps the most obviously recurring feature of His social interactions was His running battle with the authority structures of the Jewish people. Under Roman law, the Sanhedrin was legitimately endowed with almost unlimited authority to rule the Jews according to their own customs. Clearly they could not incite insurrection against Rome, nor could they implement a death sentence, but there was very little restriction on their authority. Yet Yahusha was constantly challenging their pronouncements and querying their customs, and allowing His *talmidim* to do things that were not allowed, releasing them to omit things that were required. (In the spirit of robust debate that prevailed at the time, He called the scribes and Pharisees some pretty torrid names in the process.)

How could He do this? What excuse could there be? No excuse needed. We need to look at the first half of Matthew 15, and the first half of Matthew 16. The issue is summed up in the quotation from Isaiah:

Mat 15:8 'This people draw near to Me with their mouth, and respect Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.
Mat 15:9 'But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as teachings the commands of men.' "

The obligation to worship Elohim is widely admitted, but defeated in practice by the substitution of *the commands of men* for Torah, for His teachings. How like today's Xtian churches!

But didn't the scribes and Pharisees have the authority to impose their own commands? They were constantly adding ringfences and uttering edicts which were held in more respect than the Torah itself, leading many astray and keeping many from hearing the lovely liberating Torah truth. (*Mat 23:13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you shut up the reign of the heavens before men, for you do not go in, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.*) Not if they claimed equality or superiority for them over the Torah of Elohim - and they did that very thing.

Even today the study of the Talmud overwhelms that of the Torah in most of Judaism. Which side of the authority question did haMashiach come down on? How did He address this problem? After all, we hear Him

Mat 23:2 saying, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on the seat of Mosheh.
*Mat 23:3 "Therefore, whatever **they** say to you to guard, guard and do. But do not do according to their works, for they say, and do not do. (My bold.)*

- or so read the normal translations, based on Greek translations of what is now quite widely understood to be a Hebrew original. This is totally in conflict with the general trend of His teaching and behaviour, a paradox that only becomes unknotted under the searchlight of a Nehemiah Gordon studying the Shem Tob Hebrew Matthew. A tiny scribal variation in one letter has apparently changed the original meaning from *whatever He (i.e. Mosheh) says to you* to *whatever they (i.e. the scribes and Pharisees) say to you*. "They" only get their authority from sitting in Moshe's seat - they derive their authority from his authority, and if they step outside his teaching, they lose it. The ramifications of this are vast, and totally in accordance with the teaching of Scripture from the earliest pages. It brings all men back under the obligation to teach and to observe and to uphold Torah!

Far from Yahusha giving a blanket stamp of approval to the authorities of His time, giving them a pat on the back for achieving authority status, He was collaring them around the neck and bringing them back from their flights of arrogant fancy into submission to Torah. Far from saying *OK, because you are the de facto authorities go ahead and establish your own value system, your own system of laws* He is saying *As the de facto authorities you have a special duty and privilege to uphold and clarify and apply the teachings that were relayed via Mosheh*. He could hardly rein in their aspirations to some kind of independent, inherent authority more firmly and rub their noses in the fact that their authority is absolutely derivative from and circumscribed by the written Torah.

I can hardly do better to summarize this point than by quoting a scholar:

As Clement verifies, Yahshua COMMANDED his followers to continue Torah observances. Yahshua did not come to abolish the instruction, but he did come to explain it. This is precisely what the Samaritan woman at the well expected Messiah to do when he came [John 4:25]. His actions were knowingly misinterpreted by the rigid scribal authorities holding the highest positions of religious power in the land. The Hellenistic culture in which they lived enabled them to interpret the Scriptures in a contemporary manner. For Yahshua, neither the doctrine of the Sadducees (who, during the days of Yahshua had only a political and financial agenda, the primary reason for their decline after 70 C.E.), nor that of the Pharisees (holding to the principle of the Dual Torah; written and oral) was sufficient. Yahshua, instead, reverted to the purer form of Scriptural interpretation, one that was rooted in the days before the Babylonian Captivity; in other words, one that attempted to rid society of its evils through a revamping of the theocracy.

Rudolf Bultmann, a scholar who is extremely sceptical of the possibility of catching any reliable glimpses of the historical Jesus in the Gospels, nevertheless acknowledges that 'however much his preaching in its radicality is directed against Jewish legalism, still its content is nothing else than TRUE OLD TESTAMENT JEWISH FAITH IN [G-D] radicalized in the direction of the great prophets' preaching' [Irving M. Zeitlin, Jesus and the Judaism of His Time, p. 48].

3. Juridical

There are several instances in the gospels of the religious leaders attempting to force or trick Him into adopting a modified version of Moshe in order to validate their people-pleasing judgements. In response, quite simply, He led them into a face-to-face confrontation with Torah. Some further reading of Matthew 23 is recommended for the discomfiture of those who would have us submit to their judgements rather than to those which can be described as *right-ruling*, i.e. applying the written Torah correctly and without fear or favour.

We should never forget that the Roman authority had pretty well excused itself from the Jewish legal scene, and - recognising the ethical and social merit of the Torah and the competence of the internal administration - largely left the Jews to govern themselves according to their own principles and customs, apart from reserving the right of capital punishment, which is why Yahusha had to be condemned by both the Sanhedrin and Pilate. There was no need for Yahusha to worry directly about Roman authority before the Betrayal, Trial and Execution - except perhaps for two main situations: tax, and when the Jewish leaders incited him to make a pronouncement on an issue involving capital punishment under

the Mosaic law - most notably, the woman taken in adultery, of course.

Harking back to my comment about removing oneself from the scope of an earthly authority, Yahusha simply refused to be apprehended by the various posses who tried to arrest or stone Him at various times. Even the armed "large crowd" sent out to the Mount of Olives fell back from Him, aware of their own inferiority, and were able to take Him only because He surrendered Himself deliberately, challenging Peter with *Mat 26:53 dost thou think that I am not able now to call upon my Father, and He will place beside me more than twelve legions of messengers? Mat 26:54 how then may the Writings be fulfilled, that thus it behoveth to happen?*

In even this situation He is saying *I am not doing this because the earthly authority has an indisputable right of coercion, it doesn't, I could easily override it - and I would have My Father's consent - but because the Scriptures require Me to do this in order to fulfil them. It is a specific requirement here and now of My chosen principle of obedience to every word that proceeds from the mouth of My Father.*

What prophetic Writings was He thinking of? Surely Isaiah 53 was among them, including this clause from the last verse: *Because that he exposed to death his soul* (YLT). The time had come, and He dismissed His protective covering and allowed the juridical processes which until then He had fended off, to be exercised upon Him in order to accomplish the purposes of His Father Who even then would have immediately reinstated the security canopy over Him if He had requested it. I cannot interpret this to mean He viewed Himself as perpetually and at every instant throughout His life subject to the earthly authorities in every respect, it is all too clear rather that He engaged the clutch on the spinning momentum of the earthly authority's juridical structures at the right moment in order to bring about the necessary movement prophesied through Isaiah.

I'll deliberately carry over the tax issue to the next point.

4. Statal

We may see this level of tension most clearly in His face-off with Pilate, although there are many other pointers including prophetic ones, e.g. those in Psalm 2. It is probably most useful to refer primarily to the record given by John, who, as at the Passover meal, seems to have picked up a few exchanges that were not obvious to the other recorders - it is possible that he had privileged access to the high priest's palace, and thus may have been standing closer than most to his Master in the confrontation outside Pilate's palace. We need to start in the middle of chapter 18 and go on through much of chapter 19; probably the easiest way to thread through this minefield is to interpose comments with the text.

Joh 18:28 Then they led יהושע from Qayapha to the palace, and it was early. And they themselves did not go into the palace, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover.

From this we should note that Pilate was very familiar with the Jewish law, being understanding of the refusal of the Yehudim to meet him on his own territory, inside the palace, for the sake of their ritual cleanliness (the prejudice Kepha had to get over in Acts 10), even though they were pushing the limits of good manners in requiring his attention at such an early hour in their haste to finish the whole thing in time to eat the Passover. This thought must throw light on any analysis of Pilate's thinking.

Joh 18:29 Pilate, therefore, came out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?"

Joh 18:30 They answered and said to him, "If He were not an evil-doer, we would not have delivered Him up to you."

Joh 18:31 Then Pilate said to them, "You take Him and judge Him according to your law." The Yehudim said to him, "It is not right [allowed] for us to put anyone to death,"

The issue here is one of jurisdiction: Pilate is saying *Why should I be troubled with this case?* and the Yehudim are saying *Our assessment is that the accused has committed a capital offence, and so it is beyond our jurisdiction and in yours - we aren't wasting your time.*

*Joh 18:32 in order that the word of יהושע might be filled which He spoke, signifying by what death He was about to die.
Joh 18:33 Then Pilate went back into the palace, and called יהושע, and said to Him, "Are You the Sovereign of the Yehudim?"*

At this stage, the Yehudim have neatly sidestepped the question Pilate put in v29. By throwing the responsibility for examining the accused onto Pilate, they are evading the fact that the reason they want Him executed is actually for blasphemy, as they see it, because Pilate may not be much interested. They know what *will* trigger Pilate's knee-jerk reaction: potential insurrection against Rome - a much more understandable offence, from his point of view. And we need to note that Pilate has gone back into the palace, safe from the Yehudim seething with impatience but restricted by their own "hedges", and summoned Yahusha to join him there. Does the Messiah in responding to this submit to the earthly authority as taking precedence over the Father's Law? No, because He knows that the ringfence of the scribes and Pharisees is wrong. The One who supped with publicans, prostitutes and sinners will not be contaminated by a mere interview in the palace of Pilate.

Pilate probably is not too concerned here about yet another pretender to the kingship of Judaea as long as it doesn't mean a threat of insurrection against Rome and an unsettling of the precarious peace that more-or-less obtains. What's on his mind is to ascertain whether this new king will be amenable to maintaining the status quo, to acknowledging the supremacy of Rome, to being a puppet ruler like Herod, and that's what he'll focus on finding out. One significant point to establish is whether this man is a Galilean or a native Judaeon, since the Galilee is infamous as a hotbed of intransigent rebels.

*Joh 18:34 יהושע answered him, "Do you say this from yourself, or did others talk to you about Me?"
Joh 18:35 Pilate answered, "Am I a Yehudite? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What did You do?"
Joh 18:36 יהושע answered, "My reign is not of this world. If My reign were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Yehudim. But now My reign is not from here."*

Yahusha puts the enquiry back on track: is this Pilate's own line of enquiry, or is he correctly following through the evidence supplied by the Yehudim arising from their trial? Having pointed out to Pilate that he is not limiting himself to the evidence presented, Yahusha presents him with information that puts a totally different cast on what Pilate had imagined. To Pilate it's not clear just what kind of sovereignty this Man is claiming, but apparently it is not one that threatens the rule of Rome, since He claims to have followers who could have risen up on His behalf, but did not because it was not appropriate. On the other hand, there's some hint of something far more far-reaching than a petty provincial powerplay here, He seems to be saying that the Yehudim are small fry in the ocean of His authority. Pilate must dig deeper.

