

Week #: 16 Text: _____ Title: Follow the Rabbi #5/6
Songs: Let it Rain

Audio: Ray Vander Laan – Follow the Rabbi teaching
Can be found online at: <https://oneinjesus.info/2008/10/ray-vander-laans-follow-the-rabbi-lectures/>

Schema (Deuteronomy 6:5-9):

- (The Schema is the centerpiece of the daily morning and evening prayer services and is considered by some to be the most essential prayer in all of Judaism. An affirmation of God’s singularity and kingship, its daily recitation is regarded by traditionally observant Jews as a biblical commandment.)
- It is a commitment of who you are and summarizes to God, to others, to yourself who you are and what you believe in.

“She-ma Israel, Adonai eloheinu, Adonai echad.

“Hear o Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord alone.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might, Amen.”

“Listen you who pursue righteousness and seek after God. Consider the rock from which you were cut and the quarry from which you were hewn. Consider Abraham your father and Sarah as the one who gave birth to you. These are the very words of God.” – Isaiah 51:2

Jesus as a Jewish Rabbi:

- Jesus was not a Christian – He was a Jewish Rabbi. He went to a synagogue. He was 100% a Jew – he talked like a Jew, he looked like a Jew, he ate what Jews eat, he did what Jews do, and he went to Synagogue, not to church. Somehow that’s foreign to us now.
- We will look at: What did Jesus do in His divine power and what did He do in his human nature?
 - Were miracles the divine side of him, or the human side?
 - When he knew what people were thinking, was it because he was God, or because he was a brilliant observer of people and had the Holy Spirit in Him that could give him those insights?
 - When he knew the future, is it because he was God, or because he was human and had a perfect sense of what was going on because he was such a student of human nature and he had the Spirit of God that led him to understand what was going to come next.
 - Christianity (non-liberal) in our time has tended towards making much of what Jesus said and did divine.

- Jesus had to keep God’s promise, so he has to be God, but Jesus took his divineness and set it aside. He could have used it at any time, but he chose not to.
- Everything Jesus did was out of his humanness – with the Spirit of God as his guide, but fully in his human nature, not as God the divine.
- Jesus came to show us what it means to be fully human filled by the Spirit of God.

Philippians 2:6 (Complete Jewish Bible)

⁶ *Though he was in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God something to be possessed by force.*

⁷ *On the contrary, he emptied himself, in that he took the form of a slave by becoming like human beings are.*

And when he appeared as a human being,

⁸ *he humbled himself still more*

by becoming obedient even to death — death on a stake as a criminal!

⁹ *Therefore God raised him to the highest place and gave him the name above every name;*

¹⁰ *that in honor of the name given Yeshua, every knee will bow —*

in heaven, on earth and under the earth —

¹¹ *and every tongue will acknowledge[a]*

that Yeshua the Messiah is Adonai — to the glory of God the Father.

- Luther says, “Emptied himself of his Godness” means he decided not to use his divinity. He couldn’t get rid of it, because it was fully a part of him, but he refused to rely on it for anything he did.
 - When Jesus says, “Be like me,” he means it – and we can be like him. If he relied on his divinity to do everything he did, then we cannot be like him.

The world of the Rabbi:

- Jesus did go into the desert (the temptation) for 40 days and nights, but his life was mostly spent around the area of the Sea of Galilee.
- The province of Judea (to the south of the province of Galilee) was the area of the traditionalists – they didn’t want to change anything.
 - They believed that when the prophets died, there were no more prophecies.
 - They believed that when the prophets died, there was no more healing.
 - They knew there were no angels, that there was no resurrection of the dead, etc.
 - Very traditional in their thinking.
- Between the province of Galilee (north) and Judea (south), was the province of Samaria.
 - These were the people who had intermarried when the Assyrian captivity happened and had blended the Godly religion – the true religion of God – with paganness.
 - They were called half-breeds.
 - Most Jews believed they were not truly in the image of God, that they had given up the image of God when they took on their half-breedism.
 - They were hated.

