

THE ROOT OF PACIFISM IN THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES

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David taught us to love our enemies and pray for them. “For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause. For my love they are my adversaries: but I give myself unto prayer. And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love” (Ps. 109:2).

David taught us not to be angry. “Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret, it leads only to evil. For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land. A little while, and the wicked will be no more; although you look for them, they will not be found. But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace” (Ps. 37:8).

David said that Yahveh hates those who love violence. “The LORD examines the righteous, but the wicked and those who love violence his soul hates” (Ps. 11:5).

David said that Yahveh will destroy war and save the meek. “In Judah is Yahveh known: his name is great in Israel. In Shalom also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion. There he broke the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle. Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey. The stouthearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep: and none of the men of might have found their hands. At thy rebuke, O Elohad of Yacov, both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep. Thou, even thou, art to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry? Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared, and was still, when Yahveh arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth” (Ps.76:1-9).

David learned that vengeance belongs to Yahveh. “O Elohad Yahveh, to whom vengeance belongeth; O Yahveh, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself” (Ps. 94:1).

David saw that it is the bloodthirsty who pervert Yahveh’s message. “Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O Yahveh: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men. For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. Away from me, you bloodthirsty men!” (Ps. 139:19, NIV).

David learned to continually pray for his enemies and to mourn when their leaders fall. “I am praying continually for them in their misfortune; my prayer also shall be in their calamities. When their judges are overthrown in stony places, they shall hear my words; for they are sweet” (Ps. 141:5, 6).

Perhaps David repented and longed to return to the right path for he wrote: “Too long have I lived among those who hate peace. I am a man of peace; but when I speak, they are for war” (Ps. 120:6). “Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it” (Ps. 34:14).

I say “perhaps” David repented and learned to live in peace, love, and non-violence for on his deathbed he ordered the death of a man who had cursed him once. Therefore, in his final deed, he did not practice what he preached.

Messiah: The Warrior King

Yahveh planted the Israelites at the crossroads of the world to be a cradle nation for the Messiah’s birth. Part of the Messiah’s role was to restore the religion of Abraham, and in my opinion, especially to restore the concept of Yahveh’s call to non-violence. A few leaders and prophets appeared from time to time to set things straight. The prophets kept reminding the people that Yahveh was the only warrior, and they prophesied that a Messiah was coming who would be the embodiment of the Warrior King. The Messiah would break the yoke of the oppressors, and set his people free. He would set up a kingdom of holy priests who would reign in *holiness*, power, and prosperity.

According to the prophet Isaiah, he would be the one to end all wars (Is. 2:4). He would be a conquering king whose sword would be his words (Is. 49:2). He would heal us by his suffering (Is. 53:5); he would take away our sins by his death (Is. 53:12). He would mount the throne of David and be our conquering king forever: “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom to order it, and to establish it with justice from henceforth forever” (Is. 9:7). His name will be “wonderful, counselor...*the prince of peace*” (Is. 9:6). At Yeshuah’s birth, angels appeared proclaiming “*peace on earth and good will to men*” (Luke 2:14).

In the Appendix I have listed 53 New Testament Scriptures commanding Christians to live lives of non-violence and pacifism.

Yeshuah said:

- “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye therefore as wise as serpents, and as harmless as doves” (Matt. 10:16).
- “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God” (Matt. 5:9).
- “Resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matt. 5:39).

- “I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use and persecute you, that you may be children of your father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:44-45).
- Upon his arrest, Jesus told Peter, “Put up thy sword. All who take the sword will perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my father, and he will presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matt. 26:52-53).

The Early Christian Writers

130 A.D. Justin Martyr said: “Before becoming Christians many of us were warlike, but we have changed our warlike weapons, beating our swords into plough shares and our spears into implements of tillage.”

155 A.D. Polycarp called the Philippians to obey the word of Peter: “Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, or blow for blow, or cursing for cursing.”

174 A.D. Tertullian issued a loud and bitter cry against the participation of certain Christians in military service. He said: “Shall it be held lawful to make an occupation (in the army), when the Lord proclaims that he who uses the sword shall perish by the sword? And shall the son of peace take part in the battle, when it does not become him to even sue in a law court? On the contrary, if a soldier gets converted, he must abandon the military immediately.”

180 A.D. Athenogaras reported: “We have learned not only not to return blow for blow, and not to go to law with those who plunder and rob us, but to those who smite us on the one side of the face, to offer the other side also, and to those who take away our coat, to give likewise our cloak.”

200 A.D. The Apostle’s Regulations say that donations are not to be accepted from evildoers such as “actors, dishonest merchants, (and) soldiers.”

215 A.D. Clement of Alexandria said: “Above all Christians are not allowed to correct by violence, sinful wrong doing...For it is not in war but in peace that we are trained.”

253 A.D. Origen of Alexandria said: “We no longer take up swords against nations, nor do we learn war anymore, but are become children of peace.”

258 A.D. Cyprian said bitterly, “If murder is committed privately, it is a crime, but if it happens with state authority, courage is the name for it.” He also said, “The guiltless are not permitted even to put the guilty to death.”

295 A.D. A man named Maximilian was executed for refusing to serve in the Roman Army. He said, “I cannot serve for I am a Christian.”

