

# Barnabas' Epistle

By Rabbi Yehudah ben Shomeyr

Barnabas; The son of encouragement and Rav Sha'ul's (Apostle Paul's) right hand man on the first leg of his missionary journeys. It is said that he, as Rav Sha'ul, wrote some Epistles. It only makes sense and we cannot assume Rav Sha'ul was the only Sheliach (Apostle), or Brit Chadasha (New Testament) Scriptural character out there writing letters to teach, advise, instruct and or encourage synagogues. It also makes sense that Rav Sha'ul and Barnabas would have had a different circle of those whom they ministered too, for at one point Rav Sha'ul and Barnabas parted ways and Rav Sha'ul ended up taking Silas as his partner and Barnabas his nephew John Mark (Acts 15).

Here is what a few websites document about this man Barnabas.

**“Barnabas (originally Joseph), styled an Apostle in Holy Scripture, and, like St. Paul, ranked by the Church with the Twelve, though not one of them; b. of Jewish parents in the Island of Cyprus about the beginning of the Christian Era. A Levite, he naturally spent much time in Jerusalem, probably even before the Crucifixion of Our Lord, and appears also to have settled there (where his relatives, the family of Mark the Evangelist, likewise had their homes — Acts 12:12) and to have owned land in its vicinity (4:36-37).” –**

[www.newadvent.org](http://www.newadvent.org)

**“Barnabas was an early Christian mentioned in the New Testament. His Hellenic Jewish parents called him Joseph (although the Byzantine text-type calls him *Ἰώσης*, *Iōsēs*, 'Joses', a Greek variant of 'Joseph'), but when he sold all his goods and gave the money to the apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 4:36-37), they gave him a new name: Barnabas. This name appears to be from the Aramaic *בַּר נְבִיא*, *bar naḥyā*, meaning 'the (son of the) prophet'. However, the Greek text of the Acts of the Apostles 4.36 explains the name as *υἱὸς παρακλήσεως*, *hyios paraklēseōs*, meaning 'son of exhortation/encouragement'. From the evidence of Acts 13.1 and 15.32, this wording can be seen as suggesting someone who exercises a prophetic ministry. In Acts 14.14, he is listed ahead of Paul, "Barnabas and Paul", instead of the usual reverse ordering of their names, and both are called *ἀπόστολοι*, *apostoloi*, 'apostles'". – [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)**

There is even some speculation in Nazarene Jewish circles that they may have at one time been old Yeshiva buddies under Rabbi Gamliel. One legend says that Barnabas was more zealous for a relationship with G-d and Rav Sha'ul had more zeal for the traditions of the Fathers. This is alluded to in (Gal. 1:14). However this would conflict with the statement above saying his parents was Hellenic (Assimilated into Greek culture) Jews. What Hellenic Jew would send their boy to a Yeshiva? Wouldn't you think they would have sent him to a Greek academy if they were really Hellenic? They also called him Joseph (Joses) another Hebrew

name. This seemed to be his given name and Barnabas was a sort of spiritual nickname (Acts 4:36). If they were Hellenic, why didn't they choose a Greek name for him, like Brutus or Jason? I believe his parents were Torah Observant Jews and that Barnabas and Rav Sha'ul did know each other prior to them accepting Netzarim Judaism and becoming a missions team. After all Barnabas was the one who introduced Rav Sha'ul to the Believers (Acts 9:25-27) and unless he was used to taking risks and befriending killers of his sect, I think he knew Rav Sha'ul before and could genuinely tell he was a changed man, but this is strictly my opinion. From this Epistle that bears his name it is clear Barnabas knew his Tanak! The Epistle hints of themes and interpretations found nowhere else but in the Talmud. Acts 4:36 says he was a Levite. This means he was part of the Priestly tribe that served in the Temple. If his parents were trying to assimilate into Greek culture his parents would have attempted to hide this fact and it would most likely not be mentioned as it is in the Scriptures.

**“The Epistle of Barnabas is a Greek treatise with some features of an epistle containing twenty-one chapters, preserved complete in the 4th century *Codex Sinaiticus* where it appears at the end of the New Testament. It is traditionally ascribed to the Barnabas who is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, though some ascribe it to another apostolic father of the same name, a "Barnabas of Alexandria," or simply attribute it to an unknown early Christian teacher. A form of the *Epistle* 850 lines long is noted in the Latin list of canonical works in the 6th century *Codex Claromontanus*. It is not to be confused with the Gospel of Barnabas.”** – [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

In reading this work, I have become convinced that this was first written in Hebrew because of the contents of chapter eight, but the document I read and studied from is apparently from the Greek, which I feel has been corrupted and translated with a bias in areas that I will show later.

More than likely the original Hebrew has been lost, confiscated or destroyed.