- If you were a Jew and by yourself and walked through Samaria, someone would kill you. If you were a Samaritan and walked by yourself through Judea or Galilee, someone would kill you. It wasn't safe to travel alone through the territory of the other.
- The area to the east of the Sea of Galilee is the province known as the Decapolis. (It is the place of the "land of the seven" pagan nations.)
 - Q: Why is it called "Decapolis" instead?
 - A: It was a group of ten cities founded in 333 b.c. by Alexander the Great.
 - "Deca" – ten
 - "Polis" – cities
 - Alexander the Great
 - He is known as one of the greatest generals that ever lived.
 - Alexander was a missionary – he himself said that his goal was not to conquer the world his goal was to change the world. He wanted to change the world by getting people to become Hellenistic.
 - Hellenism is the view that the human being is the center of the universe – your mind, your body, and your creations.
 - He wanted four things to accomplish this goal of changing the world:
 - Sport, Media, Education, Religion
 - So he introduced the:
 - Gymnasium & arena (for sports), School (for education), Theater (for media), Temples (for religion)
 - As he marched across the world, he would muster out soldiers that had finished their service, give them land, and he would plant little cities – and in every one he would build those four buildings.
 - He changed the world with his conquests. They are still a part of our culture today because of Alexander the Great.
 - The Jews viewed these cities as very wicked.
 - The gymnasium was where naked people would gather.
 - The temple was full of prostitution and pagan sacrifice.
 - The pigs grazing on the hillside were destined to become sacrifices in the temple to the god Dionysus.
 - The rabbis noticed in Joshua 3:10 – "And Joshua drove out the pagan nations." They then said that those seven pagan nations left that area and settled in what is later known as the area of the Decapolis. This is why the rabbis called it the "land of the seven."
 - They also called the Decapolis "the other side" or "a far country."

- Luke 15:11-32 - *A certain young man went to his dad and asked for the share of his inheritance, and he took the money and went to “a far country.”*
 - The son is across the Sea of Galilee – his dad can see him every morning. This doesn’t communicate well because we don’t know the geography.
- They also called this are “the land of the expelled ones.”
 - In reference to the seven pagan nations that Joshua kicked out.
 - In Hebrew, the word for “expelled” is *gerus* – and to make a word plural in Hebrew, you add *im*. So a group of people who have been kicked out are *gerusim*.

Mark 5:1 (KJV) - *“And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.”*

- Most Bible translations don’t know where this is, so they speculated on several locations it could be – the Gadarenes (Gadara – 15 miles away from the Sea of Galilee), Gergasenes (we don’t know of a city of Gergasa), Gerasenes (Gerash – 25 miles away from the Sea of Galilee).
- They get this wrong because it’s not a named place. The writer is saying that he went to the land of the expelled ones.
- When Ezra, Nehemiah, Zerubabel returned, they settled in the area of Judea. They were the traditionalists. Most Jews stayed in Babylon.
 - By 200 b.c. there were 1 million Jews in Babylon, and 150,000 Jews in Israel.
 - The Maccabees drove out the pagan people in Israel, and the Jews were free for the first time since 586 b.c.
 - The people in Babylon then wanted to go home, so they returned.
 - In the generation between the Maccabees and Jesus’ time, more than half a million Jews left Babylon and moved back to Israel. Galilee was the only place with space, so that’s where they settled.
 - The founded cities like: Cana, Nazareth, Capernaum, Chorazin, Bethsaida, Magdala, Gennesarat.
 - These people were not traditionalists like those in Judea.
 - They raised their hands when they sang, they danced in the synagogues, their rabbis healed the sick, they prophesied.
 - Jesus is a Galilean – not a Judean. He has 11 Galilean disciples, and the 12th is a Judean – Judas. Judas is the only Judean disciple.
 - Jesus is a Galilean Jew – not just a Jew.

