

Matthew 7

Yeshua continues his teaching From the Mount, a “sermon” that seems to gather together many of the teachings already given in the Tanakh (Old Testament), “fill them out,” and purify them from wrong interpretations.

In some ways this is also a mirror of the Sermon He made previously starting in Sh'mot (Exodus) 19 and 20, but highlighting and filling in differently. I believe Yeshua gave the “Sermon from Mt. Sinai” because He says, “No one has seen the Father” in Yochanan (John) 1:18 and 5:37. Since no one has seen the Father, but there are many physical representations in the Tanakh (Old Testament) that are called YHVH, then the physical representations must have been Yeshua. In these chapters Yeshua restates the “Constitution” for His Kingdom. While He doesn't go through it word for word, He gives enough here to “reorient” people to what He originally gave on the Other Mount.

Verses 1 – 5 (From the Complete Jewish Bible by David Stern unless noted.)

“Don't judge, so that you won't be judged. For the way you judge others is how you will be judged – the measure with which you measure out will be used to measure to you. Why do you see the splinter in your brother's eye but not notice the log in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the splinter out of your eye,' when you have the log in your own eye? You hypocrite! First, take the log out of your own eye; then you will see clearly, so that you can remove the splinter from your brother's eye!”

Many people use the first verse as a shield for any behavior they want to indulge in. But, “Don't judge” does not mean for us to refrain from trying to decide what is right and what is wrong, nor does it mean that we can't pass sentence if the situation requires it. In a few more verses He will tell us to beware of false prophets, which obviously requires “judgment” in the form of “discernment.” See what He says in Yochanan (John) 7:24: “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”

The motivation of the disciple (reader), the immediate context, and the extended context (other scripture) will help determine the proper meaning of a particular word. So, another meaning for the word judge, here, is “condemn.” Luke 6:37,38 records this teaching of Yeshua's a little differently:

“Do not judge and you will not be judged. Do not condemn and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and it will be given to you. They will cast into your lap in good and pressed down and abundant measure, for the measure with which you measure, it will be measured to you.” (From the

Hebraic Roots version New Testament by James Trimm, translated from the Aramaic.)

This statement seems to connect with Mat. 5:43-48 concerning loving our brothers. Given that coming up in verse 12 we get the "Golden Rule" too, I think this is reasonable. Yeshua started the thought at the end of chapter five, goes on to define a hypocrite in chapter six when he talks about "acts of righteousness," and now combines both ideas together. The hypocrite doesn't pay attention to his own "sin" (perhaps he is "blind" to it, pun intended, since he has a log in his eye), but is sharply aware of the smallest transgression on the part of others. Note that after the sin is removed from the eye a person can help others. This could imply that we need to get ourselves right with God, but after that we are capable of helping others.

Verse 6

Don't give to dogs what is holy, and don't throw your pearls to the pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, then turn and attack you.

This could connect with the thoughts presented in the previous verses on removing logs, but I think it is connected with the next verses on asking and receiving. It just means we should be careful of whom we deal with. Some Jews considered Gentiles to be dogs, but I don't think Yeshua would have used this term to describe other people, except perhaps as a description of internal character, in which case it would apply to any one who acted in this fashion (you shall know them by their fruits). Still, it's an odd verse, and I don't really know exactly what to do with it. I have a feeling there is more here than meets the eye, because of the placement between sections.

Verses 7 - 11

Keep asking, and it will be given to you; keep seeking, and you will find; keep knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who keeps asking receives; he who keeps seeking finds; and to him who keeps knocking, the door will be opened. Is there anyone here who, if his son asks him for a loaf of bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? So if you, even though you are bad, know how to give your children gifts that are good, how much more will your Father in heaven keep giving good things to those who keep asking him!

Persistence is the hallmark of the disciple (see next verses on the narrow gate and hard road), but the emphasis here is on the character of God because He gives good things to His persistent disciples. It is a cooperative effort between both parties. I suppose it might also be connected with verse 6, in that God does not treat us like dogs or pigs, but rather sons and daughters. Yeshua frames these statements in the classic style (He invented) called *kal v' chomer*, which means, "light and heavy," using the words "how much more." The idea is that if we, who are bad, know how to treat our children (light),

how much better (heavy) will YHVH, who is good, give to His children! Of course the Father is Good, and how marvelous and wonderful that He gives good gifts to us who don't deserve them!

Verse 12

Always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that sums up the teaching of the Torah and the Prophets.

Even people who don't know the Bible very well or don't claim Yeshua as their king know that this is called the Golden Rule. What many of those people do not know is that this is a repeat of teachings already presented in the Law in such places as Vayikra (Lev.) 19:18 & 34:

18 *"Don't take vengeance on or bear a grudge against any of your people: rather, love your neighbor as yourself; I am ADONAI."* 34 *"Rather, treat the foreigner staying with you like the native-born among you—you are to love him as yourself, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt; I am ADONAI your God."*

There was a teaching made similar to this, except stated negatively, by a rabbi called Hillel in the generation before Yeshua. Another rabbi called Shammai, who sometimes disagreed with Hillel, tells the story.

