

ONE TORAH FOR ALL

Zerubbabel ben Emunah
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Rumors about Shaul

Ma'aseh (Acts) 21:21

"...and they have been informed concerning you, that you teach all the Jews who are among the gentiles to forsake Moshe, telling them not to circumcise their children neither to walk according to the customs."

Back in the first century there were rumors about Shaul (Paul) that said he was teaching against Torah. The rumors said he was teaching others they did not have to obey the Torah commandments YHWH gave to Moshe, including the commandment to circumcise one's sons. When Shaul made a trip to Jerusalem, this rumor had preceded him there. When He met with Ya'aqov (James) and the other leaders of the assembly at Jerusalem, they confronted him about these rumors.

Ma'aseh (Acts) 21:19

And when he had saluted them, he related one by one the things which Elohim had done among the gentiles through his ministry.

Shaul gave Ya'aqov and the other leaders at Jerusalem a full accounting of what he was teaching and doing as he traveled. After he finished relating all these things to the apostles, they rejoiced. They rejoiced because they knew the rumors about Shaul were false and that Shaul was teaching Mashiach on the foundation of Torah. Shaul was teaching what the other apostles were teaching.

Ma'aseh (Acts) 21:20

And they, when they heard it, glorified Elohim; and they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of them that have believed; and they are all zealous for the Torah;

Please note that after hearing Shaul's account, they responded with praising YHWH and calling Shaul "brother". Neither of these things are small things. Furthermore, they then suggested a plan to prove to everyone the rumors were false. He was to go with four other men who were

completing a vow, which was most likely a nazirite vow, and to pay their expenses and complete the vow with them. Now, to pay for these expenses in our day would have been equivalent to tens of thousands of dollars. It was no small thing!

The biggest problem with all this, is that while this was a very good plan, it did not totally succeed in dispelling the rumors. These rumors are still around today. There are those today who would love to rip out of Scripture all of Shaul's writings, simply because they have not taken the time to understand them from a historical Hebraic point of view. Shaul was completely Torah observant and taught others to be the same way. This was the conclusion of the apostles at Jerusalem.

The leaders of the assembly at Jerusalem personally examined Shaul and exonerated him. Yet, there are those who are so bent on destroying Shaul and the work YHWH has done through Him, that they refuse to accept the plain testimony of Scripture. The plain truth of the matter is, that when a person decides to toss Shaul out of Scripture, they actually also have to toss out Luke, the author of the book of Acts, as well as Ya'aqov, the leader of the council at Jerusalem and author of the book of James. If one tosses one out, the rest begin to fall like dominoes and before one knows it, he has tossed Mashiach aside because he has not taken the time to thoroughly examine these matters from a historical Hebraic mindset.

With these things in mind, let us examine a couple additional points about Shaul besides the fact that the council at Jerusalem acquitted him concerning these matters of teaching against the Torah Moshe. That point alone should be enough to dispel any and all false rumors that still persist today. Please consider this question. Have those today who are attacking Shaul personally examined Shaul in the same manner as the leaders at Jerusalem did in the first century? Of course not! Such a thing is not possible to do as Shaul is long dead. The truth is, these people refuse to believe the testimony of Scripture that the leaders at Jerusalem cleared Shaul! However, let us add some additional weight to this testimony to show Shaul was supported by the other apostles. First, let us see what Kepha has to say about Shaul.

Kepha Bet (2nd Peter) 3:15

And account that the longsuffering of Adonenu is salvation; even as our beloved brother Shaul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you;

It is hardly imaginable that Kepha would have said anything nice or supportive of Shaul if Shaul would have been teaching others not to obey Torah, particularly considering that Kepha just a few verses before speaking words of support for Shaul, is railing against those who are mockers and ungodly men. If Shaul would have been such a person as this then Kepha would surely have used his name as an example of those who mock and live in an unrighteous manner and teach others to do the same. He did not do that, but rather just the opposite. Kepha called Shaul a brother in the faith.

Kepha Bet (2nd Peter) 3:16

as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unstable twist, as they do also the other scriptures, to their own destruction.

Kepha tells us that even back in the first century there were those who twisted the writings of Shaul. If they were doing it back then, why is it so surprising that it is still being done today? There were those who did not want to submit to the authority of Scripture then or now. So, in order to justify the unrighteous lives they live, they attempt to discredit Scripture in some way.

Please note that Kepha also states they also twist “other Scripture”. This tells us at least two things. First, the twisting of Shaul’s writings was not a unique characteristic of these people as they also twisted all the other Scripture as well. Furthermore, the fact that Kepha uses the term “other” to describe the Scriptures indicates to us that he was referring to the writings of Shaul as Scripture as well. Otherwise, he would not have used this word to describe the Scriptures.

