

Sacrifice, Obedience, & Worship

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Psalms 96:2 says:

“Sing to the LORD, bless His name; proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day.”

That’s no problem. I can do that: [Sing] *“I will sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and rider thrown into the sea.”*

Psalms 135:19 says:

“Bless the LORD, O house of Israel! Bless the LORD, O house of Aaron!”

I’m of the house of Israel. I can do that: *“Baruch atah Adoshem, Elokeynu Melech Ha-olam, shehakol niyhiyeh bidvaroh!”* “Blessed are You, God, King of the universe, by whose Word all things came into being!”

Psalms 136:1 says:

“Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.”

I can do that too: “Thank you Lord!” “Thank you God!” “Thank you Lord!”

Psalms 150:6 says:

“Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!”

Baruch HaShem, I have breath, so I can praise Him for that. Here! Watch me! “Praise you God!” “Praise you that I have breath by which which to praise you God!”

Psalms 134:2 says:

“Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, ...”

I’m in Ohev’s sanctuary, so I can do that: [Lift up hands] Look how my hands are lifted up!

Psalms 95:6 says:

“Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.”

No problem. I can do that! Well – I may have a small problem getting back up! ☺ But, if not for my arthritis, I could kneel down to God several times a day with no problem.

Let's try one more. Psalms 96:9 says:

"Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness!"

Uhh let's see. How do I do that? The verse goes on to say: *"Tremble before Him, all the earth."* Oh, I see. I have to tremble to worship Him. But I'm not trembling. How do I get myself to tremble if I'm not trembling? Perhaps if I can find out what "worship" means it will help. Here's a dictionary definition. It says:

"Worship: to adore .. to esteem."

Well, I certainly esteem God, but right now I don't feel any passion or "emotion" of adoration. And I'm still not trembling. Well, at the beginning of this service we had a time of musical praise and worship where we sang songs and danced. I worshiped God then, and today's time of musical worship was especially good, but I don't remember trembling or having any manifestation like that. Interesting! Scripture says "Sing" and I can sing. Scripture says "Bless" and I can bless. Scripture says "Thank" and I can thank. Scripture says "Praise" and I can praise. Scripture says "Lift hands" and I can lift hands. Scripture says "Kneel" and I can kneel. But "worship?" That seems to be different because, unlike those other things, worship involves my attitude and emotions – giving myself over completely to God and, though I always seek it, there does not seem to be a specific thing I can do to put my emotions into gear and call up worship when I want to. I often experience it, but sometimes I don't.

Revelation 4:8-11 describes the ultimate worship this way:

"The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy¹, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!" Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: 'You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.'"

I read it, and I understand it, but I cannot compare my worship of God to that! But I shouldn't be down on myself about it though, because the creatures and the elders are face to face with God in heaven and can experience a fullness of worship that is impossible for me now because I am not yet with them. On earth I can do what is under my control, like bless, thank, praise, lift hands, and kneel and, every so often approach what the elders in heaven are experiencing but, unless I am actively adoring God with abandon and passion, I am not worshipping as those elders are. And yet, God requires my worship at all times, so there must be a way!

Last Saturday evening I attended the Hispanic *chavurah* where I heard and viewed an excellent recorded lecture that touched on the time of the Babylonian exile when there was no Temple available in which the Israelites could sacrifice. I raised a question to the group of why it might be that the loss of the Temple at that particular time did not seem to cause the same crisis within

Judaism as the loss of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. As we were discussing it, a Scripture came to me that may have been in the recorded lecture – I don't remember – but it was 1 Samuel 15:22:

“Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.”

I had never fully understood that Scripture. I knew it was used by the early rabbis to justify substituting *Torah* obedience for the Temple sacrifices (which, of course, they could no longer do), but just then I saw in it something I had not previously seen. I had known that sacrifice was a form of worship, but just then I saw that obedience to *Torah* was also a form of worship, and I further saw why God preferred obedience over sacrifice. It was because sacrifice was given to us by God for our benefit – not His; we need the atonement, the covering, and the salvation that comes from sacrifice. God, on the other hand, does not need our sacrifices; what He wants is our obedience because that is how we show Him that He and only He is our God. Now in the New Covenant, making Messiah Yeshua Lord of our lives is our new worship of sacrifice, and complying with the precepts of *Torah* is our worship of obedience – the same as it always was. This is huge for us to realize though, because obedience to God's law is one of the key things lacking in the world and even in Christianity which has adopted worship of the sacrificed Messiah, but not obedience to law. It is therefore a major obligation of ours, the Jewish people (and especially the Messianic Jewish people), to bring the truth of worshiping through obedience to the nations of the world and also to our Christian brothers. When we talk about the Jewish roots of Christianity, obedience to God's Law is a primary thing we should mean.

I found a web site where a Christian pastor, Sandy Simpson, could not have said it better. Here is what he says:

“In many churches around the world the concept of "worship" has been redefined and narrowed to mean the time when Christians come together to sing songs, raise their hands, dance around, and get all excited about the Lord together in church. For most of the younger postmodernist relativistic generation the concept of "worship" has become a thing you do once or twice a week to absolve yourself of guilt. The more you can work yourself into a state of bliss in feeling like you are really achieving a state of "worship" by letting yourself go in the music and rhythm of the "worship" time, the more you can justify what you are doing the rest of the week when you are not "worshiping" God. This "worship" then becomes an excuse and justification process whereby Christians can rid themselves of the guilt of not obeying the Lord in their lives. This is not to say that true worship is not done in the time now called "worship". It can be a time of worship, but worship without obedience is no worship at all.”