*Joh 18:37 Then Pilate said to Him, "You are a sovereign, then?"
יהושע answered, "You say it, because I am a sovereign. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."
Joh 18:38 Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Yehudim, and said to them, "I find no guilt in Him."*

"Aha!" thinks Pilate, "One of those metaphysical messiahs! Ah well, no problem there, He's no

earthly use, so let's call Him the King of the Jews and just rub it in to them how trivial any claim to being their sovereign is. So trivial, in fact, that I can afford to release Him under my regular amnesty." At this stage he hasn't quite grasped the potential ramifications.

Joh 18:39 "But you have a habit that I shall release someone to you at the Passover. Do you wish, then, that I release to you the Sovereign of the Yehudim?"

Joh 18:40 Then they all shouted again, saying, "Not this One, but Barabba!" And Barabba was a robber.

Joh 19:1 Then, therefore, Pilate took יהושע and flogged Him.

Joh 19:2 And the soldiers plaited a crown of thorns and placed it on His head, and they put a purple robe on Him,

Joh 19:3 and came to Him and said, "Greetings, Sovereign of the Yehudim!" And they slapped Him in the face.

Joh 19:4 And Pilate went outside again, and said to them, "See, I am bringing Him out to you, to let you know that I find no guilt in Him."

Joh 19:5 Then יהושע came outside, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, "See the Man!"

Joh 19:6 So when the chief priests and officers saw Him, they shouted, saying, "Impale! Impale!" Pilate said to them, "You take Him and impale Him, for I find no guilt in Him."

Joh 19:7 The Yehudim answered him, "We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, for He has made Himself the Son of Elohim."

The kid gloves are off now, the Sanhedrin's trick has failed, the fencing is over and the Sanhedrin are forced to point to the real issue - which wasn't quite what Pilate had in mind.

Joh 19:8 So when Pilate heard this word, he was more afraid,

Joh 19:9 and went back into the palace, and asked יהושע, "Where are You from?" But יהושע gave him no answer.

How relieved Pilate would have been to hear *Bethlehem* or *Galilee*, it would have been easy to decide how to handle the case then. Nothing like as problematic as *Eternity*. But he has already burned his bridges, with his pert remark about *What is truth?* If you can't recognise the truth when it is standing in front of you, you have rather negated any further right to insist on hearing it speak to you. Nevertheless he tries again, with a blustering threat:

Joh 19:10 Then Pilate said to Him, "Do You not speak to me? Do You not know that I possess authority to impale You, and I possess authority to release You?"

Joh 19:11 יהושע answered, "You would possess no authority against Me if it were not given you from above. Because of this, he who delivered Me to you has greater sin."

We are now circling in on the essential topic of this e-mail. Pilate claims to have (possess as of right, based on his job-description) inherent authority to impale Him, or to release Him. Ah no, says haMashiach, *You only have that authority which is given you from above. And to prove it to you, the authority to release Me has been removed from you. Wherefore your sin in this matter is less than that of Judas, who delivered Me up by the deliberate choice of his own will even though he really had the option not to.* And indeed in the next verses we see Pilate trying almost desperately to release Yahusha, but unable to exert "his" vaunted "authority" over the clamor and forcefulness of the Yehudim. He's lost it!

Joh 19:12 From then on Pilate was seeking to release Him, but the Yehudim shouted, saying, "If you release this One, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a sovereign, does speak against Caesar."

Of course, this argument should have been levelled against the Herodian dynasty, who could easily have disproved it by their rather impressive track record as collaborationist puppet sovereigns easing the friction between Jerusalem and Rome for maybe a century, several Caesars, already. But then there were some longstanding ties between the royal family and the Sanhedrin, so understandably this potential application of the principle was muted, perhaps strangled, before it could be debated. But Pilate did get a sense of the thinness of the ice he was treading on - any failure to deal with the sovereign claims of this Nazarene would be interpreted as a willingness to disturb the carefully-cultivated Herodian structure that had served Rome and Jerusalem quite well. And the implication is that the Jews also have some insight into the claim of Utter Sovereignty that this man is hinting at.

He now switches tactics and gives the Yehudim an unmissable opportunity to repudiate this claimant to their fealty - which they do in excess: for Pilate's plan to work, to warrant the death sentence under the spotlight of a possible judicial review back in Rome, he has to do all the running in asserting that Yahusha *is* in some real sense the sovereign of the Jews, much to their annoyance. They want the blasphemer dealt with, but they don't want to have to consider the implications if His claims are not blasphemy but simple truth. (Nor does Pilate, really.) Together the uneasy alliance, unequally yoked, shuffles towards an agreed conclusion: *Impale Him*.

Joh 19:13 Therefore, when Pilate heard these words, he brought יהושע out and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha.

Joh 19:14 And it was the Preparation Day of the Passover week, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Yehudim, "See your Sovereign!"

Joh 19:15 But they shouted, "Away, away, impale Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I impale your Sovereign?" The chief priests answered, "We have no sovereign except Caesar!"

Joh 19:16 At that time, then, he delivered Him to them to be impaled. And they took יהושע and led Him away.

Joh 19:17 And bearing His stake, He went out to the so-called Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha,

Joh 19:18 where they impaled Him, and two others with Him, one on this side and one on that side, and יהושע in the middle.

Joh 19:19 And Pilate wrote a title too, and put it on the stake, and it was written: יהושע OF NATSARETH, THE SOVEREIGN OF THE YEHUDIM .

Joh 19:20 Many of the Yehudim therefore read this title, for the place where יהושע was impaled was near the city, and it was written in Hebrew, in Greek, in Roman.

Joh 19:21 So the chief priests of the Yehudim said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The Sovereign of the Yehudim,' but, 'He said, "I am the Sovereign of the Yehudim." ' ' "

Well, that on its own wasn't a capital offence under Roman law. Pilate needed something stronger to make his decision hold up under judicial review in Rome. What the chief priests were not admitting was that there was a very substantial groundswell of public opinion in Judaea, let alone the Galilee, in favour of making Yahusha their king - the people had already tried it in all seriousness, although without His co-operation. So *Joh 19:22 Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."*, and congratulated himself on walking straight down the razor's edge and handling a very, very ticklish problem - if the Yehudim were right, and if what the accused had said was leading where Pilate feared it was leading, he should have written *The Sovereign of all mankind, Caesar included*, but how would that have played in the Senate? So Pilate got him on a lesser offence, rather like putting a Chicago mobster of Prohibition times behind bars for falling foul of the IRS, achieving a desired result without having to confront the whole truth of all the Tommy-gun shootings and unravel all its implications which might be bad news for some respected society figures.

So much for Pilate's take on all this. We've needed to get into his mind, because without that

insight we wouldn't understand the interaction between Pilate and the Messiah, and so would miss out on our real concern: how the Messiah viewed it all. And it is clear that He denied the simple, comfortable assertion that Pilate inherently had any sort of authority over Him that proceeded merely from occupying a certain slot in a statal structure, which you might have expected from a superficial reading of Romans 13. The authority that Pilate did have, was only that which was given him from above in the context of the situation. Despite the continuing governmental fabric, authority was given and withheld by Heaven from time to time. And this, obviously, is a very significant insight. It will lead us to ask *When is such authority given, and when is it withheld?* But that is for a little later, if we have time. Right now we must look at the question of the state and the tax, in the light of our Perfect Example.

There is no question but that Yahusha paid tax, in a fuzzy sense of the word. However there is a large blind spot regarding *what* tax He paid, and why; and there is an open area for study concerning the tax that He did *not* pay. After we have examined these questions of fact, we may proceed to draw some inferences.

What tax *did* He pay? We find the primary account in Matthew 17:24-27, and the wording in the next few passages is going to be significant, so we'll resort to Strong's somewhat. and YLT, and become thoroughly confused until the light dawns. Let's look at the parallel renditions of *The Scriptures* and YLT:

Mat 17:24 And when they came into Kephah Nahum, those who received the tax came to Kēpha and said, "Does your Teacher not pay the tax?"

Mat 17:24 And they having come to Capernaum, those receiving the didrachms came near to Peter, and said, 'Your teacher--doth he not pay the didrachms?' He saith, 'Yes.'

What, one may well wonder, is a *didrachm* and why does Young use this word rather than the generic *tax* (or even worse, as the politically correct KJV very wrongly puts it, *tribute money*)? Quite simply, because it was not a generic tax, it was very specific. A *didrachm* or *didrachmon* was a silver coin equal to one half of a shekel. And *this* amount of silver was an atonement offering to YHWH introduced in Exodus 30:13-15, becoming known much later as the "Temple tax" but in common speech being referred to as "the half-shekel" - and amounting in value to perhaps ZAR3. (Silver was an important point, that was the symbol of a man.) The term is used nowhere else in the Brit Chadasha. It clearly refers to something much more specific than a generalised concept of tribute or tax. This is the "tax" that Yahusha *did* pay, but before we rush into drawing conclusions we must follow the story through a few more verses, from YLT by preference to make the contrasts bright and clear:

Mat 17:25 And when he came into the house, [Yahusha] anticipated him, saying, 'What thinkest thou, Simon? the kings of the earth--from whom do they receive custom or poll-tax? from their sons or from the strangers?'

Mat 17:26 Peter saith to him, 'From the strangers.' [Yahusha] said to him, 'Then are the sons free;

Mat 17:27 but, that we may not cause them to stumble, having gone to the sea, cast a hook, and the fish that hath come up first take thou up, and having opened its mouth, thou shalt find a stater, that having taken, give to them for me and thee.'

Thank you yet again Dr Young for being punctilious in translation. A stater was a silver coin worth just two didrachma, i.e. one shekel and thus exactly what was required in the minds of those who collected it for Kepha and his Master. Did Yahusha *need* to pay this? Did Peter *need* to pay it? Apparently not, except in the perceptions of those who were collecting it - and we should perhaps note that they are not referred to in this passage by the general and derogatory term *tax-collectors* which we find in various parts of the gospels (*publicans* in the KJV).

