

Subject: israel lost sheep who are among the Gentiles

The word gentile is Strongs # 1484= a single race! the lost sheep scattered abroad.

Luk 2:32 A light^{G5457} to G1519 lighten^{G602} the gentiles, ^{G1484} and ^{G2532} the glory^{G1391} of thy ^{G4675} people^{G2992} Israel. ^{G2474}

After Yahwehshua has equipped His disciples with authority, He sends them out and charges them:

"Go **nowhere** among the **Gentiles**, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matthew 10:5,6)¹

Here Yahwehshua clearly distinguishes the house of Israel from the Gentiles and the Samaritans.² His disciples are to confine their mission to the physical descendants of their forefathers. Perhaps it is not co-incidental that their number is twelve, representing the twelve tribes of Israel.

Similarly Yahwehshua limits His own apostolate to the house of Israel. To a Canaanite woman, seeking help for her daughter, he says:

"I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matthew 15:24)

This verbal response of preceded by silence on His part and then the request of His disciples that Yahwehshuasus send her away. There follows His second verbal response to her second plea, a response which can be interpreted only as a harsh rejection:

"It is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." (Matthew 15:26)³

Further support to this limitation upon Yahwehshuas' ministry is indicated in the following passages which deal respectively with a sick hebrew woman and a despised tax-collector, who mends his ways after meeting yahwehshua

"And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" (Luke 13:16)

"Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:9,10)

yahwehshua helps them, for they belong to the house of Israel.

Like the first three Gospel accounts, the Gospel according to St. John tends towards the same limitation. Though yahwehshua and His disciples encounter Samaritans and stay with them for about two days (John 4:1-42), this event is unusual in yahwehshua's ministry. Only prior to His Passion and the conclusion of His ministry on earth does He meet Greeks; He informs them only that the seed must first die before it can bear fruit, an obvious reference to His death (John 12:20-26). Even Paul mentions "that Christ became a servant to the circumcised" (Romans 15:8). He says nothing about a ministry of yahwehshua among the Gentiles.

Topographical studies likewise provide no evidence that yahwehshua's ever went beyond the boundaries of the hebrew population.⁴

To speak of this limitation upon yahwehshua's ministry is one thing. To give a reason for it is another. As is often the case with the person, words and works of yahwehshua, here also our understanding of this limitation upon His ministry is governed by patterns deeply and beautifully engraved in the Old Testament. To search the Old Testament for such patterns is not an arbitrary procedure; it is to follow the example of yahwehshua, who constantly points to the Old Testament for an understanding of Him and His ways because the Old Testament always points to Him. (Luke 24:25-27; John 5:39,46)

Thus it is not co-incidental that yahwehshua views Himself as the shepherd of the lost sheep of Israel. Through the prophet Ezekiel God had declared:

"I myself will tend my flock, I myself will pen them in their fold, says the Lord God. I will search for the lost, recover the straggler, bandage the hurt, strengthen the sick, leave the healthy and strong to play, and give them their proper food.... I, the Lord, will become their God, and my servant David shall be a prince among them." (Ezekiel 34:15,16,24, New English Bible translation)

Matthew, in summarizing the ministry of yahwehshua, says:

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. (Matthew 9:36; cf. Luke 19:9,10, already quoted above)

The New Testament understands yahwehshua, as a descendant of David, to be the David of Ezekiel's prophecy. As shepherd He is king. The New Testament term "Son of David" means the Messiah."⁵

What then was yahwehshua's attitude towards the Gentiles and the Samaritans? Occasional references of yahwehshua to them reveal the distinction which yahwehshua made between them and the Children of Israel. While they may sound disparaging, they are more accommodating to the views of Jewish hearers than disparaging of Samaritans and Gentiles. Thus He says to His Jewish hearers:

"And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?" (Matthew 5:47)

"And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words." (Matthew 6:7)⁶

After yahwehshua healed ten lepers, only one, a Samaritan, returned to thank God. To which yahwehshua says:

"Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" (Luke 17:18)⁷

The Samaritans considered Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to be their forefathers and religious leaders. They also acknowledged Moses to be God's prophet, the Torah to be God's Holy Book, and awaited the coming of the Messiah.

At the time of yahwehshua, however, the Jews did not consider the Samaritans to be among the true Children of Israel because they had become mixed with foreigners. Open hostility existed between Jews and Samaritans, nourished by several centuries of differences. The Jew, John Hyrcanus, destroyed the Samaritan temple on Mt. Gerazim in 128 B.C. About 8 A.D. some Samaritans desecrated the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. John summarized the situation well: "For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans" (John 4:9). Did the Jews even equate Samaritans with demons? (John 8:48)

At the time of yahwehshua the Jews were ruled by the Romans. Generally they abhorred the Romans and other Gentiles as idolaters, as rejected by yahweh, wicked and unclean. Despite earlier Judaistic tendencies to include Gentiles in the final glory of Israel, later Judaism awaited the vengeance of yahweh upon the Romans in particular, the Gentiles in general.