Is it any wonder that Yeshua said *“If you love Me, keep My commandments.”* (John 14:15)? Do you see how this as an open invitation for us to teach worship through *Torah*-obedience to the world and the Christian world in particular?

Now for those of you who follow the theological discussions of Messianic Jewish leaders, you know that what I just said about Gentiles having to obey God's Law raises the specter, among some, of what is commonly called the “One Law” doctrine – a doctrine that we do consider to be correct.

Those who claim it teach that the *Torah* applies exactly the same to the Jew as to the Gentile, and they derive their claim from Exodus 12:49 and Numbers 15:16 which say respectively, “*One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you.*” and “*One law and one custom shall be for you and for the stranger who dwells with you*” The Hebrew word for “law” in these Scriptures is “*Torah.*”

What the Scriptures say is, of course, correct. What is not correct is the notion that the “one law” of Scripture – i.e. God’s *Torah* – applies the same for all people and for all times. So let’s not get side-tracked and allow those fallacious arguments to keep us from ministering the truth that has been given to us – that God wants Jews and non-Jews, men and women, husbands and wives, children and parents, etc., to obey His Law as it applies to each.

None of this should be shocking since it is connected to what we commonly call the Great Commission. Matthew 28:19-20 quotes Yeshua instructing His Jewish disciples this way:

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, immersing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Notice that they are Jews who are being called to minister to the non-Jewish Nations of the world, teaching them obedience. Obedience to what? To Yeshua’s commandments. And what are Yeshua’s commandments? *Torah* of course.

Now here’s the catch! Before we can teach worship through *Torah*-obedience to the world or anyone for that matter, we have to first take the log out of our own eye and adopt it ourselves. Before you heard this message, you may not have thought of *Torah*-obedience as worship, but each of us here has, at one time or other, had to make a decision about how we should comply with the various commandments of *Torah*, if for no other reason than for the obvious one – that God has called us all to Jewish life, and Jewish life is intimately involved in *Torah*. Each of us has our own story to tell about this, and I am guessing two things about those stories, (1) that most of us have relied heavily on the Holy Spirit for direction in making our decisions, and (2) that each of us has come out on it in a slightly different place.

Yesterday, I gave our members and friends an e-mailed “heads-up” that I would be asking you, who are here today, to share some of your experiences with *Torah*-compliance to add to this message. So, who here would like to start by giving us a two-minute account of how you first encountered a commandment of the *Torah* with which you struggled, how you recognized your need to adapt it to modern New Covenant life, how you came to the conviction that it was God’s will that you obey, and what your resolution of the matter finally was.

Time of sharing

It’s getting time to close now, so permit me to summarize.

1. The precepts of *Torah* pre-existed creation; I didn't mention that earlier, but we easily see that it is true from John 1:1: "*In the beginning was the Word, ...*"

2. *Torah* always required God's creatures to worship Him through both their adoration and their obedience. Before man was created, God required it of the angels.

3. Before the creation, one-third of the angels led by *Satan* disobeyed and rebelled against God. This refusal to worship Him as God resulted in their being cast down from heaven.

4. Soon after man was created, he committed the same sin as the angels. He refused to worship God, also by disobeying Him, and God cast him from "heaven on earth," which was the Garden of Eden.

5. Sacrificial worship was probably unknown in the Garden of Eden but, ever since the fall, man needed to sacrifice to God in order to retain some semblance of relationship with Him.

6. Later, worship of obedience and worship of sacrifice were written into the *Mosaic Torah* as part of the Sinai Covenant, and they became the main elements in the religion of Judaism.

7. Sacrifice and obedience to God were both forms of worship, but sacrifice was strictly for man's benefit, while man's obedience was what pleased God.

8. Israel was chosen to be a nation of priests to the world. That is why only Israelites were required to worship God through sacrifice in the Tabernacle and Temple. Gentiles could bring sacrifices, but it was through the priests of Israel that all sacrifices had to be conducted.

9. The worship of obeying God's *Torah* was for Jew and Gentile alike, but the nations of the world did not know about *Torah*. It was, and always has been, the responsibility of Israel to introduce the nations of the world to its universal precepts.

10. At times in history when the Children of Israel stopped worshiping God through obedience, God took away their Temple so they could not receive the benefit of worshiping Him through sacrifice either.

11. There came a time when God gave to Israel (and through Israel to the nations of the world) a New Covenant. This new covenant also required worship of both sacrifice and obedience, but there was a difference. The sacrifice was no longer of an unblemished animal – it was of the son of God Himself. And obedience was no longer to statutes written on tablets of stone – it was to God's *Torah* written on men's hearts. And to help us read the *Torah* written on our hearts, God also gave us the Holy Spirit to reside with us and within us.

This is where we find ourselves today – Children of God called to worship Him both through sacrifice and obedience. But more than that! We are members of a priestly nation, Israel, charged with a Great Commission – a commission to export worship of God through sacrifice (Yeshua's

sacrifice) and through obedience (*Torah* obedience) to a world that doesn't know Him, and to brother and sister Christians who know Him through His son Yeshua, but not through obedience to *Torah*. It is a high calling that we have been given and, by God's grace, we will embrace it to His glory.