It's important that this account comes from Matthew, because not only was he writing from the most intimately Jewish of perspectives amongst the gossellers, but also the story arises from his area of special professional competence - tax-gathering. He was sensitive to the differences here, the terminology of the trade, and with good reason: the Greek word for tax-collector was *telones* which actually meant in the ears of the hearers *tax-farmers*. In fact the implication is that the economy, and the workers in it, are one vast "agricultural" enterprise whose purpose (*telones* comes from *telus* implying that the purpose of income, of economic activity, is tax) is to grow revenues for the state. (As I write this document I hear on the radio an advertisement from the SA Revenue Services: their officials are out on the streets to find SMEs [Small & Medium Enterprises] and encourage them to apply for the tax amnesty currently offered. Prominent in this advertisement is the statement *To do business without paying tax is a crime*. Well, that specifically goes against the Torah.) This doctrine may be the source, or perhaps the product, or maybe just the rationalization, of the presently near-universal policy that the state is entitled by right to "its cut" of anything economic. No wonder the Jews resented the *tax-farmers*, with their underlying doctrine of man which fell so short of the esteem of Elohim represented in man by His image!

Telones was not the right word for the people who were collecting the didrachms, otherwise Matthew the professional would have used that term.

Can you begin to see the vast difference between the half-shekel atonement offering, laid down once in the early history of the nation by its Mighty One, unvarying, not discriminating between man and man but reminding each of his common obligation to seek covering for his own sins, just as much as his rich neighbour on one side of him and his poverty-stricken neighbour on the other side needed to, and the tax whereby whatever state harvests whatever convenient fraction of your income for its own purposes as if by right, and graciously allows you to use the leftovers for your own needs? We should note that being subjected to this latter attitude is one of the punishments, the determinate consequences, of the Israelites' rejection of the Kingdom of Heaven in favour of earthly kings - read the sorry story in 1 Sam 8.

Fundamental to this falling away was a rejection on the part of the people of the obligation to judge themselves on the hierarchical basis established by Moshe, from the smallest community grouping of 10 (men) up through the orders to the supreme level. For such a method to work and to maintain righteousness throughout an entire nation, clearly there must be a total commitment to the teaching and ingraining of the Torah into the entire population of children, generation after generation, as stipulated in Deuteronomy 19. (As a grandfather myself, how saddened I was in the supermarket the other day to hear a distressed Afrikaans granny say to the 3 year-old tantrum beside her *My kind, ek ken nie die paaie waarin jou ouers jou lei nie.*) While the Jews have historically been far more compliant to this requirement than has any other nation, Israel as a whole backed away over a period of centuries from the downstream application of this universal Torah learning to low-level litigation (I presume the populace felt they couldn't spare the labour of their children for being taught Torah, ignoring another command in the process). Eventually, as we see in the very last verse of Judges, anarchy reigned. This resulted in a widespread move in favour of appointing a king to judge them, which opened a Pandora's box of evils, taxation included in order (on a pragmatic level) to fund the resulting administration but, far more significantly, to emphasize the dependence of the citizen on the state. To understand this, we must go back to the Greek of our passage from Matthew.

Although you would never guess it from the KJV, nor from many other translations, in vs 25 the Messiah is not talking about the money that is prominent in Peter's mind, the *didrachm*. He is referring to two different practices from the secular state - *custom*, and *poll-tax or tribute*. In the Greek, *telus* and *kensos*, the latter word being very close, with good reason, to our familiar word *census*. As mentioned above, *telus* is a rather cynical word carrying the overtone of *Just what did you expect out of this deal anyway - pay up and don't argue. The reason I'm going to all this trouble for you is to get my forecast revenue-harvest out of you so I can go ahead with my own plans and policies.* The second word *kensos* carries the overtone of *You want to enjoy the benefits of my administration? Enrol here and pay your dues.*

Put this way, it begins to sound rather as though the secular state is fundamentally just another form of protection racket (shades of Nimrod!), with the differences lying merely in the details, the window-dressing, the lofty ideals. I make no comment - you may or may not care to sift through that thought. My aim is to unravel the intention of Yahusha in bringing up this comparison between His Father's practice and that of *the kings of the earth*. (Aren't they the people that Psalm 2 refers to?) I think we have here an example of the Jewish form of logic favoured by Hillel, and unquestionably used by Yahusha from time to time, arguing from the lesser to the greater: *if the kings of the earth do this, how much more does the King of Heaven?*

One is put in mind of the well-known example of this logic in [Mat 7:11](#) *if, therefore, ye being evil, have known good gifts to give to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in the heavens give good things to those asking him?* And perhaps the quote we are focusing on relates very closely to this one. For the *kings of the earth* do not impose a tax on nor demand tribute from their own sons before they will extend a protective covering over them, protection is one of those good things that they automatically give unconditionally to their children simply because of the father/child relationship.

The converse also applies, and makes the above even clearer: *If the kings of the earth are entitled to exact custom and tribute from their subjects, how much more the King of Heaven?* But He doesn't! [Rom 8:32](#) *Truly, He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up on behalf of us all - how shall He not, along with Him, freely give us all else?*

This approach helps us to understand Yahusha's further comments on the *didrachms* in v26 and 27. The "sons" are free, not needing even to bring the minuscule atonement offering, a mere token admission of guilt perhaps, because they are in a relationship with their Father which brings with it the covering of sins simply as the generous provision of His Father-heart, paying the cost out of His own resources. But Yahusha pays it nevertheless, absolutely not because He needs to! Once again He does something which He does not need to do (and He says Peter does not need to either) at the risk of being widely misunderstood, because He wishes to avert a worse danger. Which is what? Well, not even YLT quite lifts the veil on this with its *that we may not cause them to stumble* in vs27. A closer examination of the Greek behind *stumble* (or, in the KJV, *offend*) shows that we are looking at the concept of

skandalizō *skan-dal-id'-zo*

To "scandalize"; from G4625; to *entrap*, that is, *trip* up (figuratively *stumble* [transitively] or *entice* to sin, apostasy or displeasure): - (make to) offend.

For more light, we need to dig a bit deeper (again, I would appreciate having some Hebrew light shone on this, perhaps someone has access to a Shem Tov version of Matthew):

G4625 [σκάνδαλον](#) skandalon *skan'-dal-on*

A "scandal"; probably from a derivative of G2578; a *trap stick* (*bent* sapling), that is, *snare* (figuratively *cause* of displeasure or sin): - occasion to fall (of stumbling), offence, thing that offends, stumbling-block.

So Yahusha is not talking about stepping on somebody's sensitive toes, raising an awkward subject for consideration, getting someone hot under the collar, or anything like that. He is warning that by insisting on our rights as "sons" we may metaphorically set a snare for other people and trap them into behaving in a way that is not appropriate for them, because they are not in the same situation as us but feel they may or should follow our example. Clearly, "offend" has shifted meaning somewhat in the last century or so, and along with it, "scandal". (Compare Matt 18:6)

In fact, as one views a typical dictionary definition of "offend", one has to ask *How can recent translators prefer this word over others that come to mind?* -

of·fend (-fnd) v. of·fend·ed, of·fend·ing, of·fends

v.tr.

1. *To cause displeasure, anger, resentment, or wounded feelings in.*
2. *To be displeasing or disagreeable to: Onions offend my sense of smell.*
3. a. *To transgress; violate: offend all laws of humanity.*
b. *To cause to sin.*

v.intr.

1. *To result in displeasure: Bad manners may offend.*
2. a. *To violate a moral or divine law; sin.*
b. *To violate a rule or law: offended against the curfew.*

Synonyms: offend, insult, affront, outrage

These verbs mean to cause resentment, humiliation, or hurt. To offend is to cause displeasure, wounded feelings, or repugnance in another: "He often offended men who might have been useful friends" John Lothrop Motley.

The only meaning of "offend" that could be relevant (3.b) is far from the mainstream of its meanings, and is any way not exactly enlightening either.

In fact, as we ponder this, it becomes clear that Yahusha is enunciating the same principle that Sha'ul puts forward in a different context, that of food offered to idols, in 1 Corinthians 8 and onwards. One does not use one's clear understanding of our privileged position in the Messiah in such a way as to possibly trip up someone who does not have the same degree of understanding but is still under the obligation to walk by faith - his shaky faith, based on his immature understanding, not yours. (Again the concept of the *emunah* triangle helps us to understand this. The sides have to be kept in balance and grow in proportion in each individual to avoid distortion and the danger of collapse.)

So this is what is underlying Yahusha's teaching on the "Temple tax": Because believers are children of the King, we do not need to pay it! Consider

Heb 2:10 For it was fitting for Him, because of whom all are and through whom all are, in bringing many sons to esteem, to make the Princely Leader of their deliverance perfect through sufferings.

Heb 2:11 For both He who sets apart and those who are being set apart are all of One, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brothers,

Heb 2:12 saying, "I shall announce Your Name to My brothers, in the midst of the congregation I shall sing praise to You."

Heb 2:13 And again, "I shall put My trust in Him." And again, "See, I and the children whom Elohim gave Me."

Heb 2:14 Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself similarly shared in the same, so that by means of His death He might destroy him having the power of death, that is, the devil,

Heb 2:15 and deliver those who throughout life were held in slavery by fear of death.

So does the principle extend *net* so to taxation by the secular state? As usual, I think the answer is Yes and No. Yes, the principle of trying not to trip up others still pertains. No,

because *telus* and *kensos* are so very different in concept and intent from the *didrachm*. And we see this sharply outlined in the famous attempt by the Pharisees in e.g. Matt 22:15 - to "trap Him in His words": *Is it lawful to render tribute to Caesar?* (The word here is *kensos*.) Please note that the question is not in terms of the law of the land as imposed by the Romans. That would be trivial, of course it was legal, in fact obligatory under Roman law, to pay Caesar this tax. No, the question is in terms of the Torah, the "law of Moses".

The question then is, in fact, which prevails? The law of the earthly authority, or the Torah of YHWH? - because there could be no doubt that the Torah prohibits it in terms of the Second Commandment. This emerges from Yahusha's response to their challenge. He says [Mat 22:19](#) *show me the tribute-coin? and they brought to him a denary.* "Tribute-coin" is not an idle waste of words - the Roman tribute had to be paid with a specific, Roman-minted coin, the denarius, which held an image of Caesar on the one side and some laudatory text on the other. You couldn't come along with a bunch of *didrachms* and pay the required tribute to Caesar via the *tax-farmer*. That would be an insult. It would suggest that you could value Caesar in terms of your own piffling currency. You had to have the correct currency, the coin that worshipped Caesar and challenged the Second Commandment by having a graven image of something earthly on it, namely an image of Caesar. And not much has changed over the centuries, try paying VAT for your business to the South African Revenue Services with Thai baht or Indian *rupees* or half a kilo of platinum or whatever valuable that may have come to hand in your international trading, I think you'll find you have to change it first into good old ZARands before your tribute is accepted. Indeed, I don't think you'll even be able to get by with Swazi *emalangeni* in spite of the fact that South Africa has an agreement with Swaziland to regard each other's currency as legal tender, and the *elangeni* is pegged at par with the Rand.

