

## Jesus – The Rabbi

Jesus isn't just a teacher, He is a **Jewish Rabbi**. Several things in the Scriptures demonstrate this. Rabbi is simply a transliteration of the Hebrew word – and is derived from *rav*, which means *great one*.

Rabbis are experts in the Bible, specifically the Torah. Much, if not all of the Tanach is committed to memory. Rabbis have specific attributes common to all. We see seven in the Master's life.

### A Rabbi Chooses His Followers

You don't choose your rabbi. If you demonstrate sufficient promise, a rabbi chooses you. Each rabbi has his own idiosyncrasies and methods of preparing his disciples (talmidim). This was known as his yoke – the effort necessary to be commended by the rabbi, and learn to emulate him sufficiently to become a rabbi yourself.

#### Matthew 4:19

And He said to them, **“Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”**

#### Matthew 9:9

As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector's booth; and He said to him, **“Follow Me!”** And he got up and followed Him.

#### Matthew 11:28, 30

**“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest... For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”**

### A Rabbi Sits to Teach – His Disciples Stand

Unlike the western world, where we often forsake even standing for ladies entering/leaving the room/table, men of G-d are commanded to be honored. This is taken seriously, and literally, in the rabbinic world. Famous rabbis of the past would often teach for many hours, while their talmidim stood, listening and learning – grateful to have the privilege to hear the words of the master.

#### Matthew 5:1-2

When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and **after He sat down**, His disciples came to Him. He opened His mouth and *began* to teach them...

#### Matthew 14:19

Ordering the people to **sit down on the grass**, He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed *the food*, and breaking the loaves He gave them to the disciples, and the disciples *gave them* to the crowds...

#### Matthew 15:35

And He directed the people to **sit down on the ground**...

## A Rabbi is Addressed as Master/Lord by His Disciples

The word *rabbi* has no direct English equivalent. It's meaning is an amalgamation of *teacher* and *master*. The word *lord* in our English Bibles was a common title of nobility, or a means of honoring another. Old English has that unmistakable hint of social classes in its phrases. Do we not feel a sense of order when we hear bygone military men portrayed in movies respond, "Yes, my lord?" Movies like **THE PATRIOT** and **FIRST KNIGHT** come to mind, in particular. This word *lord* is akin to *master*, conveying the same sense of honor, status and role.

### Luke 5:5

Simon answered and said, "**Master**, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say *and* let down the nets."

### John 13:13

"You call Me **Teacher and Lord**; and you are right, for so I am.

## A Rabbi Teaches With Authority

A man is considered a *rabbi* only when his authority has been established. The sages claim unbroken transmission of the oracles of G-d, with the accompanying authority, all the way back to Moses. Their efforts to preserve the word, and properly explain the commandments of G-d are a testimony to their devotion – and something for which Gentiles should be eternally grateful.

*S'micha* is Hebrew for *leaning of the hands*, and derives from a Hebrew word which means *rely on*, or *to be authorized*. It is roughly equivalent to the English word *ordination*. This granting of authority is well described in a 1947 **TIME** magazine article<sup>1</sup>, a portion of which is here:

*"And the Lord said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. . . . Numbers 27: 18-20*  
*Such was the first S'micha—the laying on of hands by which Jewish rabbis were ordained for more than 1,500 years. But S'micha is something more than a simple ceremony of ordination. It is conferred only upon Orthodox rabbis who 1) have devoted years to intensive study of the Talmud and the complex, exacting Jewish Law, and 2) have satisfied their rabbinical superiors as to their scholarship and piety. Without receiving S'micha, rabbis may preach, head synagogues and serve as chaplains, but for Orthodox Jews may decide no questions of Jewish Law..."*

### Matthew 7:28-29

When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as *one having authority*, and not as their scribes.

### Matthew 21:23

When He entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him while He was teaching, and said, "**By what authority** are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?"

*Jesus' authority is from G-d...*

**Matthew 9:8**

But when the crowds saw this, they were awestruck, and glorified G-d, **who had given such authority** to men.

**John 5:26-27**

“For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and **He gave Him authority** to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man.”

## A Rabbi Interprets Scripture and Builds Fences for His Disciples

The mark of a disciple is his walk – and how his rabbi has taught him to live out his faith. Even today, Gentiles can recognize the Chasid by his curly side locks (*peyot*), distinguishing him from followers of a different rabbi. The head covering and garb of the Chabadnik is also quite distinguishable. The instruction regarding *halachah* (walking one's faith) is often described as building fences. Even Adam did this with Eve. Adam received the word from G-d: “...do not eat” and built a fence for Eve, who recalled to the Serpent that she could “...not eat or touch it...” This method is used by parents down through the ages. The fence protects the commandment, it does not negate or nullify it. The fence clarifies.

