

ONE TORAH FOR ALL

Zerubbabel ben Emunah

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Sacrifices by the Early Talmidim

After the death, resurrection, and ascension of Mashiach Yeshua, we see recorded in the book of Acts, instances in which the early talmidim went to the temple in Jerusalem to offer sacrifices as commanded in Torah. Apparently, they did this until the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. This shows us that it was their understanding that the sacrificial system did not cease to function with the coming of Mashiach. Furthermore, they did not seem to have any expectation of it ceasing when Mashiach came. There is no record that Yeshua taught them to expect the sacrificial system to stop because of His arrival. In fact, He taught just the opposite as is recorded in Matthew 5:17, which we shall examine below.

Ma'aseh [Acts] 21:17

And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

Shaul and those traveling with him had left Miletus to go to Jerusalem for the feast of Shavuot.

Ma'aseh [Acts] 20:16

For Shaul had determined to sail past Ephesus, that he might not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Shavuot.

As they traveled on the way to Jerusalem, Shaul was warned many times not to go there. Shaul even stated to the elders at Ephesus that the Spirit was telling him he was in for some hard times when he got to Jerusalem.

Ma'aseh [Acts] 20:22-23

22 "And now, behold, I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there;

23 except that the Set-apart Spirit testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me."

When he did finally arrive in Jerusalem, the brethren received him with open arms, just as Mashiach taught us to do.

Matithyah [Matthew] 10:11

“And into whatsoever city or village you shall enter, search out who in it is worthy; and there abide till you leave.”

Shaul had been in Jerusalem before among the brethren, when the council was held concerning those who were returning from the nations (see Acts 15). It was a good welcome and they were all glad to see one another once again.

Ma’aseh [Acts] 21:18

And the following day Shaul went in with us to Ya’aqov; and all the elders were present.

It seems somewhat apparent that Shaul and his traveling companions arrived in Jerusalem rather late in the day. It was not until the next day that Shaul and his company presented themselves before Ya’aqov, who was the nasi (leader) of the brethren in Jerusalem, and to the rest of the elders as well. Most likely most of these same men were also part of the council recorded in Acts 15.

It was during the earlier trip to Jerusalem, that Shaul went into the council to present himself privately, as he mentions below.

Galatians 2:1-2

1 Then after the space of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Bar-Nabba, taking Titus also with me.

2 And I went up by revelation; and I laid before them the besorah which I preach among the Gentiles but privately before them who were of repute, lest by any means I should be running, or had run, in vain.

Therefore, we find that as Shaul had done in the past, he met with Ya’aqov and the elders upon arriving in Jerusalem. Shaul was aware of the rumors about himself. He was concerned that the message he was delivering was in error in some way. Therefore, he met privately with the elders in Jerusalem to explain to them his message. After the elders in Jerusalem heard the message that Shaul was delivering to the dispersed among the nations, they found nothing wrong with Shaul’s message.

Ma’aseh [Acts] 21:19

And when he had greeted them, he related one by one the things which the Elohim had wrought among the goyim through his ministry.

It is as if Shaul was giving his report to his superiors. Let us consider this carefully. We often refer to these men as apostles. However, if this were true, the Hebrew word used would have been שְׁלִיחַ *“shaliach,”* which means a *sent one*. The plural of this would be שְׁלִיחִים – *“shalichim.”* We often think of this term as *one who is sent* by Elohim. This is correct, to be sure. However, in this case, YHWH may not have been the only one who did the sending. Let us consider this passage.

Ma'aseh [Acts] 13:1-3

1 Now there were at Antioch, in the assembly that was there, prophets and teachers, Bar-Nabba, and Shim'on the Nigra of Niger, and Luqios from the city of Qurini, and Mana'el the foster-brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Shaul.

2 And as they ministered to the Elohim, and fasted, the Set-apart Spirit said, "Separate me Bar-Nabba and Shaul for the work to which I have called them."

3 Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

As we can see, the Spirit had clearly selected these men as "sent ones," but those in authority at Antioch also sent them. So, recognizing that the shalichim in Jerusalem were of higher authority than those in Antioch, it was just a matter of protocol that Shaul and those with him would present a report to Ya'aqov and the elders in Jerusalem.

Ma'aseh [Acts] 21:20

And they, when they heard it, glorified the Elohim; and they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are in Yehudah of them that have believed; and they are all zealous for Torah;"

After Shaul had given his report to Ya'aqov and the elders at Jerusalem, they rejoiced, glorified, and honored YHWH. It was at this point that Ya'aqov began to tell Shaul what was going on in Jerusalem. He had been gone for quite some time.

Please note, that one of the things Ya'aqov said, was that there were many Yehudi (Jews) who believed upon Yeshua as Mashiach. The word in the Greek text translated as *thousands* is μυριαδες – "muriades," sometimes translated as "myriads," which quite literally means *tens of thousands*. It is interesting to note that this word appears seven times in the New Testament, and each time it is translated with the meaning of a great multitude in the tens of thousands, except here. One wonders if the translators were trying to hide the truth that many Jews had come to faith in Yeshua!

