



ONE TORAH FOR ALL

One Torah shall be to him that is home-born, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you.
Exodus 12:49

Zerubbabel ben Emunah
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Distractions

Luqa (Luke) 21:34

“But take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be weighted down with dissipation, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that day come on you suddenly as a snare.”

There are many things in one’s life which hold his attention. Some of those things could be classified as evil and some of those things could be classified as good. Regardless of under which list one might put a particular item, good or evil, anything can become a distraction from the purpose of serving our Creator.

There are many legitimate things which a person does every day which, if not guarded against, can become a distraction, taking one’s attention away from our Master. This often happens when one becomes overly concerned about something.

Philippians 4:6

In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto Elohim.

It seems like today everyone has his own “cause.” All these different causes may, in fact, be legitimate concerns. However, while the cause itself may be legitimate, the one leading the charge or even one working for that cause may be so focused upon the cause that he has forgotten his Master. That is, a person can put so much energy and focus upon the cause that it has become first in his life. Thus, such a person has left his first love.

Gilyana (Revelation) 2:4

“But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.”

This is quite a contrast to the letter that Shaul wrote to the assembly at Ephesus. In this letter, Mashiach Yeshua is wooing that same assembly to return back to Him. Life had happened, and

the result was that the focus of these people had turned away from serving Mashiach Yeshua to taking care of their daily needs, or whatever else upon which they happened to be focused.

Marqos (Mark) 4:19

“and the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.”

Regardless of the cause of a person leaving his first love of Mashiach Yeshua, that cause can be listed in one of the categories listed by Yeshua in the above passage. He will have left because 1) the cares of the world have taken his focus, 2) he has begun pursuing riches, or 3) he lusts for something other than that which can be listed under one or two.

I think, I hope, most of us can easily see the reality of those things which could be listed under numbers one or two above and can allow His Spirit to check and prompt us when necessary to put our feet back on the good and right path to Mashiach Yeshua. Therefore, for the rest of this study we will focus mainly upon number three, particularly, those things which start out legitimate or can be seen as being legitimate in some way and how those things can lead one away from Mashiach Yeshua.

Melakim Aleph (1st Kings) 13:16-19

16 And he said, “I may not return with you, nor go in with you; neither will I eat bread nor drink water with you in this place:

17 for it was said to me by the word of YHWH, ‘You shall eat no bread nor drink water there, nor turn again to go by the way that you came.’”

18 And he said unto him, “I also am a prophet as you are; and an angel spoke unto me by the word of YHWH, saying, ‘Bring him back with you into your house, that he may eat bread and drink water.’” But he lied unto him.

19 So he went back with him, and did eat bread in his house, and drank water.

I would encourage you to read this entire chapter. YHWH sent this man on a mission to speak words against the altar of the high place in Beit El (Bethel). While he was on this mission, YHWH commanded Him not to eat or drink, and when he returned home, he was to go by a different route. The prophet did okay when King Yarabe’am (Jeroboam) invited him to come to his house to reward him and feed him. However, when a fellow prophet came to him and entreated him, he listened to the old prophet rather than to the commandment of YHWH. The old prophet distracted him from the mission on which he was sent by YHWH.

If one reads the entire chapter, one learns that this disregard of the word of YHWH to him personally would cost him his life. It is no small thing to turn aside from what YHWH directs us to do by His Voice through the agency of His Spirit. While it is not too likely today that one would die immediately, he still dies little by little in his spirit when he listens to the words of men over the words of YHWH.

What we would like to glean from this incident recorded for our edification concerning this lesson is this. Good people with good intentions can sometimes lead us astray; they can distract us. When YHWH reveals something to us personally, He expects us to follow through on what He has revealed to us until such time as He makes a course correction for us. It does not matter whether another person understands or even agrees with it. This prophet was sent on a mission, a mission given with specific instructions, given directly from the word of Elohim to the prophet. Just because someone else comes up and says that they too can hear His Voice does not mean that your instructions have changed. If YHWH wants to change your instructions, don't you think He will speak to you in the same manner as before? To be sure! Do not let another misdirect you from the path laid out for you by YHWH.

Yochanan (John) 10:27

"My sheep hear My Voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."

I write these studies to help His people to know Him better and to be able to follow Him better. I do not write these studies to try to get a following for myself. Please, I implore you, do NOT follow me. Walk beside me as your brother. I need you just as much as you need me. Together we can encourage one another and lift each other up and help each other to hear His Voice. I hope and pray that, when you read these studies you can hear His Voice. I pray that my own words fall to the ground and become nothing. His words give life. May we learn to live by His words, not the words of men.

