

Obedience is Better Than Sacrifice

"...Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sin offerings You did not desire, nor did You delight in them' (those which are offered according to Torah),⁹ then He said, 'Behold, I come to do Your will.'" (Heb. 10:8-9)

In my message from March 20, 2021 entitled *Crushed Because of Our Iniquities* I elucidated on the Biblical definition of iniquity: *when we do any activity (even good activities) in our own will rather than according to the Father's will. Thus, iniquity means doing my own will even though it is something good. Iniquity is Going Our Own Way, and this was laid upon the Messiah for all of us (Isaiah 53:6).* Willfulness is the Biblical opposite of obedience. The primary Hebrew word for *obedience* is *shema*, which means *to listen intelligently; to be attentive; to respond to a call; to consent.* I like to define *shema* as: *proving that we heard what was asked by doing what was said.* Obedience is more than mere compliance and it is not slavish subjection or blind submission. Obedience is based on the motivation that *Adonai* works through structures of authority He has established and that every person must give an account to *Adonai* for every decision he or she makes. Obedience is doing what *Yeshua* said.

In the Bible, God uses the *unbroken horse* and the *stubborn mule* as examples of willfulness (the opposite of *shema*): *"Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding, and must be held in with bit and bridle or they will not come to you" (Psalm 32:9).* Obedience implies a painful breaking of the will, for even *Yeshua*: *"Though He was a Son, He learned obedience from what He suffered" (Hebrews 5:8).*

Obedience is not just a good idea, but it is *Adonai's Orders!* We have been commanded to: *Be obedient to God (Acts 5:29); be obedient to our parents (Eph. 6:13); be obedient to your conscience (Romans 13:5); be obedient to your Congregational elders (Hebrews 13:17); be obedient to your civil authorities (Titus 3:1); and be obedient to our employer (Colossians 3:22).* *Yeshua: obeyed Adonai (John 5:30), obeyed His parents (Luke 2:51-52), obeyed His conscience (Phil. 2:8), obeyed His elders (Matt. 12:10-14), obeyed His rulers (Jo. 19:11) and obeyed His employers (Mk. 6:3).*

Obedience is a deliberate action involving bringing under control various members of our body. *Yeshua* singled out the eye and the hand as members of the body that need to obey *Adonai's Will.* The importance of bringing these members *under control* is emphasized by the *severe* discipline which *Yeshua* recommended in Scripture. Just as these *disciplines* are *unthinkable*, so the *transgression* of these members should also be *unthinkable*. *"²⁹And if your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away! It is better for you that one part of your body should be destroyed, than that your whole body be thrown into Gehenna. ³⁰And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away! It is better for you that one part of your body should be destroyed, than that your whole body go into Gehenna" (Matthew 5:29-30).*

For most people, the right eye is the dominant eye. It initiates the point of focus, while the other eye adds dimension and perspective. The retina of the eye receives light and converts it into chemical energy. This energy activates nerves that conduct the messages out of the eye into the higher regions of the brain. What we see affects our thoughts, attitudes, and actions. Losing the right eye, therefore, would be a severe handicap to vision. Also, for most people, the right hand is dominant and therefore initiates actions. We greet people with the right hand, and soldiers salute with the right hand. The tactile senses in the hand send messages to the brain, and the brain sends messages to the hand. The hand is typified as the initiator of work, evil deeds, and good deeds. *Yeshua* said: *"³But when you do tzedakah, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your tzedakah may be in secret; and your Father, who sees in secret, shall reward you" (Matthew 6:3).*

Before being tempted to disobey *Adonai* or *Yeshua* (Scripture) consider the grave consequences that King Saul experienced in his reign. When King Saul looked at the flocks and herds of the *Amalekites*, whom he had just conquered, he gave direction to his soldiers to spare the best of the sheep and the best of the oxen. This command was in direct disobedience to *Adonai's* command. On my January 24, 2015 message entitled *Blot Out all Memory of Amalek from Under Heaven:* *"¹⁹ Now when Adonai your God grants you rest from all the enemies surrounding you in the land Adonai your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, you are to blot out the memory of*