However, yahwehshua sharply separates Himself from His fellow Jews who despise both Samaritans and Gentiles. He rejects any hatred of one nation for another nation; nor does He allow vengeance by one nation against another. Vengeance is the prerogative of God (Luke 18:7; Romans 12:19). Moreover, as the New Testament accounts frequently show, He wants no part in establishing a kingdom of Israel according to Jewish expectation; He is concerned with establishing the kingdom of God. He seeks to free from Satan, not Rome.

In the light of Jewish relations with Gentiles and Samaritans a series of yahwehshua's words and acts become intelligible and meaningful. In the account of the Good Samaritan the Samaritan, not the Jewish priest or the Levite, demonstrates the true meaning and practice of love for the neighbour, i.e., if the Jews wish to know the meaning of love for the neighbour, their Samaritan enemy offers them a good example (Luke 10:29-37). yahwehshua rebukes His own disciples who seek revenge against those Samaritans who refused to welcome them in their village (Luke 9:55). He wonders why only one of the ten lepers, now healed, fails to give Him thanks; to which Luke adds, laconically: "Now he was a Samaritan" (Luke 17:16), i.e., and they supposed not a child of the Kingdom but an outsider gives thanks. As noted below, He praises the faith of two Gentiles, lost sheep whose faith, he suggests, the Jews should emulate.

Neither hate nor vengeance but repentance: This is what yahwehshua wants the Jews to practise. When yahwehshua is told that Pilate (the Gentile ruler) has massacred some Galileans (Jews), He tells His reporters to repent in order that they may avoid a similar fate. Both the prophet John the Baptist and yahwehshua reject any Jewish claim to be superior or to be in possession of an inherent merit or worthiness by virtue of being Jewish; they simply summon the Jews to repentance (Matthew 3:2; 4:11). John's crushing statement:

"Do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (Matthew 3:9),

is echoed by yahwehshua' words of judgement upon those Jews who, despite yahwehshua many works among them, remain unrepentant:

"The men of Nineveh will arise at the judgement with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will arise at the judgement with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here." (Matthew 12:41,42; cf. Matthew 11:21-24; 10:15)

By rejecting hatred and revenge, by citing good actions of some Samaritans and Gentiles and by summoning the Jews to repentance and love, yahwehshua incurred the wrath of many of His countrymen. Along this same pattern He once reminded His countrymen in His own town of Nazareth of two Old Testament incidents: During a famine in Israel the prophet Elijah aided not the widows of Israel but a widow at Zarephath (a Gentile); a little later the prophet Elisha helped not the lepers of Israel but the leper Naaman (a Gentile). Hearing these incidents, yahwehshua own countrymen became furious with Him. (Luke 4:25-28)

Our point here, however, is not the furious response. Rather, it is to recall that God directed both of these prophets, great prophets of God to the Children of Israel, to help individual Gentiles. Do not these prophets supply an Old Testament precedent for yahwehshua action among a few individual Samaritans and Gentiles?

One of these actions concerned the Canaanite woman, to whom, as already noted, yahwehshuahad said: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Let us cite the whole incident to put both the words of yahwehshua and His action in proper perspective, since at least some Muslims have chosen to quote only these words but to ignore their context:

And yahwehshua went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman from the region came out and cried, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely possessed by a demon." But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." And he answered, "It is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." Then yahwehshua answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly. (Matthew 15:21-28)

In addition we cite the passage regarding yahwehshua and the Roman centurion:

As he entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, beseeching him and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, in terrible distress." And he said to him, "I will come and heal him." But the centurion answered him, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it." When yahwehshua heard him, he marveled, and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith."
(Matthew 8:5-10)

While reiterating our agreement with Muslims that yahwehshua said that He was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, we note also that 1. yahwehshua healed both Gentiles in need of healing; 2. Both the centurion and the woman realized their unworthiness before yahwehshua. What is explicit in the account of the Canaanite woman is implicit in the account about the centurion: yahwehshua's ministry is to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Both were fully aware that they did not belong to the house of Israel and that yahwehshua had the right to reject their requests;⁸ 3. Both demonstrate a faith which was unparalleled among the Children of Israel. It is this kind of faith that yahwehshua looked for and which He honored. Such a faith always receives what it wants, for it wants God's will (John 15:7, 1 John 5:19);⁹ 4. yahwehshua told neither of them to follow Him.

Should we be surprised that yahwehshua followed the precedents of Elijah and Elisha in helping Gentiles, especially Gentiles of such faith? By abiding by His practice that He was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, should He have ignored their pleas? It does seem possible that these exceptions proved His rule of limiting His ministry to the house of Israel.¹⁰

Further we should note yahwehshua additional words to His disciples after He has instructed them to "go nowhere among the Gentiles, and ... the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel":

"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men; for they will deliver you up to councils, and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear testimony before them and the Gentiles." (Matthew 10:16-18)

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