Money alone wasn't good enough, Caesar wanted via the money to force an acknowledgement of indebtedness to him, of dependence on him, and affirmation of his supremacy in and power over the lives of his subjects. There were other currencies in use in daily life, for purposes of trade, but to pay tribute to Caesar you had to come up with the "tribute-coin" otherwise much of the point was lost and Caesar would be displeased.

Consequently Yahusha didn't happen to have a denarius or two in His pocket. A truly devout Jew would not want to touch one, the symbolism was too repugnant, and this was what made the Pharisees' question such a poignant and dangerous one. **It challenged the primacy of the *Sh'ma Yisro'el* and thus the First Commandment too.** It is *not* just a simple query about tax, about paying for services legitimately rendered and received, without reference to its deepest nature, it is aimed precisely at eliciting Yahusha's teaching about the relationship between earthly authority and Heavenly authority. And in contrast with Yahusha, the Pharisees' disciples - who were pretty well accustomed to [Mar 7:13](#) "...nullifying the Word of Elohim through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such traditions you do" - didn't have too much difficulty with laying hands on a denarius and carrying it to Him and telling Him whose image was on it. (One gets the impression that He didn't even want to look at the abomination Himself, hearing about it was bad enough.)

What then was Yahusha's resolution of the tension between earthly and heavenly authority? Where did He draw the dividing line? May I suggest that with His famous *render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto Elohim the things that are Elohim's* He neither resolved the tension nor drew a dividing line? - because there is presently no resolution for the tension, nor ever a dividing line. The tension will only be resolved when Messiah comes and implements on this earth the rule of Torah, so that the earthly authority is totally obedient, precisely aligned, in its will and desire and behaving, to the heavenly. Then it will be clear to all that there is not, and never can be, any dividing line. There is no area where the earthly authority can say to the heavenly, *Back off, this area is reserved for me and is none of Your business.* The tension only arises because the earthly authority generates it, because it attempts to draw a dividing line. But Caesar has nothing of his own, in fact Caesar does not even belong to himself. He too is YHWH's. Not the Pope's. YHWH's.

(There are *no* sovereign states. States may well assert their right to be independent of each other, but none is ultimately sovereign. All exist, and their rulers exist, to serve YHWH Elohim

and implement His Torah. Their so-called “independence” is a misinterpreted consequence at their common level of their common status as servants of the Almighty.)

And this is the link with Romans 13 and many other passages in the Scripture that touch on this problem. Yes, we have to understand that *no* authority exists outside of the permission and intention of the Mighty One, the only Mighty One, which I think is the point you were making. But we also have to understand that that authority is not given as a blanket transfer of power, but it is given for a purpose and the people to whom it is given remain accountable to the One Who gives them that authority. And likewise it may be withdrawn without notice. Read Judges 16:20 and ponder.

Do we have any clue what that purpose is? Certainly, it's right there in Romans 13, and in 1 Timothy 2, 1 Peter 2 ...

Rom 13:4.... it is a servant of Elohim, a revenger to execute wrath on him who practises evil...

Rom 13:6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are servants of Elohim attending continually to these duties.

1Ti 2:2 [Pray] for sovereigns and all those who are in authority, in order that we lead a calm and peaceable life in all reverence and seriousness.

1Pe 2:13 Be subject to every institution of man because of the Master, whether to the sovereign as supreme,

1Pe 2:14 or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of doers of evil, and a praise for those who do good.

1Pe 2:15 Because such is the desire of Elohim, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men,

1Pe 2:16 as free, yet not using your freedom as a cloak for evil, but as servants of Elohim.

1Pe 2:17 Respect all, love the brotherhood, fear Elohim, respect the sovereign.

What emerges here is not only an obligation to the ruled to be subject to the rulers, but also an obligation to the rulers to limit themselves to certain activities. A job-description. A remit. A statement that there is no such thing as an independent nation, free of the service of YHWH Elohim. No ruler or ruling party is free to decide for itself what agenda to follow , what platform to adopt, what political philosophy to implement - without having to face, some day, a reckoning against the criteria mentioned above. And these criteria have massive implications. But before examining them, let's step back a moment and review what I've just said:

Robert Mugabe is the servant of YHWH Elohim

Thabo Mbeki is the servant of YHWH Elohim

George Bush is the servant of YHWH Elohim

Maggie Thatcher was the servant of Elohim

Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd was the servant of Elohim

Idi Amin was the servant of YHWH Elohim

Winston Churchill was the servant of YHWH Elohim

Josef Stalin was the servant of YHWH Elohim

Adolf Hitler was the servant of YHWH Elohim

Napoleon Bonaparte was the servant of YHWH Elohim (BTW, how many readers have registered that in 1798 he broke the supremacy of the Roman Catholic papacy which had been established in 538CE, 1260 years previously, by Justinian when he defeated the third heretical Arian kingdom of the Goths, cf Dan 7:25?)

Charles the Second was the servant of YHWH Elohim

Oliver Cromwell was the servant of YHWH Elohim

Charles the First was the servant of YHWH Elohim

Gengis Khan was the servant of YHWH Elohim

Constantine was the servant of YHWH Elohim

Trajan was the servant of YHWH Elohim

Nero was the servant of YHWH Elohim

Augustus Caesar was the servant of YHWH Elohim

Pontius Pilate was the servant of YHWH Elohim

Yahusha haMashiach is the Servant of YHWH Elohim

Herod Agrippa was the servant of YHWH Elohim

Antiochus IV was the servant of YHWH Elohim

Cyrus was the servant of YHWH Elohim

Belshazzar was the servant of YHWH Elohim

Daniel was the servant of YHWH Elohim

Nebuchadnezzar was the servant of YHWH Elohim (have you noticed that he gave the land of Israel its missing 70 years of Sabbath rests when the Jewish leaders had failed to?)

Ahab was the servant of YHWH Elohim

David was the servant of YHWH Elohim

Saul was the servant of YHWH Elohim

Samuel was the servant of YHWH Elohim

Eli was the servant of YHWH Elohim

Yahusha was the servant of YHWH Elohim (Moshe's Yahusha/Yehosha, that is)

Moshe was the servant of YHWH Elohim

Pharaoh was the servant of YHWH Elohim

Nimrod was the servant of YHWH Elohim

- and of course I could, given the resources, continue enumerating millions, no, billions, more of people in positions of earthly authority, greater or lesser, who all are or were *servants of YHWH Elohim*. (This job has been done already, much to my relief, by the heavenly recorders.) Some of them no doubt would be shocked or amazed to hear it, some would deny it strenuously, some might pat already inflated egos with the thought. Some might accept the assertion humbly. It doesn't matter: *it is appointed to man once to die, and after that the judgement*. Every one of those knees will bow, happily or unhappily. So will yours, so will mine.

Unquestionably some of the above performed their service better than others - but who are we to judge between them? One day all will have to account for the deeds done in the flesh, and those who have held authority amongst men will have to account for how they have discharged the *responsibility* that was brought on them by accepting their position of *authority*,

1. *To execute wrath on him who practises evil (i.e., lives in opposition to Torah)*
2. *To enable those who desire to be Torah-obedient to lead a calm and peaceful life in all reverence and seriousness*
3. *To punish doers of evil (i.e., those living in opposition to Torah) - see point 1 above*
4. *To attend continually to these duties*

Who will hear *Well done, good and faithful servant!*? I do think we may be surprised when the verdicts are handed down to see who did well with their responsibility and who did not. We all have our own opinions, and I imagine they're mostly wrong.

So I do not believe we should be judging those in authority over us, it is clear they are the servants of Another Who will judge them in due time. I do believe each person in such a position should be judging themselves, and in particular asking themselves *If I am to be continually attending to those simply-stated duties, how can I have time for attending to all the other matters of state? Because it is these things that people are allowed to pay taxes for, and governments are entitled to demand taxes for, not all the fripperies.*

The implication is that there is no legitimacy for any desired functions of the *state* that go beyond those covered in points 1, 2 and 3, thus interfering with point 4. The welfare state is inherently in opposition to Torah. (That does not mean that there is no imperative for charity or social welfare, medicine, education, you name it, simply that it must be an individual and community imperative, not a statal one.) In this connection, I would ask you to give serious thought to just what haMashiach was getting at with His famous words shortly after He had reprised the Torah in the Sermon on the Mount:

Mat 11:28 "Come to Me, all you who labour and are burdened, and I shall give you rest.

Mat 11:29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am

meek and humble in heart, and you shall find rest for your beings.

Mat 11:30 "For My yoke is gentle and My burden is light."

Being yoked or obligated to Him is *useful, easy, gracious, kind*. And that *burden* – is actually an *invoice*. I believe that the Torah-based administration of the Messiah will be incredibly efficient from an economic perspective, and will sit very easily, gently, beneficially on the shoulders of those who submit to it.

(For any civil servant earnestly wondering where to get some tips on *Restructuring civil society and the state for a nationally Torahic lifestyle* I could do no better than commend the Pentateuch for serious study, followed by parallel study of the last half of Nehemiah's book and Ezra's book. This would be particularly good reading for those civil servants in the United States of America tasked right now with preparing the nation for the Sunday Act which will prohibit the observance of the seventh-day Shabbat. And you could study critically the 60-odd years of recent history of the state of Israel for supplementary reading. But I doubt that there will be many takers at this stage, before the Messiah has returned to make it required reading for anyone wishing for a leading post in His administration.)

What about, I can hear one or two questioning minds thinking, education? hospitals? housing? social welfare? defence? environment? justice? correctional services? and so on? These are irreducible functions of the modern human-rights based welfare state. They have to be funded from somewhere!

Perhaps to the surprise of some, these issues are all addressed in the Torah, and they are not rights-based. They are not obligations of the state. They are not funded from the fiscus. But the entire alternative system is based on the open and general recognition of the YHWH-cratic state which applies the Torah of the Hebrew Scriptures, from Beresheit to Debarim, as expounded from Yehosha to Revelation. It is not a welfare state.

I'm not going to go into many details now, for one thing because we don't *have* this state yet, and then I don't want to take away from my readers the pleasure of discovering (from Scripture, not from very hard experience, that won't be a pleasure at all) some of its implications. That state, let me make it very clear before someone charges me with being a *Kingdom Now* advocate, will only come into being once Yahusha the Messiah, anointed for this role, comes as the all-conquering Prince of the new rule. In the meantime, those of us who are subjects of the Kingdom of Heaven are in this world, but not of this world. Some would argue that we can therefore claim diplomatic immunity from the requirements of the secular state, but I don't believe this is quite correct. I believe we are to live as laid down in the Scriptures.