Amalek from under the heavens. Do not forget!" (Deuteronomy 25:19). In that message I shared: "We are to uproot complacency and doubt from our lives, and especially apathy (e.g., the Lord is not attentive with the details of our daily lives). In Jewish writings: "The inner Amalek is unholy cynicism. That little voice inside each of us that derides, belittles, and attacks truth and goodness; our irrational tendency to mock people who act morally, to be cynical when we see altruism, to doubt our own or other's sincerity - these are the modern-day Amalekites. They wage a lethal war with our soul. If we let it, cynicism can kill our every attempt to improve ourselves and smother any move towards refining our character and expressing our soul." We are prone to flirting with ideas, philosophies, worldly concerns, and our own free will: 'We know what to do', we say; 'I have it all under control'; 'I do not give the Lord what He wants, but what I think He should get (or deserve)'. Thus, we flirt with Amalek once again. We compromise and disobey. Why? Because Amalek is pleasant to our senses! We believe we are an enlightened society, we have greater education, we have better ideas, 'I' cannot learn from your experience, 'I' must experience it myself, and 'I' will succeed where you and others have failed."

Like Nathan confronted King David, the prophet Samuel confronted King Saul as to why he had disobeyed *Adonai*. Saul claimed that he was going to use the animals for sacrifices (iniquity or self-will exemplified). *Adonai's* prophet replied: *"²²Samuel said: 'Does Adonai delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of Adonai? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, to pay heed (hearken, KJV) than the fat of rams'" (1 Samuel 15:22). And then he added: "²³For rebellion is like the sin of divination (witchcraft, KJV) and stubbornness is like iniquity and idolatry. Since you have rejected Adonai's word, He has also rejected you as king'" (1 Samuel 15:22). That was the end of Saul's godly reign even if it took years to come to fully pass. Did you hear this word: "He has also rejected you!" Some people say that if *Adonai* or *Yeshua* chooses and anoints you, you are immune to *Adonai* or *Yeshua's* future rejection and discarding. You cannot read this account in 1 Samuel 15 and come up with such a conclusion logically. To flirt and try and do good to *Amalek* is to choose Satan over *Adonai*. Amalek has been judged and found eternally guilty and so does Satan. Choosing Satan's ways is equivalent to: *"rebellion is like the sin of divination (witchcraft, KJV) and stubbornness is like iniquity and idolatry". Adonai nor Yeshua will tolerate witchcraft, iniquity, or idolatry. Adonai and Yeshua who are Eternal Deity are jealous for that which belongs only to the Father (Adonai). Do not be fooled or deceived, Adonai said that rebellion is comparable to witchcraft and stubbornness is comparable to iniquity and idolatry.**

How do we approach Godly obedience, especially at this time in our history? Here are some thoughts. First, we balance obedience with *discernment*. If you lack discernment, you are likely to obey the wrong person or carry out inappropriate instructions. In the area of obedience, discernment is knowing whom to obey and under what circumstances you would not obey. A teenager asked his parents if he could play a practical joke on a neighbor, and the parents gave permission, with the stipulation that he clean up the mess the next day. As the teenager was carrying out his prank, the police arrested him for defacing property. In this situation neither the boy nor his parents had discernment, although the boy was trying to be obedient. The Greek word for discernment means *to separate thoroughly; to decide between; to make a judicial estimation*. Discernment involves making a choice between right and wrong: *"...⁶For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter" (Ecclesiastes 8:6).*

Next, we approach Godly obedience with *Enthusiasm*. It is possible to obey an authority but grumble about it. Such an attitude communicates a disobedient spirit. When we carry out a Scriptural command such as paying tithes, God does not want us to do it grudgingly or out of necessity, but enthusiastically (*2 Corinthians 9:7*). The word enthusiastic comes from the Greek words *en Theos*, which mean *of God*. Therefore, a believer who is obeying the Lord should be the most enthusiastic person there is. Everything needs to be done without grumbling or complaining (see Rebbetzin's message from 1990 based on Numbers 14).

Finally, we approach obedience with *agape (genuine) love*. This must be the motivation for obedience. Love does not depend upon the attitude or rewards of the one being obeyed. *Yeshua* demonstrated obedience out of genuine love when He came into the world to die for our sins. One of the greatest hindrances to obedience is fear. But perfect love casts out fear: *"¹⁸There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear" (1 Jo. 4:18). Shabbat Shalom!*