This Epistle was apparently written sometime during the first missionary journeys for he ends the letter by saying:

“The end of the Epistle of Barnabas, the Apostle, and fellow traveler of Paul the Apostle Paul.”

We will explore the Epistle of Barnabas to try to see if this is possible an authentic document, and if so, if Barnabas was, as Rav Sha'ul was, a Torah Observant Netzari Jew.

Barnabas 1:2 Having perceived abundance of knowledge of the great and excellent laws of God be in you, I exceedingly rejoice in your blessed and admirable souls, because ye have so worthily received the grace which was grafted in you.

Apparently Barnabas is addressing converts to Netzarim Judaism because he mentioned in the latter part of the verse about being grafted in. In the prior section of the verse he had gotten word regarding their outstanding Torah observance being lived in them from the inside out. So right off the bat this document shows the early “Christians” were Torah Observant, and that Barnabas and Rav Sha’ul (being missions partners and safely assuming they agreed on major doctrinal issues, Torah being one of these issues) agreed that the Torah is to be observed by both Jew and Gentile.

Barnabas 1:4 He mentions how well they have adopted Torah into their life

“...I have had more than ordinary good success in the way of the law of the Lord which is Christ.”

Knowing that Yeshua Messiah and G-d the Father are one (John. 17) Yeshua’s Torah is no different, hence the same as the Father’s Torah; the 613 Commandments of Judaism.

Barnabas 1:5 expresses a Talmudic though found in the Perkei Avot about esteeming others reputations greater than your own.

“For which cause brethren, I also think verily that I love you above my own soul: ...”

Chapter two of Barnabas’ Epistle is reminiscent of Rav Sha’ul’s letter to the Galatians which the theme was make sure your Torah Observance comes from the inside out and not the other way around. Put Faith righteousness before Works righteousness.

Barnabas 2:1 Seeing then the days are exceedingly evil, and the adversary has got power of this present world we ought to give more diligence to inquire into the righteous judgments of the Lord.

Here Barnabas tells the people that because of the world’s wickedness we need to study Torah more than ever! Barnabas used a well known Jewish phrase for

Torah that David himself used in Psalm 119, which is all about the Torah; and that phrase is: “the righteous judgments of the Lord”.

Barnabas makes it clear in verses seven and eight that God did away with heartless rituals, not the rituals or the sacrifices themselves. He seems to be quoting or alluding to Isaiah chapter one where God is fed up with the sacrificial system and the High Holy Days because it wasn't from the heart.

Verse twenty of this same chapter may confuse some because he tells the converts not to run to “Jewish law”. This is referring to the manmade traditions of the Rabbi's and Sages that has been raised to the level of authority of that of the Torah, and not the Torah itself. In chapter three Barnabas says that the Jews have lost sight of the Torah in being so occupied with their man made additions to the Torah.

Barnabas 3:10b So the Son of God tells us; Let us resist all iniquity and hate it.

The word iniquity can be translated as Torahlessness, without the Torah. So Barnabas is saying that the Lord told us to resist anything or anyone who tells us we don't have to obey the Torah and hate it, have nothing to do with it, don't give it the time of day.

Barnabas 3:12b-13 ...Let us meditate upon the fear of God; and strive to the utmost of our power to keep his commandments; that we may rejoice in his righteous judgments. 13 For G-d will judge the world without respect of person: and every one shall receive according to his works.

Ecclesiastes says at the end of the book that the meaning and purpose in life is to fear God and keep His commandments (Torah) and that is what Barnabas implores us to do. Verse 13 says we will be judged according to our works, meaning how faithfully we kept the Torah.

Verses 16-17 is similar verbiage and message Rav Sha'ul said about how converts shouldn't boast against the Jewish branches because God has, when necessary broken off and thrown away some of the indigenous Jewish branches because of unbelief.

Barnabas 4:1-4 Barnabas is writing to Ebonite converts and makes the point to say that what has been given and entrusted to the Jews is now open to the gentile converts.

Barnabas 4:12 tells how Yeshua didn't choose Rabbi's and great Pharisees to be His talmidim, but common men such as his audience.

Chapter 6 and 7 Barnabas shows his Priestly training in elaborating on how the scapegoat on Yom Kippur and the Red Heifer is a type and shadow of Messiah.

Chapter 8 we will spend a little time on because it contains many fascinating things. First of all I feel the translators was translating the Greek text on a biased assumption that the Torah has been done away with for in verse six it says that circumcision has been "abolished". I wish I was privy to the text, because I can almost say of certainty that the word abolished means complete. As in complete, or understood in full in light of Messiah Yeshua.

Barnabas 8:6 Wherefore he has circumcised our ears that we should hear his word, and believe. But as for the circumcision, in which the Jews trust, it is abolished. For the circumcision God spake, was not of the flesh.

