

Called for a Purpose

By Moshe Schwab

When I first began learning about Yeshua (Jesus) one of the things I was taught is that I was called, called to be a Christian. I didn't realize that was not what being called meant; I was being taught a theology. I was being taught a whole system of biblical philosophy that wasn't biblically accurate.

When Rabbi Shaul (Paul) talks about being called he is talking about the Jewish idea of a people who are called by God for a purpose. Israel was called to love God, love their neighbor, and be a light to the world and all that entails. Prophets were called to give messages from God. God had specific callings, purposes, for others as well. The people who believe in Yeshua have a similar purpose to that of Israel, to love God, love their neighbor, and be light to the world and all that entails. Believers in Yeshua are to live up to their calling just as the Jews were supposed to live up to their calling.

To some theologians, being called means being called to be Christian; like I said, that is what I initially learned. These theologians see no relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament regarding being called. Just being a Christian is not really what being called means. Being Christian can be defined in many ways, but loving God and your neighbor and being a light to the world¹ and all that involves is a better definition of what a believer in Yeshua is. Also, being empowered to live good lives is an important part of being a light for believers in the Messiah. The New Testament portion is not separate from its Jewish roots, but was written by Jews to a mostly Jewish audience. The term "called" and other terminology in the New Testament portion has its roots in the Tanakh (the Old Testament portion) and cannot be properly understood without an authentic context.

The word for call is the Hebrew word “qara” and is used 735 times in the Tanakh.² According to Strong's Concordance it means, “to call, call out, recite, read, cry out, proclaim.” In Exodus, Bezalel is called and filled with the Spirit of God to do work on the Mishkan (The Tabernacle, Tent of Meeting in the desert). “See, I have **called** by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship.” Ex. 31:2 NKJV.

Being called by God is for some specific purpose. Psalm 78:70 CJB says, “He chose David to be his servant, taking him from the sheep-yards.” David was called to be king. Jeremiah 1:4 CJB says, “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; before you were born, I separated you for myself. I have appointed you to be a prophet to the nations.” For those of you who have read letters in the New Testament portion, these words are familiar. Rabbi Shaul says in the New Testament portion that believers in Yeshua are set apart (separated for God's purpose), that God knows us, and are part of God's plan.

Unfortunately, the majority of believers in Yeshua don't understand that Shaul's (Paul's) writings come from an understanding of the Tanakh. What believers often see is a distinct disjointedness or separateness between the Tanakh, the Jewish culture and teaching at the time of Yeshua, and the New Testament portion.

Not only did Shaul's teachings rely on the Tanakh, Shaul was familiar with all the Jewish concepts of his time and also would have been familiar with the teachings of the Essenes. From the Qumran scrolls: “For

¹ Loving God and your neighbor is a summation of the commandments. It is small minded to think these are the only two commandments. Rabbis, including Rabbi Yeshua (Jesus), would summarize the commandments to help people to follow God.

² Strong's Concordance with Hebrew and Greek Lexicon, Hebrew word H7121, <http://www.eliyah.com/lexicon.html>

[the man of understanding that he may instruct the sai]nts” They were to love God with all their heart ... to love people that He chose, do what is right and good. “Depart from evil and cling to good works.” “Practice truth and righteousness.” Not to be stubborn, not to be filled with lust, “to cause all the volunteers to enter who wish to practice the precepts of God in the Covenant of Grace.” Taken from 1QS 1.1-8 (1st Qumran scroll).³

From this short section of the Qumran scroll that I took excerpts from we see words that are in common with what Yeshua taught and Shaul’s letters. The language that they used was not uncommon in that time. Words like saints, love God ..., love, chose, and grace from the Qumran scroll stand out. It may surprise some of you to see the Old Testament believers referred to themselves as living in the “Covenant of Grace.” The word volunteer probably is similar in meaning where Shaul describes himself as a servant. The Greek word that Shaul uses for himself is the word “doulos” which means a volunteer servant.

It should be easy to understand the concept of being called. Shaul tells them to, “Lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called.” Eph. 4:1 CJB. The Jews had a purpose, to love God. They were God’s holy ones, saints, living in the “Covenant of Grace.” They were chosen by God’s grace to do what is right and good. We also have been called by the Messiah to do the same only now we have the Holy Spirit to help us.

The Messiah has come and now we have a better hope of following God. “Also through him and on the ground of our trust, we have gained access to this grace in which we stand; so let us boast about the hope of experiencing God’s glory.” Rom. 5:2 CJB. Kefa (Peter) referring to the Holy Spirit says, “God’s power has given us everything we need for life and godliness, through our knowing the One who called us to his own glory and goodness.” The Jews had grace from God, but now grace had also come through the Messiah. Acts 4:12 says, “There is salvation (deliverance) in no one else.” It is also important to understand that God expects us to accept His deliverance through the Messiah. God has given man grace again, we have now been called by the Messiah to live lives commensurate with the wonderful glory we’ve been called into.

There is not a giant chasm in understanding between the New Testament and the Tanakh as some teach. There is a difference, but not the disjointedness between the Tanakh and the New Testament that so many teachers claim there is. We immediately realize that God keeps trying to help man and in very dramatic ways throughout history. It should make us extremely humble and thankful for a good and great God who continues to reach out to sinful man and call mankind to Him.

³ The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English (7th Edition) (Penguin Classics) (p. 98). Penguin Books Ltd. Kindle Edition.