- The Sea of Galilee has four groups:
 - Herodians:
 - The city of Tiberias (about 60k in Jesus' day)
 - Secular Jews – pro Roman, pro Herod
 - Most were wealthy, but not religious. They weren't anti religion, they were just not very focused on religion.
 - Zealots:
 - Gamla was the city of their headquarters.
 - The zealots – those who believed they had to bring about the Kingdom of God through the knife.
 - They always mistook Jesus for a zealot.
 - The zealots were committed to killing, or at least resisting, anybody who was Roman, Greek, or collaborated with the Romans and Greeks. They assassinated Jews for 125 years because of their belief.
 - Jesus' one disciple who was a zealot was Simon.
 - Decapolis:
 - Land of the seven pagan nations
 - Orthodox Jews
 - Sometimes, by Christian scholars, called the triangle because of three cities:
 - Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum
 - They are about 3 miles apart
 - These are the three cities Jesus called God's judgment on if they didn't change.
 - Most of Jesus' miracles were performed in these three cities. More than 70% of Jesus' teaching (in the Bible) happened in or right by these three cities.
- Where Jesus lived:
 - It was a world of mostly farmers – some fishing.
 - Capernaum:
 - A small village of about 2,500 people
 - On the shore of the Sea of Galilee
 - It was, in their world, our equivalent of Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Oxford.
 - If you look in the Mishnah (the record of Jewish thinking from the years 0 to 100), there are more quotes from the rabbis of Capernaum than there are of all the rest of the rabbis of the world combined.
 - Jesus didn't do his ministry in the hollers of Arkansas or in the jungles of central America – he did his ministry at Princeton, Harvard, etc. He went to where the best of the best were living.

- The main structure of Capernaum is the synagogue. (The ruins we now can see are from after Jesus' time. The Synagogue from his day is underneath.)
- The school in the synagogue was the largest school by four times ever found in ruins until the 1500s. It was the largest rabbinical school in the entire world, and that's where Jesus chose to go to teach.

What was it like to be a first century rabbi?

- There were many Rabbis – the word Rabbi means “honored person” or “honored one.”
- It was not an office, it was not a title, you didn’t get ordained, you didn’t get a degree. It simply meant that because of your Godliness and your wisdom, you were honored by others.
- Jesus was called Rabbi by five different kinds of people:
 - Roman
 - Pharisee
 - Sadducee
 - His own disciples
 - A Phoenician
- He is obviously recognized as someone who is a rabbi.
- There are two types of rabbis in this world:
 - Torah Teachers
 - Rabbis with Schmeha
- Torah Teachers:
 - The word “*Torah*” is the same as our word for the first five books of the Bible.
 - First - Torah Teachers were considered to be people who were masters of the Torah – that means they knew the Torah by memory, and could work from what they knew very well.
 - Second – they were master teachers. They were brilliant. They could use parables and alliteration; they could blend verses together in creative ways.
 - They were recognized by the community. No ordination, no degree, no installation, no hiring, the community simply said they recognized in this person these gifts.
 - He was limited in the sense that he could only teach what the community believes to be right. They did not have freedom to do Midrash.
 - (Midrash:
 - They had the freedom to think of new parables and new applications.
 - They would teach like this – in three parts:
 - “It is written...” – then he would quote the text.
 - “And that means...” – he would explain with a parable, story, alliteration.
 - “According to...” – then he would quote his source, because that’s the authority that supports the meanings of what he is teaching.
 - A Torah Teacher is limited by the authority or interpretation of others.
- Rabbis with Schmeha:
 - In Jesus’ world, there was a small group of rabbis with schmeha – we know of about a dozen by name from 30 b.c. to 70 a.d.
 - They don’t exist in Judea.

- Sometimes it's a Torah Teacher who has moved up.
- First – he is a master of the Torah and the haftorah.