It takes some practice; thankfully, He gives us grace and time to learn to hear and obey His Voice. The length of time from the moment we hear His Voice to the moment of obedience is crucial to our spiritual lives. The longer the lag time, the more of a distraction a person is causing himself. One's obedience needs to be immediate. While in some cases one's obedience is time sensitive, that is, He is directing one to do a particular task at a particular time and that task cannot be done until such time, one's willingness to obey can be immediate. This is most crucial. It is at this point, when one's willingness to obey is not immediate that one can become distracted.

The obedience of which we are speaking is not a mechanical or legalistic obedience, but rather, it is an obedience born out of one's love for his Master. This obedience is manifested through the two greatest commandments.

Marqos (Mark) 12:29-31

29 Yeshua answered, "The first is,

Hear Israel; YHWH our Elohim, YHWH echad:

30 and you shall love YHWH your Elohim with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.

31 The second is this,

you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

There is no other commandment greater than these."

How a person loves YHWH our Elohim with all of his heart, soul, mind, and strength is directly reflected in how he treats others. One cannot separate these two commandments.

The love of the brethren should be easily seen in the life of a follower of Mashiach Yeshua. If it cannot, then it is quite likely that such a person has become distracted. For example, today in this movement back towards obeying all of the Torah of YHWH, some people become so focused upon obeying the commandments, they forget about their relationships within the body of Mashiach. This will often manifest itself with harshness toward others and an air of superior knowledge and understanding, in some cases even an attitude of self-righteousness. These things are distractions from being in a good and healthy relationship with our Savior and with one another. When a person's obedience consistently hurts those around him, then something is wrong.

It has been my own personal observation that, generally speaking, evil or sinful distractions are more readily seen by the distracted person than those distractions which can be listed as being good or even righteous. Let us please consider the following incident recorded in Scripture.

Shophim (Judges) 11:30-31

30 And Yiphtach (Jephthah) vowed a vow unto YHWH, and said, "If You will indeed deliver the children of Ammon into my hand,

31 then it shall be, that whatsoever comes forth from the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, it shall be YHWH's, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering."

Unless this man was in the habit of keeping sheep and goats in his home, then this was truly a foolish vow. One can speculate as to what he was thinking would come out to meet him on his return home, but it is simply that, a speculation, for we are not told in Scripture what he expected to meet him.

Even so, he was so focused upon keeping this vow, that he did not even care enough to take the burden of breaking the vow upon himself, and repenting, and begging YHWH for forgiveness. This is greatly contrasted with Elohim commanding Avraham to take Yitzchaq to offer him as a burnt offering. Avraham set out to do that very thing, but unlike Yiphtach, Avraham was open to changing directions. When YHWH spoke to Avraham a second time, he heard and stayed his hand from harming his son.

Yiphtach was so distracted by the vow he had given, that he plowed straight through with completing the vow to the destruction of his own daughter. How many times do we as parents do the exact same thing? We get something set in our hearts and minds, and nothing, not even YHWH, can deter us from finishing what we started. Sadly, the result is that we turn people away from us, the people whom we love and care about the most.

Instead of being focused upon hearing and obeying His Voice moment by moment the way Avraham was, all too often we live like Yiphtach and plow through life hurting those we love

because we are distracted by our duty, our call, even at times by the very commandments of YHWH. Please carefully and prayerfully consider this next passage which are the words of Mashiach Yeshua.

Marqos (Mark) 2:27

And He said unto them, "The shabbat was made for man, and not man for the shabbat."

YHWH has given His Torah to instruct us. In fact, that is what the word "Torah" means: "instruction." Its primary means of instruction is to teach those who have ears to hear to be able to hear and obey His Voice (shema). YHWH does not want, nor does He desire for those who serve Him, to mechanically obey His Torah or even His Voice. What He desires is to be in a relationship with His people, a relationship based upon mutual love and respect.

The distractions that one faces in his life, whether they are good or evil, all come through eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. When a person decides for himself what is evil or even what is good, then he is distracted from being in a relationship with his Creator. It seems that many of those who say they follow Mashiach Yeshua become the most distracted in life and its pursuits. Many times worldly pleasures do not have a hold on such a person, but legitimate pursuits do and can be just as much of a distraction as worldly pleasures. So, how is one to know if he has become distracted? Simply, ask YHWH; then listen for an answer. He will answer. One may not like the answer, but He will answer.

Are you distracted? YHWH knows. Seek Him and allow Him to help you refocus upon Him in a manner which is pleasing to Him.

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