(Not Very Quick Aside: many may say *But theocratic governments have been tried before, they don't work* and then dredge up Calvin's experiment in Geneva as an example. For a hostile resume of it, here's a brief quote from <http://www.religion-cults.com/heresies/outlook.htm>, a Catholic summary of cults etc in the Common Era, but nevertheless a convenient short chronological compendium if you ignore the spin:

In 1536 [Calvin] established a theocratic government in Geneva in which the religious and social and political affairs of the city were controlled by Calvin's new church. Geneva became a model of Puritan sobriety in which the lives of all citizens were closely policed and all offenses punished severely... all people were expected to live the life of a monk, with no alcohol, no dancing or singing, no fun..

Clearly Calvin did not base his rule on Torah or the TNK more widely, is the impression one gets as one reads the last line of the quote.

It's an inherent flaw in Replacementism in all its flavours, the arrogance that may lead to the conclusion that the church can rule without the physical presence of the Anointed One to issue *right-ruling* from Jerusalem. An underlying arrogance that leads to serious deviations at one point or another.)

So now we have to face the very real question of what we do about the tax that exceeds what is correct for the government, any government, to demand for the services it is entitled to provide to its subjects (as I have said many times, *governments should do well, not good*. An awkwardly phrased attempt to encapsulate a deep truth).

This is precisely the dilemma that Messiah left His hearers with after He told them "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesars, and unto Elohim the things that are Elohim's". Yes, He said, *there are things that are due to Caesar, but never may they hijack the things that are due to Elohim. They are anyway actually due to Elohim, but they are temporarily deputed to Caesar. There is an allocation by priority. And you have enough information in the TNK to figure out for yourselves what belongs where, I'm not going to do it for you.*

You cannot logically apply Romans 13 etc to a governing authority, then allow that structure to claim that it gets its authority from *the will of the masses* or anywhere else. That is confusing *How* with *Why*. If you believe that the government gets its authority from above, then it is the servant of the Almighty and responsible to use its authority for the purposes of the Almighty as spelled out in the relevant passages of Scripture. Any other position is inconsistent. One has to take issue, for example, with the framers of the USA Declaration of Independence as exemplified by James Madison:

"The preservation of a free government requires not merely, that the metes and bounds which separate each department of power may be invariably maintained; but more especially, that neither of them be suffered to overleap the great Barrier which defends the rights of the people. The Rulers who are guilty of such an encroachment, exceed the commission from which they derive their authority, and are Tyrants. The People who submit to it are governed by laws made neither by themselves, nor by an authority derived from them, and are slaves."
(James Madison, MEMORIAL AND REMONSTRANCE AGAINST RELIGIOUS ASSESSMENTS. He was arguing that to levy taxes to pay the salaries of preachers would *threaten the preservation of a free government.*)

If you accept the implications of the italicized sentence, then only in a democracy can one be "free", and not the slave of the lawgiver - the lawgiver has to be subject to the will of the people. Along with Sha'ul - Rom 6:18 - I'd rather be the slave of the righteousness which YHWH has defined in His Torah, and I'd rather live in a society made up of likeminded people, than be "free". Because as soon as you go along with Madison and his friends, you run into the following problem, the following need to make an exception, the following inconsistency that Madison himself remarked on:

The Religion then of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man; and it is the right of every man to exercise it as these may dictate. This right is in its nature an unalienable right. It is unalienable; because the opinions of men, depending only on the evidence contemplated by their own minds, cannot follow the dictates of other men: It is unalienable also; because what is here a right towards men, is a duty towards the Creator. It is the duty of every man to render to the

Creator such homage, and such only, as he believes to be acceptable to him. This duty is precedent both in order of time and degree of obligation, to the claims of Civil Society. Before any man can be considered as a member of Civil Society, he must be considered as a subject of the Governor of the Universe: And if a member of Civil Society, who enters into any subordinate Association, must always do it with a reservation of his duty to the general authority; much more must every man who becomes a member of any particular Civil Society, do it with a saving of his allegiance to the Universal Sovereign. We maintain therefore that in matters of Religion, no man's right is abridged by the institution of Civil Society, and that Religion is wholly exempt from its cognizance. [330 U.S. 1, 65] True it is, that no other rule exists, by which any question which may divide a Society, can be ultimately determined, but the will of the majority; but it is also true, that the majority may trespass on the rights of the minority.

Strange that a man who could write the emphasised (my emphasis) would not take the next step and inquire - *has that Governor, that Universal Sovereign, not perhaps laid down a set of rules of behaviour that would be invariant for all men and therefore all members of every Civil Society? Rules that transcend the bounds of "religion"? Universal Justice on the basis of Universal Law given by the Universal Sovereign?* But then the Founding Fathers were aiming to create a society based on a common *humanity* rather than a common *obligation*; a society safe for people of every shade of belief - and we are seeing the longterm consequences developing in terms of those people who wish to be obedient to the Governor of Whom all men are subjects: the two societies are not compatible. And this is an extremely important point which we must remember a little later.

(I think that this is possibly roughly where Kent Hovind took his point of departure to be, not from a generally bolshie attitude towards governments. I do think that he and I would differ in our understandings of how the allocation by priority falls out in practice, because he thinks in terms of a corrupt concept, namely the "church" as widely understood by Christians including Calvin, and sets it over against the state, implying that the "church" is where the will of Elohim should be obeyed, while the state has an independent remit; but I don't think we differ on the principle that I mentioned a few paragraphs back, that Caesar is subordinate to YHWH. But he views things from a Reformation perspective: Caesar has his patch, the "Church" has hers, and the two should not interfere with each other. This is not Scriptural, it is a pragmatic accommodation to the reluctance of men to submit themselves to Torah in all its implications. Remember the Rich Young Ruler.)

(For more light on this concept, please read Matt 21:33-45. Consider that the fruit required and anticipated by YHWH, the owner of the vineyard, would be the *peaceable fruit of righteousness* - a good phrase to put into your e-Sword search engine. Elohim has created the *kosmos* and human society so that He can reap not a tax harvest - He already owns all the wealth of the world - but a harvest of righteousness from the behaviour of people as individuals and as members of society. Righteous behaviour is what we see exemplified in the Anointed One, Yahusha benYosef, and guess what? It is exactly Torah-observant. The servants in the parable hijacked the vineyard to produce fruits for their own use, and refused to allow the Owner His due, refused to allow Him to collect what He had prepared and set up the entire vineyard for - and this is precisely the enormous, sometimes unperceived, temptation for every governing authority in history on this earth.)

Before we address the italicised question in detail, let me just point out a truism: the more the secular states of the present time try to live up to the foundational ideals which they embrace, the more they have to take from their citizens to fuel their efforts. Thus inevitably they encroach more and more on ethical and material territory that is not theirs to claim by right. So - as I suggested at the start - we are inevitably faced with more and more pressure to conform to things which believers know - on the basis of Scripture, by the witness of the Ruach of Set-apartness, by their common humanity - are not right. In the present time this shift is being accelerated by the widespread lipservice being given to democracy as the best possible theory of government. (This was not quite the view of Winston Churchill, who as I recall offhand thought there were no good theories of government, but democracy was the *least bad* option.)

I see a solution that accords with the general principles of Torah, and the specific principles concerning submission to authority, and the principle of doing what may not be obligatory to you in order not to trip up another believer who is not properly prepared yet to follow your example. It is stated quite simply: *pay every (legitimate) tax - even though you don't have to!*

Before going into detail on the reasons for this conclusion, let me quickly address that "legitimate". It's where the grey area sits. Let's ask a few questions which may help to clarify what I mean, and some answers which in my opinion represent the scriptural ideals - I'm not going to defend this opinion right now, please just accept it momentarily for the sake of the argument:

Does a society have a right

1. to maintain a standing Supreme Court as an ultimate arbiter of justice? Yes
2. to maintain a hierarchy of lower courts? Yes
3. to maintain a penal system of prisons and correctional institutions? No
4. to execute justice on offenders? Yes

Does a government have a right to tax its citizens in general in order

-

1. to maintain a standing Supreme Court as an ultimate arbiter of justice? Yes
2. to maintain a hierarchy of lower courts? No
3. to maintain a penal system of prisons and correctional institutions? No
4. to execute justice on offenders? No

Can you opt to pay a tax to maintain a standing Supreme Court, but not also different taxes that maintain a hierarchy of lower courts and a penal system of prisons and correctional institutions?

Not in any country that I'm aware of!

The problem of course is that it's very difficult if not impossible - at least in theory - for a state to selectively offer certain benefits to some taxpayers and not to others, particularly a state that depends for its support on being perceived by the voters to be spreading the tax largesse fairly across society as a whole. (Of course, in practice it happens every day, through the technique called *corruption* and through

other means, but it is not likely to be done formally and openly and widely.) Therefore the state gathers taxes as widely as possible on some basis that it decides is equitable, and dishes out its favours as widely as possible in order to obligate as many people as possible to come under the tax net and be beholden to the state, thus ensuring its continued existence.

Try claiming back the fees for your child at private school from the taxman, on the grounds that you're not using the government school. Or, even worse, deducting that monthly amount from your PAYE contribution! Or, worse yet, calculating what portion of your tax payment goes towards education, and withholding that because you are home-schooling. Likewise, although you may claim a limited rebate for medical expenses, you would not be welcome to withhold the portion of your taxes that goes towards the Department of Health. Nor would you be welcome to calculate what percentage of your tax goes towards facilitating abortion-on-demand, and refusing to pay that portion because of your ethical stance against this "service". And I could multiply such examples many times.

Such attempts would be regarded as subverting the ability of the government to provide the services it has promised the electorate it would deliver to the citizens.

Now I'm not going to try to solve the problem of how a government would be able to finance the provision of these services if the tax structure didn't work more-or-less the way that it does. My point is exactly that it probably wouldn't be able to, and that points to the fact that in my opinion governments shouldn't be offering such services to their citizens. Therefore the payment of what one might wish to decide are *legitimate* taxes in the sense we have been using the word is inextricably and deliberately coupled in practice to the payment of - what can I call them, there is no other word in this context - *illegitimate* taxes, taxes that are needed for providing services which governments should not be providing, which often translate into taxes that go against one's conscience or that do not result in the provision to a particular individual as taxpayer of services from the government that he wants to receive from the government.

So here is the dilemma again, reduced to its bare bones: *If I pay legitimate taxes, I will also be paying illegitimate taxes through the integrated tax system. If I refuse to pay illegitimate taxes, I will fail to pay the legitimate taxes which I should pay.*

Is there a scriptural resolution to the dilemma when stated in this way?

I believe there is. And I could go back to the TNK to illustrate it in practice there, but I will shortcut via the summary statement of principle given by YHWH's Anointed One in the Sermon on the Mount:

Mat 5:38 "You heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,'

Mat 5:39 but I say to you, do not resist the wicked. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.