Haf-to-rah – noun

“the rest” – it is a short reading from the Prophets that follows the reading from the Law in a synagogue

- We would say he is a master of the whole Bible.
- *Tanach* is the Jewish word for the Bible (the Old Testament portion).
- He had to know the entire Old Testament by memory.
 - How many verses can you quote from memory from the O.T.?
 - The average (that RVL has found) is about a dozen verses.
- Second – they were master teachers, like the Torah Teachers only more so.
- They were recognized by the community, and many of them were healers.
 - Most miracles Jesus did, are attested in other rabbis of this time – demons, storms, blind, lepers, feeding people
- Because of their unique ability to teach Torah and to heal, and their ability to teach at such a high and intriguing level, they received what was known as “*schmecha*”.
- *Schmecha* is today ordination. It did not mean the same to them though. They didn't have ordination – no one would have ordained a rabbi while the Temple was still standing. That would have been a competition, and the Temple was number 1.
- *Schmecha* means “authority”
 - Authority to teach new ideas
 - They were so close to God, so brilliant, so wise, so knowledgeable about the text that God had given them new insights that no one else had ever thought of.
- Their teaching method:
 - “It is written...” – then he would quote the text.
 - “You've heard that it means _____, but I tell you it means _____.”
 - Who taught like that?

Matthew 7: 28-29 “*When Yeshua had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at the way he taught, for he was not instructing them like their Torah-teachers but as one who had authority himself.*”

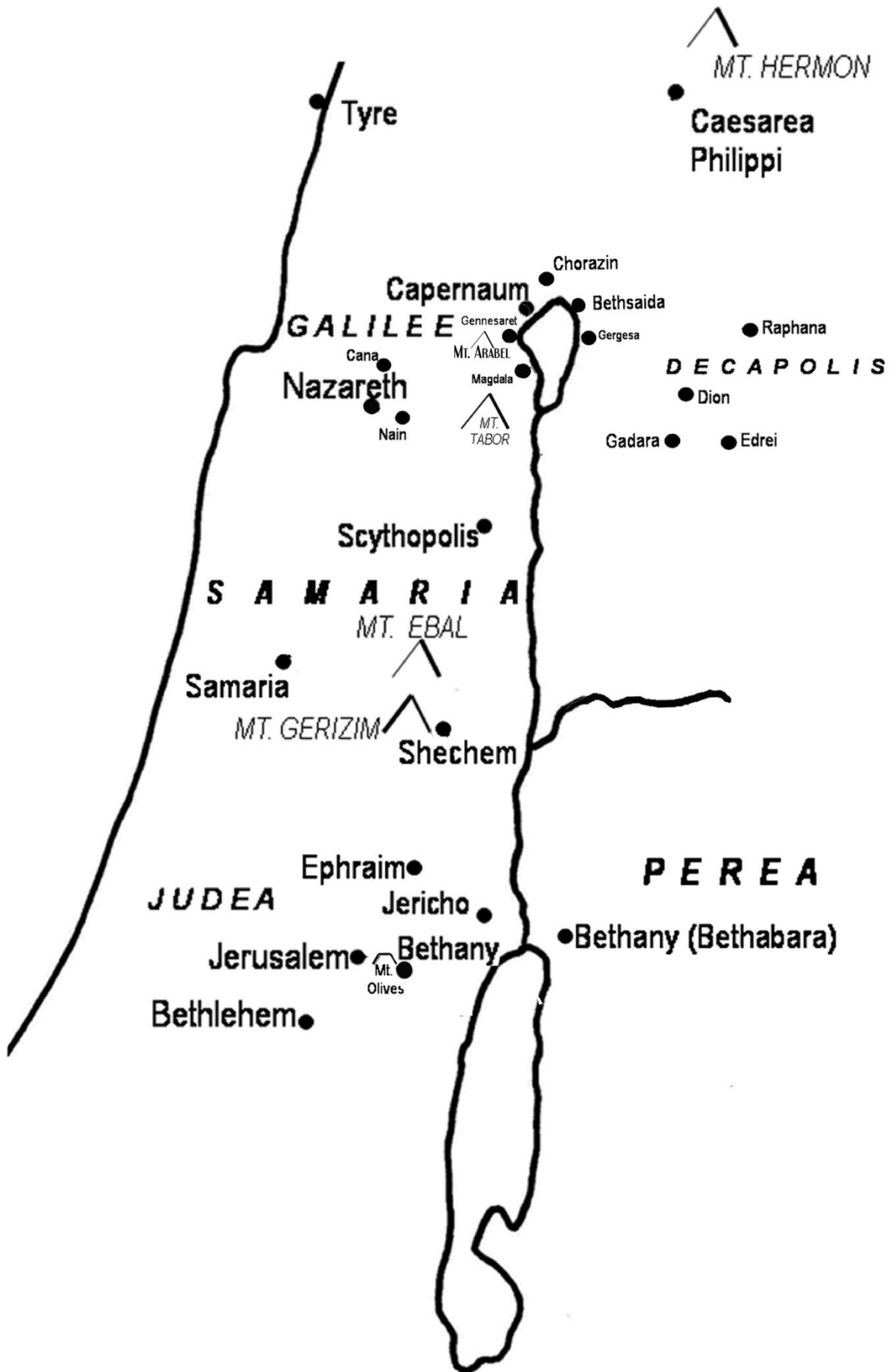
- This does not mean Jesus was one of a kind – it means he was one of this very select group of rabbis who were considered teachers with *schmecha* – authority to make new teachings.