Kepha admits that even in the first century, the writings of Shaul can be difficult to understand. If it was true then, then this should be a very strong word of caution for us today, to handle these writings with the greatest of care, searching diligently for the intended meaning of the writer; which we know to be from a Hebraic point of view in which Shaul was teaching others to keep Torah.

There are those who attempt to twist these passages of Scripture, but they do so to their own destruction. They attempt to twist the meaning of these passages into something that the plain meaning of Kepha’s words do not mean. Kepha wrote in support of Shaul, but also wrote a word of warning. We can certainly understand this warning, as people are still twisting Shaul’s words. However, the main point of what Kepha wrote was that Shaul was a brother in the faith of following Mashiach Yeshua and teaching others to keep Torah.

Some of those who have taken to attacking Shaul are not really attacking Shaul, but rather attacking the twisted interpretation of his writings. That is they don’t really have a problem with Torah or teaching Torah, nor do they have a problem with those who teach Torah. However, many over the centuries even in our own time, twist the words of Shaul to say things that he never intended for them to say. This is really what these people are attacking but not realizing it. Instead of attacking Shaul, they need to attack those who twist his writings and leave Shaul alone.

There is one last point that needs to be brought into consideration of this matter. It is the purpose of Scripture, which is at least three-fold. Scripture is the story of Mashiach and its purpose is to teach us about Him. Scripture is also given to us to teach us to hear His Voice that we might choose to obey Him. Then, lastly Scripture is one of YHWH’s winnowing tools to see if one is willing to obey Him in all matters and to separate those who love Him from those who would rather do their own thing.

It is upon this last point that we need to elaborate. Much of what Shaul wrote (because as Kepha pointed out, much of what he wrote is difficult to understand) falls into the third category of the purpose of Scripture. The writings of Shaul are often the deciding factor in whether a person will walk in loving obedience to Mashiach and Torah or not.

Matithyah (Matthew) 3:12

“Whose winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly cleanse His threshing-floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but the chaff He will burn up with unquenchable fire.”

The language of this passage is highly symbolic. However, one often does not go deeply enough in his search to discover the depth of the message being presented. Sure, we see that those who follow Mashiach Yeshua are likened to the wheat and that those who do not follow Mashiach Yeshua are likened to the chaff which shall be burned up. But for what is the winnowing fork a symbol? In order to understand what the winnowing fork is, first we must understand what it is doing. In this case, the winnowing fork is separating the wheat from the chaff; which is symbolic for separating the followers of Mashiach Yeshua from those who do not follow Him.

Ivrim (Hebrews) 4:12

For the word of Elohim is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.

It is the word of Elohim, what we today call the Scriptures, that determines right and wrong. It is so discerning that it can pierce the depths of a person's heart as well as his thoughts, and rightly judge his motives. It is the written word which ultimately determines who is a true follower of Mashiach Yeshua and who is not.

Ephesians 6:17b

And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of Elohim.

In the symbolic language of Scripture then, the symbol of a winnowing fork pictures the same thing as a sword, but with a slightly different emphasis. A sword separates by cutting, whereas a winnowing fork separates the wheat from the chaff through the use of wind. Remember that in Hebrew the word for “Spirit” and the word for “wind” is the same word – רוּחַ “ruach”.

Many more minor points could be made in support of Shaul as a teacher of Torah. We have chosen to look at only these three main points in order to keep the issue of whether Shaul was a teacher of Torah or not simple. In reality, there is really only one point those who attack Shaul cannot get past and until they do, all their arguments are void. That point is that the leaders of the council at Jerusalem found Shaul innocent of teaching against Torah. These leaders examined Shaul in person, something that those attacking Shaul today have not done.

Brothers and sisters, this is a very big point and it is one that should not and cannot be dismissed.

Furthermore, Kepha actually testifies that Shaul was considered a brother in the faith. Now we know there are those who attempt to twist the words of Kepha to mean otherwise, but they are doing exactly what Kepha warns us about: those who twist the words of Shaul as well as other Scripture. So it is not surprising there are those who not only twist the words of Shaul, but that the very testimony of Kepha calling Shaul a brother is twisted to mean something else.

Yeshayah (Isaiah) 5:20

Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil

Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness

Who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

Those who attempt to twist Shaul's words to try to prove he taught against Torah and those who attempt to twist Kepha's words to show he did not call Shaul a brother when, in fact, he did, are doing exactly what YHWH warned us about through the prophet Yeshayah! Beware, brothers and sisters, that you do not fall victim to these unprincipled men!

ABBA YHWH, open the eyes of those who belong to You, that we may see Your truth in this matter; in the name of Mashiach Yeshua. Amein.

Shabbat Shalom

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