Mat 5:40 "And he who wishes to sue you and take away your inner garment, let him have your outer garment as well.

Mat 5:41 "And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.

Mat 5:42 "Give to him who asks of you, and from him who wishes to borrow from you, do not turn away.

Mat 5:43 "You heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.'

Mat 5:44 "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those cursing you, do good to those hating you, and pray for those insulting you and persecuting you,

Mat 5:45 so that you become sons of your Father in the heavens. Because He makes His sun rise on the wicked and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.

None of the translators seems to get quite to the heart of vs 41. As Strong advises us, *compel* and the first *go* are one and the same in the Greek, while the two *go*'s translate quite different words. Influenced perhaps by the familiar and certainly justified example of the Roman soldier obliging the reluctant citizen to carry his pack for a thousand paces, the translators have opted for simple short words that fail to do justice to the broader concepts involved. Hazarding a closer transliteration, I humbly suggest that the following would help us to understand Mashiach's intention better:

Mat 5:41 "And whoever impresses you into public service to be a courier for one mile, submit yourself with him for two.

Being impressed into public service, being *commandeered*, implied putting certain assets, let's say your donkey or your back, at the service of the state whether you agreed or not with the intentions and goals of the state in general or in that particular situation - whether the state was being friendly to your view on life or not, whether the purpose of this was to provide a service you desired or not. You might be a pacifist or a zealot, and the thought of lending a helping hand to carry the arms of the oppressor might not sit well with you - but Yahusha is saying *Do it, and even more than required!*

Why? Why not object? Why not read the riot act (in this case, the Torah) to the individual trying to commandeer your resources which you would rather devote to, let us say, missionary service, or getting your harvest in before the rain falls? Why not claim your human rights? The answer to this too is given in our Scripture reference, Messiah speaking: *Then are the sons free; Mat 17:27 but, that we may not cause them to stumble...* or, more properly, as we have seen, *so that we may not set a snare that will trap them into sinning...* go ahead, find the resources with My help by being obedient to my command, and pay the tax.

Clearly what will be most important in understanding this verse is what group of people that pronoun *them* refers to. In the context, it could reasonably refer to:

1. *The sons*
2. *The strangers*
3. *The sovereigns of the earth*

Can we reasonably eliminate any of these categories? Not really, in my opinion, so I think we must accept that *them* applies to *all* of them. Let's consider how each group might be tempted into sinning by believers insisting on their right not to pay (illegitimate) taxes:

1. *The sons* - who are other believers who have not yet, in the development of their *emunah*, come to an understanding of the implications of the Gospel of Elohim in regard to earthly authority - may be tempted to despise and withdraw support from the sovereigns because they are following a different ethical agenda. By their *emunah* they are sons of Abraham and by their identification in baptism with the Firstborn they are sons of the Almighty One.

2. *The strangers* - these are in social and supportive relationships with the *sons* but are not yet committed in *emunah* to a Torah-obedient lifestyle, although if living close enough to believers (*within your gates*) they may be required to follow Torah precepts. By comparison with the Exodus they are perhaps like *gerim*, strangers who nevertheless are impressed enough by what they understand of the Kingdom of Heaven (= the Gospel of Elohim) to want to associate with it. Perhaps many "Christians" are in this category, although they understand little more of the Kingdom than the astonishing offer of free pardon for sinners through the blood of Yahusha. One can see how they might be tempted even more easily than the *sons* who are established in *emunah* to despise and withdraw support from the sovereigns, if they were misled to think that that was the way to live.

3. *The sovereigns of the earth* - Like Pharaoh, they are trying in a rational way to achieve their objectives for their reigns, with varying degrees of concern for whether these objectives coincide with the unvarying *righteousness*-objective of the Almighty. The temptation for these, should they see the *sons* repudiating their efforts, whether for trivia or for the most fundamental issues of Torah, is to become more firmly set against the authority of Heaven. Sometimes this is exactly what Elohim has in mind for them, as in the case of Pharaoh vs Moshe, but I would think that in general YHWH is willing that they too should come to repentance, and in this connection we need to read the Book of Daniel with amazed humility at the examples we see there.

What we need to be sensitive to on an historic scale is that YHWH is permitting the gentiles the opportunity of trying out and exhausting the alternatives to Torah-rule. When the democratic experiment is generally admitted to have failed, in not too many years from now, there will be only one last insane option to fall back on, the One-World Government under a global dictator who puts himself forward as

Christ. People will look to him to rescue and optimize the economic system and rationalize the legal system across countries, but they will not demand that he institutes the rule of Torah, because they do not understand that YHWH has anointed His Mashiach, His Son, to implement the rule of Torah, of righteousness.

The simultaneous truth and falsity of Madison's words will become evident, for the people will have chosen laws for themselves, but these laws will turn out to have been sold to them by the evil puppetmaster, and they will discover themselves to be the slaves of one whose burden is anything but light. It will be a desperate experiment, doomed to failure. Only then will Yahusha return bodily and intervene against those *who suppress the truth in unrighteousness* - this is *the Good News of Messiah*, that Elohim is not going to let deluded men get away with it forever, but is going to show them how it should be done, and how it should have been done from the beginning.

I think it's now beginning to become clear that the role of the believer is not to impede this process except in truly confrontational situations. Believers are to assist the governors in their attempts to bring about good governance, even though we know that there is something terribly flawed in their basic approach. We are not to despise them nor exalt ourselves in our own eyes above them, because we too are sinners, and we too are servants of the Most High. As His servants, we are surely to assist His other servants to perform their duties, even if they are not doing them very well in our opinion. It is the prerogative of the Master to reckon with His servants. Only occasionally does He choose to send a Nathan to rebuke a David (but he does send many prophets to rebuke many evil rulers).

This implies a lot of forbearance on our part. But it does not, obviously, mean unthinkingly and unceasingly going along with the authority's demands on us when they would force us specifically and directly to break the Torah of YHWH, or to cause others to do so. There is a lot of latitude, of opportunity for believers as fellow-servants to remind the authorities of where their commission comes from and Who will reckon with them in due course. I keep reflecting with awe on the steadfast and unremitting faithfulness of Daniel, who in his top support role in very hostile governments was surely called on to implement policies that were far from congenial to him, yet received an encomium from Heaven which has few equals in the Scriptural record: *O Dani'el, man greatly appreciated*. In fact, the adjective there in the Hebrew is difficult to translate into a single English word with adequate intensity of feeling: it conveys the multiple senses of *delight, desire, goodly, pleasant, precious*. One does not find this kind of language applied again to an individual until the Father speaks from heaven to the people at the Jordan and advises them *This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased!*

It is, as I read the Scriptures, almost inescapable that that same Daniel's three Jewish friends would have had final responsibility for the construction of the idolatrous golden image which but for a miraculous intervention would have taken their lives. (It appears likely that they occupied the ministerial posts of Labour, Public Works, and Trade & Industry for the home province of Babylon, if we may use current concepts, and there is no possibility that such a massive project could have been mounted and successfully completed without their active official co-operation. How about Daniel? Daniel had had himself transferred from the top executive role, the Premiership, to the Imperial judiciary, occupying a seat in the king's gate, which would have translated roughly to the High Court, finalizing all outstanding cases of law which did not need to be referred to the Appeal Court, consisting of Nebuchadnezzar himself.)

For whatever reason, Daniel himself was not obliged to bow to the image, but his friends could not have escaped involvement in the entire project. But it seems that they only saw the line of refusal, or even of giving a warning testimony, as being drawn at the point where they themselves would have to worship the image. (On the other hand, I can't imagine that Daniel would have failed to witness somewhere along the line to the megalomaniacal Nebuchadnezzar that this really wasn't a good idea, and perhaps this was why he seems to have been exempted from doing obeisance to the image.)

After this incident, we hear no more of his friends' impact on society, and we may well ask whether they were not early examples of **1Co 3:15** *If anyone's work is burned, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, but so as through fire*. Apparently they had not objected to the project for fundamental reasons as affecting the righteousness of the nation, only when it impinged on their own personal piety. We note also that they seemed to have left their Hebrew names behind them, while Daniel retained his in spite of insistent attempts by the king to "Babylonize" him.

However that may be, it is clear that Daniel was still in place alongside the emperor when the latter was humbled with bovine unreason to reprove his folly of Dan 4:30. Daniel faithfully relayed the judgement on Nebuchadnezzar, and it was delivered from heaven. But he was there to help maintain the stability and administration of the vast empire during the incapacity of the king for seven years. (Think what kind of loyalty that implied! Think of the temptation to “introduce a just system”! Just think of the fine-tuned sense of righteousness which admitted that the Jews were being properly punished for their sins, and should not try to break out from the captivity that was to be their safety, according to Jeremiah's witness which Daniel may well have heard back in Jerusalem - he knew about Jeremiah's prophecies, see Dan 9:2.) He was there in a unique position to bring the truth of the Kingdom of Heaven to bear on not just a series of kings, but a series of bitterly antagonistic political systems - and he did it without fear or favour. Even before judgement came on Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel gave him some unsolicited advice [Dan 4:27](#) “Therefore, O sovereign, let my counsel be acceptable to you, and break off your sins by righteousness, and your crookednesses by showing favour to the poor - your prosperity might be extended.” It wasn't appreciated at the time, but it seems to have had some effect later on.

One cannot but ask *Was Daniel involved in bringing the command of YHWH Elohim of the heavens to Cyrus to build Him an house in Yerushalayim in the last year of Daniel's service and the first of Cyrus' reign?* (Dan 1:21 and Ezra 1:1-3, if you want to check.) Somehow I think it would have been so fitting for Daniel, after his towering prayer of *t'shuvah* in Dan 9, to be part of the first irrevocable earthly gesture towards the re-acceptance of the Jews for worship in Jerusalem.

While considering the return to Jerusalem, let's look at Isaiah's prophecy, at the complaint YHWH levels against His city:

[Isa 1:14](#) “My being hates your New Moons and your appointed times, they are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them.

[Isa 1:15](#) “And when you spread out your hands, I hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I do not hear. Your hands have become filled with blood.

[Isa 1:16](#) “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Stop doing evil!

[Isa 1:17](#) “Learn to do good! Seek right-ruling, reprove the oppressor, defend the fatherless, plead for the widow.