- How do you get schmeha?
 - You had to be knowledgeable and you had to memorize the Torah and Haftorah – so it was mostly older men.
 - You had to have two other rabbis with schmeha in public put their hands on your head and declare that from God you had God’s authority.
 - Many times (8 or 9) they come to Jesus and ask, “Where did you get the authority to say that?”
 - This does not mean they didn’t agree with him – maybe they did, maybe they didn’t. What they are saying is, “Who gave you schmeha?”
 - There is a Jewish Rabbinic technique (still used today):
 - Begin the dialogue / discussion with a question. (The group discusses this question and comes up answers.)
 - The response from the group comes in the form of a question.
 - The question that comes is first of all, answer to the original question, and second it extends the original question to a deeper level.
 - Repeat...
 - Luke 3 talks about Jesus staying in Jerusalem when his parents had gone home. The text says, “*and they were amazed at his questions.*”
 - How often does Jesus in teaching life, people come with a question, and he responds not with an answer, but with a question, except that his question is the answer.
 - By answering your own question with another question, it comes out of your heart instead of out of your head. That’s Jesus’ genius.
 - Jesus was in the Temple. The Pharisees came to him and asked, “Who gave you schmeha to say that?” Jesus said, “Let me ask you a question – John the baptizer, where did he get schmeha?” Remember, his question answers theirs.
 - Their question: where did you get schmeha?
 - His question: where did John get schmeha?
 - He was telling them “I got schmeha from John.”
 - When did John declare in public God’s authority being in Jesus?
 - As Jesus came out of the desert down towards the Jordan River, John said, “Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” – this is authority.
 - Who was the second to pronounce schmeha over Jesus?
 - The Jews believed the sky was not soft – they believed it was hard...the firmament. They thought that if you put a crack in it you could end up with another Noah flood.

Mark 1:10 *“Immediately upon coming up out of the water, he saw heaven torn open and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove; 11 then a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, whom I love; I am well pleased with you.”*