Ma'aseh [Acts] 2:41

They then that received his word were immersed; and there were added to them in that day about three thousand souls.

On the day in which the Set-apart Spirit was poured out, the day of Shavuot (Pentecost), on that day alone, three thousand were added to the number of believers. It is noteworthy that the word for "thousand" here is used, which is a different word than that used for tens of thousands. The Greek word is a compound word τρισχιλιαι – "trischiliai," which is made up of *tris* and *chiliai* (three and thousands).

In one day, three thousand were added to the talmidim. It should not be surprising then that there would be tens of thousands many years later!

Ma'aseh [Acts] 5:14

and believers were added daily to their numbers by YHWH, multitudes both of men and women;

Please note that YHWH was adding to the number of talmidim on a daily basis.

Ma'aseh [Acts] 6:7

And the word of Elohim increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

However, it was not just the common people who were coming to faith in Mashiach Yeshua; it was also the learned men: the priests and Levites. As they came to believe, it was only natural that the people would follow their leaders and come to believe as well.

Notice that all these believers were zealous for the Torah as well as their faith in Mashiach Yeshua. It is important that we see they were still keeping Torah and following Yeshua as Mashiach. This was the normal way to exercise one's faith in those early days before Rome came into the picture and threw out all things Jewish.

Ma'aseh [Acts] 21:21

“and they have been told concerning you, that you teach all the Yehudim who are in the goyim to forsake Moshe, telling them not to circumcise their children neither to walk according to the directions of the Torah.”

Before Shaul had returned to Jerusalem, word had preceded him about his ministry. He had a reputation. The problem was that the reputation was not based upon truth, but upon rumors, lies, and misunderstandings. What was the reputation and rumor? The rumor was that Shaul was teaching the Goyim not to keep Torah.

Please note there was one particular aspect of this rumor that was of special concern: that of circumcision. Part of the rumor was that Shaul was teaching the Goyim not to circumcise their children and not to keep all of the Torah.

This was a particularly damning rumor and it had a lot of people upset because they knew that keeping Torah was part of the true faith, and it was now that much easier to actually do because of the infilling presence of the Spirit in them. How could anyone rightly teach not to keep Torah? It just did not make sense to them.

Ma'aseh [Acts] 21:22

“Well, they will certainly hear that you have come.”

Now Ya'aqov had a very real concern. He knew that in this close-knit community of talmidim, the whole community would know very quickly that Shaul was in town. As in any large group, there are those who are zealous and then there are those who are really zealous! Perhaps Ya'aqov had some of those men in mind as he was talking to Shaul.

Ma'aseh [Acts] 21:23

"Therefore do what we say to you. We have four men that are under a vow;"

However, even with this concern, Ya'aqov was praying and listening to His Voice and was moving as the Spirit directed him to move. Ya'aqov knew there were already four men who had taken a vow and it was nearing its completion. This shows us that the talmidim of Mashiach Yeshua were still following and keeping all of Torah, even at this late date.

Ma'aseh [Acts] 21:24

"take them, and purify yourself with them, and pay their expenses, that they may shave their heads; and all shall know that there is no truth in the things whereof they have been informed concerning you; but that you yourself also walk orderly, keeping the Torah."

We are told that to end their vow they would shave their heads. This clearly indicates to us that these men were under a Nazirite vow. However, let us examine just exactly what the ending of a Nazirite vow would entail according to Torah.

B'midbar [Numbers] 6:13-15

13 And this is the law of the Nazirite, when the days of his separation are fulfilled; he shall be brought to the door of the tent of meeting;

14 and he shall present his offering to YHWH, one male lamb a year old without blemish for a burnt-offering, and one ewe lamb a year old without blemish for a sin offering, and one ram without blemish for peace offerings,

15 and a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and their meal-offering, and their drink-offerings.

These are the sacrifices that a Nazirite is to present to YHWH when his vow is completed. Let us list them for ease of reference.

1 male year old lamb

1 female year old lamb

1 ram

1 basket of unleavened bread

unleavened wafers for each sacrifice

1 meal offering for each sacrifice

libations, or drink offerings, for each sacrifice

In today's market, one is looking at somewhere around a value of \$400 for all these sacrifices and offerings to end the Nazirite vow. Now Shaul was not only going to pay for his own sacrifices; he was going to pay for four others as well. That is about \$2000 worth of sacrifices for which Shaul was going to pay. Even in today's world, that is not cheap. That is more than two months' worth of wages. That is a lot of tent making to pay for all of that.