Please note the prescription, the agenda, for the repentant. See how it would apply to 21st century believers:

- **Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes** - Believers have done this in and by the blood of the Lamb
- **Stop doing evil!** - This sounds like many Xtians' idea of sanctification. But there is more to it than that, some positives that must be implemented:
- **Learn to do good!** - But don't we just naturally do good as a result of having the New Nature in us, John Bevere's new DNA? Apparently not, it is a challenge to deliberately apply our understanding as well as other faculties, as Paul indicates in, amongst others, [Rom 16:19](#) *Your obedience, indeed, is reported to all. Therefore I rejoice concerning you, but I wish you to be wise indeed as to the good, and simple toward the evil.* How are we to do this? First at an individual level, you need to [2Ti 2:15](#) *Do your utmost to present yourself approved to Elohim, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly handling the Word of Truth.* This, as I understand it, is in fact the “walk of faith”, of *emunah*. For when you've got well down this road of studying Torah, there are some more steps:
- **Seek right-ruling.** This is not the same as learning to do good, it is a matter of seeking out and appointing people who will apply their learning of Torah to the resolution of *shalom*-disturbing disagreements between members of society by giving right-ruling, i.e, ruling that conforms to Torah.
- **Reprove the oppressor.** By definition an oppressor is someone or some entity that exerts their authority, legitimate or not, over people to prevent them from doing what they should be allowed to do. This apparently is not something you would be able to undertake with a great expectation of success if there is no context in which right-ruling may be found. In a conducive context, the issue of obedience to authority will be much easier.
- **Defend the fatherless.** Marc, I think you and I are both well into this, in different ways. But the

question that comes to my mind is, are we not doing something unbalanced, almost jumping the gun, by concentrating on this while not giving similar attention to the prerequisites stated here in Isaiah 1?

- **Plead for the widow.** A similar argument applies. I am not saying we should drop charitable activities until we have repaired societies and nations, but that we should give a well-rounded representation, a full witness, to the whole counsel of Elohim in what we do, and part of this is taking authorities lovingly to task if they depart from their Scriptural duty as servant of the Most High Elohim. (Could give them quite a shock!) Paul could say to the elders of the assembly in Ephesus in **Act 20:27** *For I kept not back from declaring to you all the counsel of Elohim.* Just a verse or two before he emphasises that among them he *went about proclaiming the reign of Elohim*, a system in which the widow is thoroughly cared for.

(Note that the modern welfare state typically skips the important earlier steps and tries to achieve the “nice” latter outcomes without acknowledging submission to YHWH through implementing His Torah throughout the society. Australia may proclaim itself to be an “Xtian country”, to keep Muslims subdued, but that’s still far from where it needs to be.)

So what had happened to Jerusalem, and what was YHWH going to do about it? More, please, Isaiah:

Isa 1:21 How the steadfast city has become a whore! I have filled it with right-ruling; righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers.

Isa 1:22 Your silver has become dross, your wine is mixed with water.

Isa 1:23 Your rulers are stubborn, and companions of thieves. Everyone loves bribes, and runs after rewards. They do not defend the fatherless, nor does the cause of the widow reach them.

Isa 1:24 Therefore the Master declares, הוה' of hosts, the Elohim of Yisra'el, “Ah, I shall be eased of My adversaries, and I shall be avenged of My enemies.

Isa 1:25 “And I shall turn My hand against you, and shall refine your dross as with lye, and shall remove all your alloy.

*Isa 1:26 “And I shall give back your judges as at the first, and your counsellors as at the beginning. **After this** you shall be called the city of righteousness, a steadfast city.”*

Isa 1:27 Tsiyon shall be redeemed with right-ruling, and her returning ones with righteousness. (My bolds.)

Verse 23 almost shocks one with its aptness to Southern Africa 2007 CE, although its primary application is to Jerusalem 600-650 BCE. But more to our point is verse 25: part of the cure is a restoration of the judiciary - those who give *right-rulings* - as laid down in Exodus 18 and affirmed in Deuteronomy 1.

We have to ask the question: has this prophecy been fulfilled already or not? With the return from Babylon, was the Mosaic system instituted again? Do we have information on this point? Of course we have!

It was certainly the intention of Artaxerxes that it should be, as he wrote in the letters patent by which he commissioned Ezra:

Ezr 7:25 *And you, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your Elah that is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges to judge all the people who are beyond the River, all such as know the laws of your Elah. And teach those who do not know them.*

Well, did Ezra or didn't he? Apparently not - the reference in

Ezr 10:14 *“Please, let the leaders of all the assembly stand. And let all those in our cities who have taken foreign women come at appointed times, together with the elders and judges of their cities, until the burning wrath of our Elohim is turned away from us in this matter.*

Ezr 10:15 *Only Yonathan son of Asah'el and Yahzeyah son of Tiqwah opposed*

this, and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Lēwite gave them support.

Ezr 10:16 Then the sons of the exile did so. And Ezra the priest, with certain heads of the fathers' houses, were separated by the fathers' houses, each of them by name. And they sat down on the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter. ”

seems to refer to the already-existing civil structures who obviously were not well-informed regarding the laws of YHWH. There is no record of Ezra appointing and training a judiciary as laid down by Moses.

Similarly, Nehemiah as the governor of the province of Judea deals directly with a prevalent, mature social evil that should have been nipped in the bud by the intended system if it had been in place:

Neh 5:7 And my heart ruled over me, and I strove with the nobles and with the deputy rulers, and said to them, “You are exacting interest, each one from his brother.” And I called a great assembly against them...

Through his mass rally, Nehemiah ensures he has popular support for his reform, which certainly is implementing Torah regarding exacting interest, but it is not done in the Torah-approved way which would have had this practice halted at the very lowest level as a clear travesty of the Torah, as aggrieved borrowers took their lenders to the judges of 10s, 50s, 100s... for right-ruling.

Likewise, when we get to Nehemiah 11, we may think that we are seeing the institution of this judiciary system, but no! Again it seems to have failed to proceed from the higher levels down to the lowest, which would have dispersed justice evenly and accessibly and freely, in both senses of the word, throughout the entire nation (shades of *salt of the earth!*).

We see confirmation of this from the Messiah Himself, in Luke 12:14, where He refuses to perform the task of allocating an inheritance between a supplicant and his brother. Why ever not - I mean, who else could possibly have done it more fairly? Although He uses the incident to warn His hearers against greed, He does not rebuke the man who asked for justice - rather His rebuke is pointed against the greedy brother who refused to share. No, Yahusha's refusal to judge is based on the fact that He had not been appointed a judge over the pair of them. Yet.

Luk 12:13 And someone from the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, speak to my brother, to divide the inheritance with me.”

Luk 12:14 But He said to him, “Man, who made Me a judge or divider over you?”

Luk 12:15 And He said to them, “Mind, and beware of greed, because one's life does not consist in the excess of his possessions.”

(If the judgement were to be given in the man's favour, would he have an excess of possessions? No, he would have his fair share. If the judgement were not to be given, who would have the excess? Not him, but his brother, obviously. The reproof here is not for the appellant, but for the greedy brother who was sitting on the entire inheritance.)

So what Yahusha is doing here is upholding the Torah requirement for a proper authoritative Exodus 18 system of right-ruling, by refusing to jump into an unoccupied slot and thus bypass the proper chain of delegation. Was the slot unoccupied? Surely, otherwise the plaintiff would already have had his case dealt with quickly and without cost, in a way that carried the approval of his community. Instead he was trying to avoid the delay and cost of the legal system then in place with its lawyers who would argue any case to best advantage in the highest court they could push it to, but would not humble themselves before Torah to seek *right-ruling* rather than their client's success and their own reputation. The circumstantial evidence is strong against the prevalence of the proper judicial system, and the Messiah's response implies that the aggrieved plaintiff, and all in a similar situation, should press the authorities to appoint judges correctly.

Consequently we must conclude from Isaiah 1 that the structural reforms prophesied in *Isa 1:26*

“And I shall give back your judges as at the first, and your counsellors as at the beginning. After this you shall be called the city of righteousness, a steadfast city.” and [Isa 1:27](#) Tsiyon shall be redeemed with right-ruling, and her returning ones with righteousness still await fulfillment, along with the more-widely anticipated and intimately-linked Isaiah 2:3. This prophecy is Messianic and millennial. So while we look forward to that ideal, we do not expect it to be realised globally or even nationally without haMashiach at the helm of the earthly government. Let's be realistic - most people would far rather have the corrupt mess that they are used to, with a bit of tinkering to clean things up a bit, than subject themselves to Torah. What, no 24x7 convenience stores, 7-day malls or even Internet trading?! No bacon/pork/gammon/ham in my pizzas or toasted cheese sandwiches?! Home-schooling obligatory for the children - have to wait 20 years before the wife can re-enter the job market?! Death for a bit of fun with that girl at the office?! I have to release all debts every jubilee year?! Does that mean no 20-year mortgage bonds to finance that dream house that I so covet?! How are the stock exchanges going to operate?! And on it goes...

To summarise: I would not like to be regarded as foolish enough to expect human society worldwide to reform as drastically as described in the previous paragraph, without the Son of the Most High King ruling the nations *with a rod of iron* and having a lot of faithful servants in place all over the world to help *administer right-ruling* at all levels of society. I hope you would not either, and therefore are accepting that the question of how to manage the tension between the Torah lifestyle that believers are committed to, and the lifestyle that the surrounding world system, authorities included, would like to squeeze them into, requires deep, wide and careful study, well beyond the limits of Romans 13. (How about a quick look at Romans 12? Oh, but then you have to ask yourself what underlies that *therefore* and you have to go back even further... Sorry, no quick looks.)

While living in this tension we are obliged by Scripture to subject ourselves to these authorities, but we are not allowed to compromise the Law of the Kingdom of Heaven in order to do that. What I have tried to do is to show that there are grounds - extensive, solid grounds - for *never* allowing our subjection to earthly authorities to be based on an excessive valuation of their worth - worship, if you like (and *they probably would like*, remember Caesar's *tribute-coin*). It must be based on our understanding that they are servants of the same Ruler that we serve - and they may be, and most likely are, rebellious and faulty servants of that King - who are appointed by Him with a rather narrow job-description the boundaries of which they are almost certainly greatly overstepping. Yes, in His boundless grace He will bring forth much good even from their transgressions, but that will not excuse them, it will only add to the esteem in which we all should hold Him now and shall hold Him when everything is revealed at the judgement.

Our esteem for authorities derives from our esteem for YHWH our Mighty One, and never matches or exceeds it. Nevertheless they do have a fairly wide choice of means to accomplish their prescribed goals, and we should be reluctant to seem to be challenging them at every point because that would be tempting them, and those subjects that they are supposed to be helping to live according to Torah, to fall further into sinful antagonism against the Most High.