This appears to be the same problem Rav Sha'ul had with the Galatians. Judaizers came in and said to circumcise first and teach Torah after the fact in regards to converts. Rav Sha'ul said it must be the other way around because why circumcise only later to find out the person doesn't want to be a Jew and the circumcision would have been in vain. Teach Torah first and see if the person wants to commit to a life of Torah Obedience. It seems the Judaizers felt that one's severed foreskin was ones ticket to Heaven, and Rav Sha'ul said this is not the case. Seems Barnabas is trying to relay the same message to these Ebonites. The bottom line is before ones penis is to be circumcised ones heart, ears, mind and soul needs to be circumcised in that they are willing to be faithful to G-d and His word. For in the following verses Barnabas makes the point that physical circumcision means nothing without having first an inward circumcision, because Egyptians and Arabians circumcise too, yet they do not keep the Torah or have a covenant with God as Abraham did.

Barnabas 8:10-14

Understand therefore children, these things more fully, that Abraham, who was the first that brought in circumcision, looking forward in the Spirit to Jesus, circumcised, having received the mystery of three letters. For the Scriptures say that Abraham circumcised three hundred and eighteen men of his house. But what therefore was the mystery that was made known unto him? Mark, first the

eighteen, and next the three hundred. For the numeral letters of ten and eight are I H (Yud and Chet). And these denote Jesus. And because the cross was that by which we were to find grace; therefore he adds, three hundred; the note of which is T (Tav) (the figure of the cross). Wherefore by two letters he signified Jesus, and by the third his cross. He who has put the engrafted gift of his doctrine within us, knows that I never taught to anyone a more certain truth; but I trust that ye are worthy of it.

To me this passage indicates several things:

1. This document was written first in Hebrew, possibly Paleo-Hebrew
2. A true Kohen (Levitical Priest) wrote this document.

Barnabas specifically mentions a mystical teaching apparently in the realm of the priesthood that he had been taught. That Abraham received a mystical three letter word form G-d. It is spelled; “Yud-Chet-Tav”. Yud and Chet spell the word “Chi”, which means, “Life” and Yeshua is the author of life, He is the one who spoke everything into creation (John 1). And the numeric representation of the word Chi is 18! But I ran into a problem when I looked at the Tav, for to my knowledge Tav on the end of Chi doesn’t spell of mean anything, except to possibly hint of a plurality to the word life, as in “abundant life” (John 10). Also the Tav has a numeric value of 400, not 300. So I consulted my Rabbi on this matter and he said that before Babylon the priest came up with a numeric system that differed from the one commonly used and indeed the value of Tav in the priestly numeric system is 300! The Rabbi confirmed from his memory secondary source besides his Rabbinic training from a book called “Lost languages of the Bible”. This knowledge was not privy at the time of this document outside of the Levitical priesthood.

Chapter 9, Barnabas uses a Jewish hermeneutic way of interpreting the Scripture saying that the “pashat”, the literal interpretation of the dietary laws is that we are not permitted to eat certain foods, but the “sod”, the spiritual level, which does not negate the pashat level of interpretation, gives reason why we do not eat certain animals. For example we do not eat birds of prey and carrion because it symbolically represents fellowshiping with murders and thieves. We do not eat Rabbits because it represents whoremongers, fornicators, and adulterers.

Chapter 11 likens Joshua (Yeshua) the son of Nun unto Joshua (Jesus/Yeshua) the Messiah as is King David and the case is made through this why he is the Son of G-d.

Chapter 12 details how the promise made to Jews is now through Messiah offered to Gentiles.

Chapter 13 purposes a well known Jewish doctrine how each millennium is a day in the sight of G-d and the seventh Millennium will be the Sabbath Millennium. According to the Jewish calendar we are presently in the 6<sup>th</sup> (Netzarim), some say we are at the tail end of the 5<sup>th</sup> Millennium (Orthodox), a “day” away from the Sabbath Millennium.

Barnabas 13: 4-5

Consider my children, what that signifies, he finished them in six days. The meaning of it is this; that in six thousand years the Lord God will bring all things to an end. For with him one day is a thousand years; as himself testifieth, saying, Behold this day shall be as a thousand years. Therefore, children, in six days that is, six thousand years, shall all things be accomplished.

The last two chapters is a simplistic overviews of what it means to be Torah Observant and how that one who does so will be honored in the Kingdom of G-d (15:7), matching up which what it says in Matthew chapter 5. Finally Barnabas also gives the go ahead, as the right of every Jewish community, to establish halachah, or the way the community lives out certain commandments.

In my mind there is little doubt that this is an authentic document of Barnabas, a Torah Observant Netzarim Jew.