

# The Red-Letter Words of Yeshua ~ Part 16

## Rise of Opposition

The confrontation we saw by the **Scribes** in our last post dealing with the healing of the paralytic was just the beginning. Declaring that He had authority to forgive sins, **Yeshua** naturally arouse immediate reaction from the **Scribes** and **P'rushim**. We pick up the story in Mark 2.

## The Calling of Mattityahu

<sup>13</sup> *Yeshua went out again by the lake. All the crowd came to him, and he began teaching them.*

<sup>14</sup> *As he passed on from there, he saw Levi Ben-Halfai sitting in his tax-collection booth and said to him, "Follow me!" And he got up and followed him.* ~ Mark 2:13-14 (compare Matt. 9:9 and Luke 5:27-28)

I've always paused at the calling of Mattityahu (Levi). He is sitting in his tax-collector's booth. Yeshua passes by and says: **"Follow me."** And Levi gets up as does just that. Why? There is no indication that he has heard **Yeshua** preach or seen Him heal. Did he even know what people saying about Him? I have learned from a couple of commentaries that **Levi** was the brother of **Ya'akov** (James) **Ben-Halfai** (Alphaeus) one of **Yeshua's Emissaries** (Mark 3:18).

**Jews** who undertook to collect taxes for the **Roman** rulers were the most despised people in the **Jewish** community. Not only were they serving the oppressors, but they found it easy to abuse the system to line their own pockets by exploiting their fellow **Jews**.

## Eating with Sinners

<sup>10</sup> *While Yeshua was in the house eating, many tax-collectors and sinners came and joined him and his talmidim at the meal.* <sup>11</sup> *When the P'rushim saw this, they said to his talmidim, "Why does your rabbi eat with tax-collectors and sinners?"* <sup>12</sup> *But Yeshua heard the question and answered, "The ones who need a doctor aren't the healthy but the sick. <sup>13</sup> As for you, go and learn what this means: 'I want compassion rather than animal-sacrifices.' For I didn't come to call the 'righteous,' but sinners!"* ~ Mattityahu 9:10-13 (compare Mark 2:18-22 and Luke 5:29-32).

**Sinners.** This term came to be used by the **P'rushim** to refer to prostitutes, thieves, and others of low reputation whose sins were blatant and obvious, not the kind the establishment winked at. **Yeshua** taught that those who considered themselves not sinners but **"righteous"** (v. 13) were in fact worse, because they made themselves unteachable (see also Yochanan 9:38–41).

**Go and learn** is a common formula used by rabbis to direct their followers toward a particular passage in the Scriptures. Yeshua's use of this formula might be a subtle jab at the **P'rushim**, who are not His disciples and represent the learned of **Jewish** society. Because they have failed to properly understand the spirit of the law, **Yeshua** treats these experts as beginners.

Our next post will continue to examine the mounting opposition of the Jewish authorities.