In broad terms our strategy must be to help earthly authorities execute their assigned task to the best of their understanding, a role which should leave us much opportunity for witnessing to the eternal principles and applicability of Torah and to the supremacy of Heaven. Clearly this is tightrope-walking, and we need to become *wise as serpents, and harmless as doves*, an ideal that obviously requires us to study and meditate on the Laws, Commandments and Torot of the Mighty King, particularly the 5 books of Moshe but also the remainder of the Tanak, then the Brit Chadasha, otherwise we really won't have much of an idea where the boundaries of the Kingdom of Heaven lie and where the transgressions of man's arrogance and misguided humanism begin. It is an enterprise that demands the great humility and commitment of a Daniel, who was prepared to face the ravenous lions rather than forego either of his allegiance to YHWH and his submission to Darius. One might summarise Daniel's attitude in this crisis by *The best way I as a servant of the Most High Elohim can help you, o King Darius, is to pray for you - not to you.*

Which is not much different, is it, from what we see in expansion by Paul in

[1Ti 2:1](#) *First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for all men,*

[1Ti 2:2](#) *for sovereigns and all those who are in authority, in order that we lead a calm and peaceable life in all reverence and seriousness.*

[1Ti 2:3](#) *For this is good and acceptable before Elohim our Saviour,*

1Ti 2:4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

1Ti 2:5 For there is one Elohim, and one Mediator between Elohim and men, the Man Messiah יהושע,

1Ti 2:6 who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be witnessed in its own seasons,

1Ti 2:7 for which I was appointed a proclaimer and an emissary – I am speaking the truth in Messiah and not lying – a teacher of the gentiles in belief and truth.

1Ti 2:8 So I resolve that the men pray everywhere, lifting up hands that are set-apart, without wrath and disputing.

(Verse 2 might throw some light on the Moshe-Pharaoh confrontation.) But please notice that Paul ties this tightly to the Messianic paradigm, something that pretty well disappears out of sight in all those scripture translations which use Greek and pagan terms to conceal the truth.

In closing: Daniel put his life on the line in order to say to the authority *Thus far and no further*. Mattathias Hasmon, launching the Maccabean revolt as the story goes by seizing the Greek soldier's spear and impaling the priest who was about to sacrifice a pig, put his life and the lives of many of his countrymen on the line to say to the occupying Greek authority *You have gone much too far already and there is no longer room for you here in YHWH's land*. Yahusha didn't merely put His life on the line, but laid it down and told the Roman authority *Actually, you don't even have the authority to pick it up again*. What about the author of Romans 13? Paul?

Ah yes, Paul. Well, you can't read 2 Corinthians 12 or the last 5 chapters of Acts without realizing that he was in hot water with a variety of authorities on numerous occasions. Bear in mind, please, that your "religious norms" were the "country laws". There was no separation of church and state, or religion and country laws. Dr Ernest L Martin attests to this regarding New Testament times:

In a word, the Jewish state in Palestine (no matter who was governing it) was reckoned a theocracy and the heart and soul of its government had to rest, by popular demand, squarely upon their understanding of the words in the sacred scriptures...

The fact is, the Mosaic laws represented the teaching which dominated the civil government, as well as the societal and religious rituals and/or ceremonies that thoroughly ruled the lives of all Jews everywhere. Since matters of money, property and daily social activities were governed by those laws embodied in the Holy Scriptures (or the many precedential laws in existence based upon biblical legislation), we can be certain that all copies [of] the "constitution" were the same throughout the country of Judaea, and even throughout the entire Jewish world.

And the fact that Sha'ul had written Romans 13 didn't keep his head attached to his shoulders when the Roman soldier's sword eventually flashed. Was he misleading the Roman believers then, telling them something he didn't believe in; or did he not follow his own advice to be in submission, that he received such a punishment from the authority? No, I am confident that he was both sincere and correct, but his advice to the Roman believers needed to be interpreted in the light of the *whole counsel of Elohim*. If there was anyone who was in a position to have a fully-balanced if complicated perspective, it was Sha'ul the arch-Pharisee, superbly trained at Gamaliel's feet. He knew all too well what he was up against, he understood the nature of the struggle and the tension and whose side to come down on. Sha'ul would not have accepted the KJV's politically correct but watery version of 1 Pet 4:16 *But if ...as a Chr_stian* where the near-universal interpretation of *Chr_stian*, for the last good four centuries, has been one who has merely accepted the free gift of salvation by belief; he understood very well the difference between such a person and one understanding and committed to the Messianic status and political agenda of the Anointed, *haMashiach* of Israel.

As he wrote to the Corinthians,

2Co 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not fight according to the flesh.

2Co 10:4 For the weapons we fight with are not fleshly but mighty in Elohim for overthrowing strongholds,

2Co 10:5 overthrowing reasonings and every high matter that exalts itself against the knowledge of Elohim, taking captive every thought to make it obedient to the Messiah,

2Co 10:6 and being ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

If you feel that in this passage Paul is coming across as being ever so slightly aggressive, you are quite right. Therefore I would not advise anyone to view Paul's advice in Ephesians 6 as being defensive in intent. After advising believers (chapters 5 and earlier 6) on how to conduct their relationships in the assembly and in the family, he turns his attention to relationships with outsiders. It is not very irenaic:

Eph 6:10 For the rest, my brothers, be strong in the Master and in the mightiness of His strength.

*Eph 6:11 Put on the **complete armour** of Elohim, for you to have power to stand against the schemes of the devil.*

Eph 6:12 Because we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against authorities, against the world-rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual matters of wickedness in the heavenlies.

*Eph 6:13 Because of this, take up the **complete armour** of Elohim, so that you have power to withstand in the wicked day, and having done all, to stand.*

Eph 6:14 Stand, then, having girded your waist with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

Eph 6:15 and having fitted your feet with the preparation of the Good News of peace;

Eph 6:16 above all, having taken up the shield of belief with which you shall have power to quench all the burning arrows of the wicked one.

Eph 6:17 Take also the helmet of deliverance, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of Elohim,

Eph 6:18 praying at all times, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, watching in all perseverance and supplication for all the set-apart ones;

Eph 6:19 also for me, that a word might be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to be bold in making known the secret of the Good News,

Eph 6:20 for which I am an envoy in chains, that in it I might speak boldly, as I should speak.

In order to *tak[e]* captive every thought to make it obedient to the Messiah, it is required to put on the **complete** armour of Elohim, which obviously has some defensive components, but has two very offensive components: *the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of Elohim*, and *the preparation of the Good News of peace*. How can *the preparation of the Good News of peace* be offensive? Quite simply, that's what takes us into the battle zone and gets us into trouble. (In that situation, we'd better be carrying the sword, right?) The news that Elohim is offering peace, *shalom*, reconciliation on His terms, is good news indeed, but for many people, and for the forces mentioned in verse 12, it is unwelcome news and it is news that they would do anything to suppress. Many governments that are quite tolerant of the gospel of salvation as preached in so many churches, because it has historically made for many "model" citizens, are not going to take kindly to the Gospel of the Kingdom (the only Gospel of peace which is possible) which presents far sterner challenges to its proponents and its opponents alike, because its thrust is to *tak[e]* captive every thought to make it obedient to the Messiah. Not to the Saviour, not to the Perfect Substitutionary Sacrifice, but to the One Who is Mashiach, Anointed, to bring into global, actually universal, realization the Torah-compliant rule of the Creator.

We started with Paul; shall we let him have the last word(s)?

2Co 10:7 Take a look at what you are facing. If anyone seems to trust in himself that he is of Messiah, let him reckon again for himself, that as he is of Messiah, so also are we.

The one who is "of Messiah" will be as Paul and his companions are. So, how are they? He has spelled it out earlier, and it is not a comforting picture to anyone who wants to get along comfortably with the dominant culture, the earthly authority:

2Co 6:4 Rather, we commend ourselves as servants of Elohim in every way: in much endurance, in pressures, in hardships, in distresses,

2Co 6:5 in stripes, in imprisonments, in disturbances, in toils, in watchings, in fastings,

2Co 6:6 in cleanness, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Set-apart Spirit, in love unfeigned,

2Co 6:7 in the word of truth, in the power of Elohim, through the weapons of righteousness, on the right and on the left,

2Co 6:8 through esteem and disrespect, through evil report and good report; regarded as deceivers, and yet true;

2Co 6:9 as unknown, and yet well-known; as dying, and see, we live; as disciplined, and yet not

It makes for interesting reading, however I don't agree with him (I base it on this article – I have not read anything else relating to his case). Although we live and should be governed by the ways of the Kingdom of God we are also clearly according to scripture to submit to those in authority. His argument goes directly against Rom 13.

Rom 13:1 Let every soul be subject to the higher authorities. For there is no authority but of God; the authorities that exist are ordained by God.

Rom 13:2 So that the one resisting the authority resists the ordinance of God; and the ones who resist will receive judgment to themselves.

Rom 13:3 For the rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the bad. And do you desire to be not afraid of the authority? Do the good, and you shall have praise from it.

Rom 13:4 For it is a servant of God to you for good. For if you practice evil, be afraid, for it does not bear the sword in vain; for it is a servant of God, a revenger for wrath on him who does evil.

Rom 13:5 Therefore *you* must be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

Rom 13:6 For because of this you also pay taxes. For they are God's servants, always giving attention to this very thing.

Rom 13:7 Therefore give to all *their* dues; to the *one due* tax, the tax; tribute to whom tribute *is due*, fear to whom fear *is due*, and honor to whom honor *is due*.

Even his examples he uses, confirms God's respect of the earthly authority that He set up:

- Even God respected the authority that Pharaoh had over the Israelites at the time when they were in Egypt and the plagues continued until Pharaoh gave up the authority he had over them. The fact that he freed them from Egypt does not mean that we are removed from earthly authority - Yeshua submitted himself unto death under earthly authority in accordance with His Father's will.
- The examples in Acts are not breaking country laws but rather religious and cultural norms which lead to floggings and imprisonment, we should not be sent to prison for breaking laws that don't contravene God's word. (1Pe 4:15-16 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evildoer, or a meddler in the affairs of others. But if *one suffers* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God because of this.)
- If God didn't respect authority then he could just force us to bend our knee to serve Him, but that is not God's heart. He could have removed Satan and all the angels that rebelled with him in an instant, but he didn't. I agree that God is the ultimate authority, but he has also allowed for other authority structures and there is a process through Yeshua where all authority will eventually be placed under his feet. We have not entered into His millennium reign yet.
- I think he's stretching it when he starts comparing bowing to idols in Babylon to paying for a permit in the USA.

Unfortunately the article has a very arrogant spirit to it that seems to be contrary to the humble spirit we are called to – according to his argument, he wouldn't have to show his driver's license to a traffic cop that stopped him on a routine inspection either – this too would end in an arrest.

With the limited information I have at this stage, it rather points to the danger of not understanding the authority that God has placed in our lives in various forms, which leads to an independent spirit and ultimately to rebellion to God (one of the few sins that seem to be subject to judgement while we are alive according to scripture) “So that the one resisting the authority resists the ordinance of God; and the ones who resist will receive judgment to themselves.”.