"A pagan came before Shammai and said to him, 'Make me a proselyte, but on condition that you teach me the entire Torah while I am standing on one foot!' Shammai drove him off with the builder's measuring rod, which he had in his hand. When he appeared before Hillel, the latter told him, 'What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. That is the whole Torah. The rest is commentary. Go and learn it!'" (Talmud, Shabbat 31a, quoted by David Stern in the Jewish New Testament Commentary, page 33.)

Although Yeshua is the essence of originality (and from Him all good things flow), many of His teachings are not so much original as they are selective. He seems to delight in picking and choosing from the many interpretations and meanings in existence and selecting those that are in agreement with His original teachings and the character of His Father. In some ways it's as if He is saying, "That's it!" to students or disciples who most correctly understood what the Teacher was saying, in many cases even before He was incarnated. Even though Hillel stated the point in the negative, I think Yeshua picks up the idea, says "Good work," and just tweaks it a little, like a caring teacher will who wants to encourage more participation in class.

The negative might seem to be better (don't do to others what you don't want done to you), because sometimes we don't treat ourselves right either. But I think Yeshua hits the proverbial nail on the head (gee, really?) by comparing our behavior to the Father's, and making Him the standard (emphasized in the following verses). In other words our

Father gives to us what is good and right and holy, without regard to repayment or benefit to Himself, and we should do the same.

Verses 13 – 14

“Go in through the narrow gate; for the gate that leads to destruction is wide and the road broad, and many travel it; but it is a narrow gate and a hard road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”

This is a sobering warning from the King of Creation, who knows the end from the beginning and the hearts of men. The work of humbling ourselves and following Him is difficult and takes great perseverance. Sadly, only a few choose this road and judging from the condition of the world not many more want to.

Verses 15 – 20

“Beware of the false prophets! They come to you wearing sheep’s clothing, but underneath they are hungry wolves! You will recognize them by their fruit. Can people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every healthy tree produces good fruit, but a poor tree produces bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, or a poor tree good fruit. Any tree that does not produce good fruit is cut down and thrown in the fire! So you will recognize them by their fruit.”

Several people have called me a false prophet. Unfortunately, it was not because of my fuzzy clothing, sharp teeth, or my fruit, so they could not use this term legitimately. If my accusers had stuck with the Word, they would have longed for me to see the light rather than hoping for quick condemnation. They could've started with something like Yesha'yahu (Isaiah) 8:20:

“To the Torah and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word they have no dawn.”

But the only problem was I was speaking directly from the Torah and they didn't want to hear it. In judging fruit it seems plain that we need to exercise discernment and compare what the false prophet says to the Word. And according to Yesha'yahu 8:20 and similar scriptures we should use the Law also. Yeshua is also to be judged according to the Word and The Law, and I think He is inviting the comparison. The Messiah had to speak like Moshe (Moses) according to D'varim (Deut.) 18:18,19

“I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their kinsmen. I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I order him. Whoever doesn't listen to my words, which he will speak in my name, will have to account for himself to me.”

He had to speak according to the Law and the Prophets or He could not be the Messiah. This is reinforced by verse 23 in the next section, where the word "lawlessness" is

translated from the Greek word *anomia*, which means literally "no Torah." It's amazing, isn't it, that many translators of the New Testament translate the Greek word *nomos* as "Law" in a negative sense everywhere they can - regardless of context, but when a word like "no Torah" comes around it gets translated "iniquity." What a coincidence.

Verses 21 – 23

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, only those who do what my Father in heaven wants. On that Day, many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord!’ Didn’t we prophesy in your name? Didn’t we expel demons in your name? Didn’t we perform many miracles in your name?’ Then I will tell them to their faces, ‘I never knew you! Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness!’”

Kurios is the Greek word for "Lord" here, and can mean anyone in authority. "On that Day" is the day when the books are opened and the dead are judged. "Knew" is from the Hebrew word "*yadah*," to know intimately, used also of the physical intimacy of marriage. It is this type of intense intimacy that Yeshua wants in His followers; indeed, it is the only type of relationship that counts with Him. "Lawlessness" means "no Torah." Literally, this means producing works apart from the Word of YHVH, as embodied in His Torah. So He is saying, in essence, that "doing what the Father wants" is the opposite of "producing works apart from the Law."

In my opinion there is no stronger statement anywhere in the Bible concerning the requirement for "doing" what the Father wants, and Yeshua relates doing what the Father wants directly with "knowing intimately." We cannot claim to know the Father without doing what He wants. Even "beating up" on demons, and all the miracles performed by anyone will not suffice to substitute for doing what the Father wants. Remember that at this point the New Testament as such had not been written. The "doing" that Yeshua is referring to was already revealed in the Torah, but it was not being performed.

