

Messianic Rabbi: The Blind Are Still Leading the Blind

Each of us reads the Bible through the lens of our experiences and the experiences of our teachers. These experiences are made up of the things we walk through on our journey, both good and bad, which includes those things we have been taught.

We have all heard the idiom attributed to Julius Caesar, "Experience is the best teacher." But is that statement really true? What if our experience is based on skewed information or faulty assumptions? For instance, our views on a father will be in some ways blurred by the type of father we have.

If we had a loving father who was a caring provider, our experience allows us one view of our heavenly Father. However, if we had a father who didn't demonstrate love and was not a caring provider, it would cause us to have a different view of our heavenly Father.

So, in a real way, each of us views the Scriptures through a personalized pair of prescription lenses that are the result of everything we have both experienced and been taught. These lenses change the way we see G-D's Word.

The truth is that no matter how long you have been reading the Bible, your comprehension will be affected by the lenses of your experiences. This would not be a problem if all of our experiences resulted in a corrective prescription that allowed us to see the sacred text more clearly. However, for many of us, our lenses result in more distortion than correction.

Some of these distortions can be minor, while others can blind us completely to extremely important biblical concepts. Some of these distortions are more easily exposed than others, while other lenses produce such blind spots that they actually blind the wearer to the point where they view heresy as good

doctrine.

One of the lenses that causes these blind spots is the doctrine known as replacement theology. This belief teaches that Israel, as G-D's chosen people, have been replaced by "the church" and that all covenant blessings promised to Israel now belong solely to the church. This belief contradicts entirely the teachings of Paul in Romans 9-11, and this lens ultimately allows the wearer to accept anti-Semitism as acceptable. After all, through this lens, G-D has rejected physical Israel and so must His church, "the New Israel."

The overt teaching that brought about the distortive lens of replacement theology resulted in the Inquisitions, pogroms, and the Holocaust. All of these were supported by the church and justified because those "Christians" looked at the Jewish people through what they read in their Bibles through distortive lenses.

While some distortive lenses that cause the wearer to see the teaching of the Bible as consistent with replacement theology are overt and easy to diagnose, such as statements like "We are the new Israel" or "G-D divorced Israel, and the church is His new bride," other lenses are more subtle.

It is one of these subtle distortions that I want to discuss here in hopes that someone reading this will see that they are viewing the Bible through this distortion and put on the corrective lens of truth.

Now, I know that some who read what I am about to write will say, "So what?" or "What's the big deal?" But please remember that those statements are the foundation of subtle distortion.

OK, here we go. Recently, I once again heard a teacher make the statement that the commandments of the Torah are divided into three categories, or types: sacrificial commandments, ceremonial commandments and moral commandments. Yet nowhere in the entire Bible do we find anything that states this. The

Torah does divide the commandments into three categories. These are commandments, ordinances and judgments.

At this point, many of you reading just thought to yourself, "So what?" or "What's the big deal?" The big deal is that the next statement that follows when someone says the commandments are divided into sacrificial, ceremonial and moral commandments is that today the "church" is only responsible to observe the moral commandments.

This teaching is one of the hidden, or subtle, roots of the heresy of replacement theology. For those wondering "so what," first you must understand that by dividing the commandments into three groups and then casting off two of them as irrelevant, you attempt to make void nearly two-thirds of the Bible. Second, just a simple reading of the Book of Acts would inform you that the first followers of Yeshua didn't seem to agree that after the death of the Messiah only the moral commandments were relevant to believers. They continued to go to the temple; they continued to make sacrifices; they continued to keep the feasts and festivals. Third, there is absolutely no way to divide the commandments into those three categories. For instance, is the Shabbat ceremonial, sacrificial or moral? How about Kosher laws?

One might say that the reason we divide the commandments into these categories is because today there is no priesthood and no temple, so we had to divide the commandments in a way that allowed us to know what commandments we could still keep and those that we could no longer keep.

The problem with that thinking is that this is not the first time in history in which there was no temple and no priesthood, and reading the Book of Daniel alone would let us know that he didn't believe that not having a temple and priesthood did away with any of the commandments.

Another might say the reason we divide the commandments into

these categories is because Yeshua (Jesus) fulfilled all of the ceremonial and sacrificial commandments, so now we only need to keep the moral commandments.

The problem with that thinking is that Yeshua actually said the following in Matthew 5:17-19 (TLV):

“Do not think that I came to abolish the Torah or the Prophets! I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. Amen, I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or serif shall ever pass away from the Torah until all things come to pass. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever keeps and teaches them, this one shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

Notice He said “until heaven and earth pass away.” This has not yet happened, and like I said above, Paul, Peter, John, James and the rest continued to keep all of the sacrificial and ceremonial commandments for more than 30 years until the destruction of the temple – even after Yeshua died.

When confronted with the above, the next reason given is, “Well, those commandments were given to the Jews.” Before I go on, let’s just note that the commandments were given to the children of Israel and the mixed multitude that surrounded the mountain when Torah was given. But with this statement we find the subtle, hidden message and reason for the division of the commandments into the categories of sacrificial, ceremonial and moral. It is so that the “church” (the “New Israel”) could separate themselves from the Jews. They say the Jews depended on the works of the sacrificial system and the temple ceremony for their salvation. The “church” doesn’t need those; the “church” has Yeshua. So, now only the moral laws are important.

This teaching is the complete opposite of the teaching of Paul

in Romans 9-11 that speaks of the Gentiles (wild branches) being grafted into the Olive Tree (Israel).

Please understand that I know we don't have a temple or a priesthood and that we cannot possibly keep or observe all of the ceremonial or sacrificial laws. But that does not mean they are no longer relevant. As I stated above, Daniel could not make sacrifices and offerings at the temple, so instead he honored those commandments by doing all that he could to observe them. Three times a day at the hours of the sacrifices Daniel looked toward Jerusalem and prayed. He and three Hebrew men also refused to eat foods forbidden to them.

This is how we make these sacrificial commandments relevant to us today. We choose to do all that we can do until the time comes when we can do everything. Now, this may seem like making much ado about nothing, but the reality is that there are only two reasons for redefining and recategorizing the commandments G-D gave to us. The first is to divide the body of Messiah into two groups: Jewish believers and non-Jewish believers. And the second is to provide an excuse for people to not keep those commandments. Both of these reasons are demonically inspired.

I hope that if you have been taught that the commandments are or should be divided into these three unbiblical categories you will take the time to study for yourself. Dig into the Scriptures themselves and allow G-D to clear this distortion from your lenses. Otherwise, we will continue to have the blind leading the blind. {eoa}

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