

Messianic Rabbi: Sometimes It Takes Becoming Blind Before We Can See

I was recently doing a study on the sayings of Yeshua when I noticed that in the book of Matthew, Yeshua makes a very similar statement in two different chapters, while speaking about two very different subjects.

It isn't unusual to find similar or even exact statements made by Yeshua within each of the four gospels because they each provide for us different viewpoints of the same historical narrative. However, in this case, we find Yeshua saying the same thing in different chapters of the same book. One of those times is found in Matthew 5 and Matthew 18:

"And if your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away! It is better for you that one part of your body should be destroyed, than that your whole body be thrown into Gehenna" (Matt. 5:29).

"If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it away from you. It's better for you to enter into life with one eye than, having two eyes, to be thrown into fiery Gehenna" (Matt. 18:9).

As I read these words from Matthew 5 and 18, I started to think about what a powerful statement Yeshua makes with these words. So, I began to wonder how we, as His disciples, might apply His words today. First, it is clear that Yeshua is not telling His disciples that they should physically blind themselves so they won't sin. If He was, then the whole world would be filled with blind people.

However, if Yeshua made this statement twice, we should pay special attention to it and we must conclude that He felt this

was such an important lesson for His disciples that He repeated it. If that is the case, and I believe it is, then there must be an equally important application of these words for His disciples today.

As I pondered these two verses in Matthew, I immediately thought of a place in the Bible where someone's eyes were in fact plucked out. So, I turned to the book of Judges to re-read the story of Samson. I believe that I found within Samson's story a lesson from which we can glean a lesson we can apply to our lives today from Yeshua's words in Matthew.

When we read in Judges 16 about the end of Samson's life, we see that Delilah deceives Samson into sharing the secret of his strength, and Samson's hair was cut, making it possible for him to be captured by the Philistines. Once Samson was captured and bound, the Philistines gouged out, or plucked out, his eyes, as we read in verse 21.

"Then the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes. They brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze chains, and he became a grinder in the prison" (Judges 16:21).

The plucking out of Samson's eyes has always seemed interesting to me. After all, Samson didn't kill thousands of Philistines with his eyes, he killed them with his arms. Why did they pluck out his eyes, rather than cut off his arms?

There had to be more G-D wanted us to glean from this part of the story of Samson. I believe that there is a spiritual lesson, which I believe directly ties together with Yeshua's words in Matthew.

In order to see what I am talking about, we must look in Judges 14 and read the first thing the Bible actually tells us that Samson does, which also tells us the beginning of Samson's fall into sin.

"Then Samson went down to Timnah and eyed in Timnah a woman,

one of the daughters of the Philistines” (Judges 14:1).

Notice that Samson eyed a Philistine woman. Samson knew the Philistines were the enemies of Israel, and he also knew that as an Israelite, he was commanded to stay away from idolatrous women from other nations. But Samson still chose to look, and when he looked, he saw this woman and his eyes caused him to stumble.

Samson’s eyes led him to Delilah, which ultimately led to Samson’s capture. It is later in the story we see that after his capture, Samson’s eyes are plucked out. Once he couldn’t see anymore, he saw his need for G-D. When he saw again, he turned his heart to G-D and begged for help, as we see in Judges 16:28:

“Then Samson called out to Adonai and said, “My Lord Adonai, please remember me and please strengthen me only this once, O God, so that I may this once take revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes.”

Now, I know that in Samson’s case, his eyes were physically plucked from his sockets. However, I think we can find spiritual application for our lives from the physical events of Samson’s life. When we look at how Samson allowed his eye to cause him to stumble, which ultimately brought him into the bondage of his enemies, we can understand the reasoning for the strong language Yeshua uses in these verses from Matthew 5 and 18.

We also have to realize our adversary, the evil one, will always try to make us see sin as something desirable and beautiful. If we, like Samson, allow what we see to cause us to stumble we will have to choose to either spiritually “pluck out” our own eye through true repentance, or we may end up like Samson: only seeing how far we have fallen after our enemy has plucked out our eyes.

Either way, sometimes it takes becoming blind before we can

see because, *"It is better for you that one part of your body should be destroyed, than that your whole body be thrown into Gehenna."*

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