Now, lest we miss the whole point of this, let us back up just a moment. Let us remind ourselves exactly why Shaul was going to do this.

and all shall know that there is no truth in the things whereof they have been informed concerning you; but that you yourself also walk orderly, keeping the Torah."

It was for the express purpose of dispelling the evil rumor that Shaul was teaching others not to obey Torah. By doing this, he would show that he was still keeping and obeying Torah, and that he was teaching others to do the same. That was the whole purpose of his doing this vow with these other men: to dispel the rumor.

Ma'aseh [Acts] 21:25

"But concerning the goyim that have believed, we wrote, giving judgment that they should keep themselves from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what is strangled, and from fornication."

Ya'aqov then reminds Shaul what the judgment was when the council was held as recorded in Acts 15. Let's list them.

1. Stay away from things sacrificed to idols
2. Stay away from blood
3. Do not eat things strangled
4. Stay away from fornication

Ya'aqov here lists the four negative halakot as ruled upon by the council. However, he does not list here the one positive halakah.

Ma'aseh [Acts] 15:21

"For from the earliest times, Moshe has had in every city those who proclaim him, with his words being read in the synagogues every Shabbat."

In order for the goyim to be able to enter into the synagogues and learn Torah, they had to meet the four minimum requirements of not doing certain things. If they would abstain from those four things, then they would be eligible to enter into the synagogues, learn Torah, and learn how to walk the walk of faith.

One is to stay away from those things polluted by idol worship. Staying away from blood seems to be dealing with family purity laws. To stay away from things strangled is to eat meat killed in a kosher manner according to Scripture so that all the blood is drained out of it. Finally, they were to remain sexually pure. If the goyim would do these four things, then they could come into the synagogues. It should be noted here that these four things were not about salvation. What they were about was being able to enter into fellowship and learn Torah and progress in the walk of faith.

Ma'aseh [Acts] 21:26

Then Shaul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them went into the temple, declaring the completion of the days of purification, until the sacrifice was offered for every one of them.

Shaul was agreeable to this suggestion to put to rest the rumor that he was breaking Torah and teaching others not to keep Torah. Therefore, the very next day, Shaul took these four men, and after purifying himself, went to the temple to offer the prescribed sacrifices for each man.

One would think that this act would have been sufficient to show that Shaul was obedient to Torah. However, it was not. How do we know it was not? Well, after nearly two thousand years, that rumor is still floating around. Some rumors die pretty hard and this seems to be one of those rumors that just does not want to die, particularly when it is in the interest of Satan to keep this rumor going. Just look how Christianity has taught that believers in Yeshua did not have to obey Torah.

Even in the movement of YHWH's Spirit to restore the original faith and bring us to our inheritance, that rumor still persists. Look how many people think that at least part of the Torah has been done away with. Look how many think the sacrificial system is somehow incongruent to the perfect sacrifice, the Blood of Yeshua our Mashiach.

Yeshua said:

Matithyah [Matthew] 5:17

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Torah or the prophets; I came not to destroy, but to verify."

If Yeshua Himself did not do away with the Torah, then in what way would His Blood do away with the sacrificial system? Furthermore, in what way would His Blood do away with the sin offering? Can we not see that the blood of bulls and goats never did take away sin, but that these things only pointed to the Blood of Mashiach? Moreover, just because Yeshua Mashiach has come, in what way have these sacrifices stopped pointing at His Blood? They have not!

Can we not see that these men of faith in the first century offered sacrifices right up to the time that the temple was destroyed? Did they understand something we do not? Consider this. The sacrifices were never about salvation. NEVER! The sacrifices were about hearing and obeying His Voice.

Yirmeyah [Jeremiah] 7:21-23

21 Thus says YHWH Tzava'ot, the Elohim of Israel; "Add your burnt-offerings to your sacrifices, and eat flesh.

22 For I spoke not to your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices;

23 but this thing I commanded them, saying, 'Shema My Voice, and I will be your Elohim, and you shall be My people; and you shall walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.'”

Did this happen?

Yirmeyah [Jeremiah] 7:24-28

24 "But they shema not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in their own counsels and in the stubbornness of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward.

25 Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I have sent unto you all My servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them;

26 yet they shema not to Me, nor inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff; they did worse than their fathers.

27 And you shall speak all these words to them; but they will not shema you; you shall also call to them; but they will not answer you.

28 And you shall say to them, 'This is the nation that has not shema the Voice of YHWH their Elohim, nor received instruction; truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth.'"

Obeying Torah is about hearing and obeying His Voice! If one does not understand this basic principle, he will not be able to progress in his walk or in his understanding.

Let us desire to keep the whole Torah, every single jot and every single tittle!

ABBA YHWH, we love You; and our desire is to hear and obey Your Voice. We ask that you would sharpen our hearing; in the name of Yeshua our Mashiach. Amein.

Shabbat Shalom

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www.onetorahforall.com

zerubbabel@onetorahforall.com

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