Verses 24 – 27

“So, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a sensible man who built his house on bedrock. The rain fell, the rivers flooded, the winds blew and beat against that house, but it didn’t collapse, because its foundation was on rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a stupid man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, the rivers flooded, the wind blew and beat against that house, and it collapsed – and its collapse was horrendous!”

Yeshua punctuates His teaching here by saying "words of mine." His teaching is not His own, but comes from the Father, and yet He claims the Words as His own. Could this be a direct reference to His deity? He also says that the preferred course of action (building on rock) comes from "hearing and doing." Both of these must be done in concert in order

to build on the proper foundation. Hearing only is not enough. Doing without understanding is not enough either, although doing can lead to understanding, just like hearing can lead to doing.

How do we know if we are building on rock? Well, Yeshua says that if your house is not on the rock, it collapses. So if you are sitting (or have sat) in a pile of rubble from a collapsed house, then you did not build on rock. If your structure shakes in a light breeze, if you are fearful, anxious, worried, scared, or otherwise “shaking,” then it’s time for a foundation check. And you’d better make it quick because there is a whole lot more than a light breeze headed this way if current events are any indicator.

This is one of the reasons why I think the Law was never “eliminated” as popular teachings suggest. It was never, ever, intended as a method of salvation – it was always intended for sanctification. Paul says in Romans 10:4 that Yeshua is the “end” of the Law for righteousness,” meaning the goal. And in the following verses (Rom. 10:8,9) Paul says:

But what does it say? “THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, in your mouth and in your heart”— that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

Romans 10:8,9 are quoting Deut. 30:11-14:

“...if you obey the LORD your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and soul. For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?’ Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?’ But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it.”

To me, the meaning is obvious. Paul says in Romans 10:8 that the “Word that we are (he is) preaching” is the “Word of faith” which is the same Word taught by Moshe in the Law (D’varim (Deut.) 30:14) and is directly quoted by Paul in Romans 10. This also means that Moshe taught the same Word of Faith as Paul – see? Compare Rom. 10:9 and D’varim 30:14 very carefully. If we “do” His Word, in whatever fashion is available, then it contributes to our learning, our growth, our maturity, and leads us on to the Messiah. The Law is a beautiful way to learn and grow, a discipleship program designed to perfection by Yeshua Himself, to help lead us to Him. It’s simple logic. YHVH “saved” Israel by faith (do you really think that animal blood on the doorposts and lintel saved anybody?), THEN gave them His Ways to walk in and be a light to the World.

Some may say that Romans 14 puts the Law on the sidelines, but they are “abolishing” or “destroying” the meaning of the text through misinterpretation. First, Romans 14 doesn’t refer to the Law at all, but to the interpretations made of the Law by men otherwise known as “doctrines of men.” In 14:1 it clearly states that Paul is referring to “opinions,” not the Law. What follows is a discussion of things that are not even a part of the written Law but opinions about the Law. In verse 5 the word “alike” is not in the Greek. In verse 10 Paul is clearly referring to “judgment” equaling “contempt” (we should not show contempt for our brother, although the people who quote this don’t practice what they preach). And in verse 14 he says “nothing is unclean in itself” which means “nothing can render a person unfit to go into the Temple” but does NOT mean “anything you stick in your mouth is okay.” Verse 23 wraps up by saying that obedience has to be from faith, which is what he is establishing in chapter 10.

If we humble ourselves and submit to His Word, by the Grace of YHVH through faith we can “pursue righteousness.” The heart that “trembles” at His Word (Torah) is the person of which the Kingdom is made.

Verses 28 – 29

When Yeshua had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at the way he taught, for he was not instructing them like their Torah-teachers but as one who had authority himself.

The first level of amazement was that Yeshua was not teaching like a scribe. Modern scholars believe that the scribes were teachers of the Law without a *s’ mikhah* (ordination) and did not have the ability to render legal judgments or new interpretations. This is a possible reason the crowds were amazed at His authority. In Mattityahu 21:23 the question is asked about His authority, in essence, “who laid hands on you” (*s’ mikhah*) or “who ordained you” so we can question him also (and get really upset with him too). The *s’ mikhah* goes back to Moshe and the ordination of the 70 elders (Bamidbar (Num.) 11:16-17, 24,25; 27:18-23). A panel of three elders ordained a rabbi, at least one of who had been also been properly ordained.

The second level of amazement was that He taught as one having authority in Himself. No rabbi taught against the *halacha* (literally “walk,” meaning interpretations of the Law to help one “walk” in the Way of YHVH) of the rabbi who had taught him. Yeshua was teaching without referring to a particular rabbi who was His teacher, but in Yochanan (John) 12:44-50 He tells us that He got His authority directly from the Father. In any event, there is no doubt in my mind that as King Yeshua was laying down the framework for citizenship in the Kingdom, as Prophet He was forth-telling the Word, and as Priest He is helping here to build a relationship with the Father.

Always with more to say,
Bruce