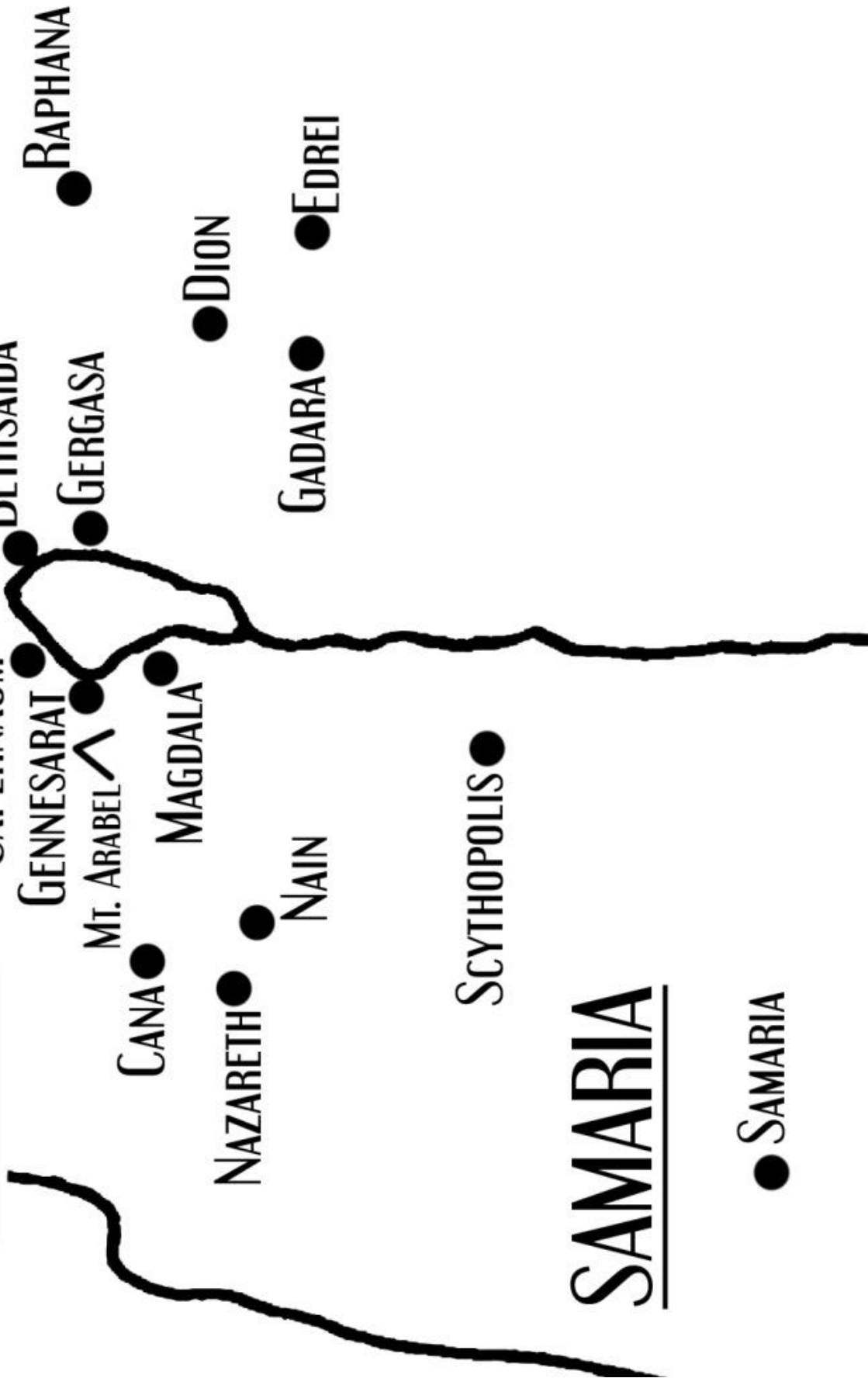
- We have the only rabbi in history who got his schmecha directly from God himself!
- Jesus ends his ministry by saying to his disciples, “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me, and I give it TO YOU!” You come with schmecha!

You have been commissioned of God, to go out into the world, and not to parrot what you’ve always heard, but to take the text and, with the leading of the Holy Spirit, to make new teachings. You have been given the keys to the kingdom!



GALILEE

DECAPOLIS



SAMARIA

● SAMARIA