**Matthew 5:21-22**

“**You have heard** that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ **But I say to you** that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court...”

**Matthew 5:27-28**

“**You have heard** that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY’; **but I say to you** that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

**Matthew 5:33-34**

“Again, **you have heard** that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD.’ **But I say to you**, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God...”

**Matthew 5:38-39**

“**You have heard** that it was said, ‘AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.’ **But I say to you**, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.”

**Matthew 5:43-44**

“**You have heard** that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.’ **But I say to you**, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...”

## A Rabbi Teaches His Followers How to Pray

Liturgy often gets a bad rep in our *free expression* society. The prayers have been man's way of blessing G-d with His own words. Each rabbi emphasizes certain aspects of the prayers that he deems most important in the life of faith. This same practice can be seen in church denominations around the U.S.,

as Pentecostals pray *differently* than Presbyterians. These nuances focus on the predominant names of G-d or His attributes.

#### **Luke 11:1**

It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, **teach us to pray** just as **John also taught his disciples.**”

#### **Matthew 6:9**

**“Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.**

### **A Rabbi Often Uses Questions to Teach**

Instead of lecturing, rabbis ask questions. These questions engage the disciple in the learning process and begin the rabbinic dialog which has molded the lives of many of history’s most godly men. The discourse opens with a question, which the disciple should answer by asking another question, which will yield a clear understanding of the disciple’s grasp of a concept to the rabbi. The rabbi will then in turn ask another question to propel the disciple into the Scriptures. Examine these snippets of interaction between Jesus and others to see His deftness at rabbinic teaching, even when He was still young.

#### **Luke 2:46-47**

Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and **asking them questions**. And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding **and His answers**.

#### **Matthew 12:10-11**

And a man *was there* whose hand was withered. And they questioned Jesus, asking, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”—so that they might accuse Him. And He said to them, **“What man is there among you who has a sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift it out?**

#### **Matthew 22:41-46**

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question: **“What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?”** They said to Him, **“The son of David.”** He said to them, **“Then how does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying, ‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, ‘SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET’ ’? ‘If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his son?’** No one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to **ask Him another question**.

#### **Mark 10:2-3**

*Some* Pharisees came up to Jesus, testing Him, and *began* to **question Him** whether it was lawful for a man to divorce a wife. And **He answered** and said to them, **“What did Moses command you?”**

#### **Mark 11:27-30**

They came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to Him, and *began* saying to Him, “By what authority are You doing these things, or who gave You this authority to do these things?” And Jesus said to them, **“I will ask you one question,**

and you answer Me, and *then* I will tell you by what authority I do these things. “Was the baptism of John from heaven, or from men? Answer Me.”

## Summary

The call to discipleship is initiated *by the rabbi*. He chooses the disciple. The disciple must then choose to *accept the yoke* of his new master – for life. The disciple lives with the rabbi from that day forward. The disciples of a rabbi are referred to as *his household*. We read in the Talmud about the *zugot* (pair) that stood at the head the Sanhedrin. In Jesus’ day, these rabbis and their followers were referred to as the *House of Shammai* and the *House of Hillel*.

The disciple’s goal is to become like his master in every way. Rabbinic discourses in the **TALMUD** are often tediously filled with attributions such as this one from Megilah 15a:

*Rabbi Elazar said in the name of Rabbi Chaninas, “Anyone who says something in the name of the person who said it brings redemption to the world, as it written: ‘And Esther said to the king in the name of Mordechai.’”*

When a rabbi speaks, he attributes what he has learned to his rabbi, as his disciples shall do when they have learned. Consider the words of my Rabbi:

### Matthew 10:24-25; 37-39

“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. “It is enough for the disciple that he **become like his teacher**, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more *will they malign* the members of **his household!**”

“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**. “And he who does not take his cross and **follow after Me** is not **worthy of Me**. “He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has **lost his life for My sake** will find it.”

### John 15:16

“You did not choose Me but **I chose you**, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.”

### John 16:1-3

“These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling. “They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God. These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me.”

### John 14:6

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”

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<sup>i</sup> TIME Magazine, March 31, 1947 <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,793518,00.html>