300 A.D. Lactantius of Bithynia said: “It is not lawful for a just man to engage in warfare.” He described Christians as “those who are ignorant of wars, who preserve peace with all, who love all men as brothers.”

300 A.D. The Apostolic Order said, “Converts must give up sorcery, palmistry, and soldiering.”

310 A.D. Finally, Arnobius said that “Non-resistance had been the position of Christians from the beginning of the Church.”

Some Final Thoughts

So here we are with a toe into the 21st century. We have Israeli Jihadists who feel Yahveh is asking them to purge Israel of all non-Jews, and expand her boundaries from the Egyptian Nile to the Euphrates. We have Christian Jihadists who are ready to join any crusade, anywhere, whenever one can be established as having Yahveh’s blessing. And we have Islamic Jihadists who feel it is Yahveh’s will to conquer the whole world and submit everyone to Islam, or the sword.

Where there is smoke there is fire. With our scientists feverishly producing bigger and more fiendish weapons, and with the oil-rich Muslim nations purchasing these weapons in a mad rush, I mournfully and solemnly predict that as we enter this next century we will see the planet wracked, cracked, scorched, poisoned, polluted, burned, scathed, seared, scared, nuked, and inundated with larger and more deadly wars.

So What Should We Do?

Four things:

1. Seek Yahveh with all your heart.
2. Love Yahveh with all your heart, and soul, and mind, and strength.
3. Follow Yehshuah’s Gospel that calls us to love all people, including our enemies, and do violence to no one.
4. Stand still and see the salvation of Yahveh.

Appendix

53 New Testament Scriptures Calling Christians to Live in Peace and Love and Non-violence

1. “Resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matthew 5:39).
2. Remind the Christians “to speak evil of no man, to be peaceable, gentle, showing meekness to all men” (Titus 3:2).
3. “Follow peace with all men and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14).
4. “The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves” (2 Timothy 2:24-25).
5. “Do all things without murmuring and disputing, that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation” (Philippians 2:14, 15).

6. Jesus came “to guide our feet into the way of peace” (Luke 1:79).
7. Whatever you do to another it is as though you were doing it to Jesus, for he said, “In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brothers, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40).
8. “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother” (1 John 3:10).
9. “He that doeth good is of God, but he that doeth evil hath not seen God” (3 John 11).
10. “He that kills with the sword must be killed with the sword” (Revelation 13:10).
11. Forgive “one another if any man has a quarrel with any” (Colossians 3:13).
12. If anyone steals from you “take it joyfully” (Hebrews 10:34).
13. Even if you are unjustly enslaved or imprisoned, do not resist but seek to convert your jailers as St. Paul did.
14. “Be diligent that you may be found in peace” (2 Peter 3:14).
15. Doesn’t the Bible say we are to obey the government? Yes, in all things which are not contrary to the Gospel, but if Jesus says live in peace and the government says go to war, then “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).
16. “The fruit of the Spirit is peace...love...gentleness...meekness” (Galatians 5:22).
17. “Walk worthy of the vocation with which ye are called with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:1-3).
18. Peace is the Gospel. This is the doctrine of Christ. “Whosoever transgresses and abides not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God” (2 John 2:1).
19. “The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace” (James 3:18).
20. “Whosoever compels you to go a mile with him, go with him two” (Matthew 5:41).
21. “When they persecute you in this city, flee into another” (Matthew 10:32).
22. This world is not your home. “You are citizens of heaven” (Philippians 3:20).
23. “I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use and persecute you, that you may be children of your father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:44-45).

24. "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye therefore as wise as serpents, and as harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16).
25. "Have peace with one another" (Romans 9:50).
26. "Let us follow after the things that make for peace" (Romans 14:19).
27. "God hath called us unto peace" (1 Corinthians 7:15).
28. "Live in peace" (2 Corinthians 13:11).
29. Jesus' mission was to "preach peace" (Acts 10:36).
30. Jesus came and "preached peace" (Ephesians 2:17).
31. "Seek peace and pursue it" (1 Peter 3:11).
32. "As you would that men would do to you, do ye also to them likewise" (Luke 6:31).
33. "We are counted as sheep for the slaughter" (Romans 8:36).
34. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9).
35. "He hath given us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18).
36. "As far as your responsibility goes, live at peace with all men" (Romans 12:18, Phillips).
37. "On earth peace, good will towards men" (Luke 2:14).
38. "If any man wants to sue thee to take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also" (Matthew 5:40).
39. "Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled" (Matthew 24:8).
40. "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then my servants would fight that I should be delivered of the Jews" (John 18:36).
41. "Put up again thy sword into its place: for all they that take the sword will perish with the sword" (Matthew 26:52).
42. "Bless them that persecute you: bless and curse not" (Romans 12:14).
43. "Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:20).
44. "Recompense no man evil for evil" (Romans 12:7).
45. "Being reviled, we bless. Being persecuted, we suffer it. Being defamed, we entreat" (1 Corinthians 4:12-13).
46. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves but rather give place unto wrath, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay,' saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19).
47. "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink" (Romans 12:9).
48. "See that none render evil for evil, or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing" (1 Peter 3:9).
49. God's primary title in the New Testament is the God of peace. It is used six times (Rom. 15:33; Heb. 13:20; Phil. 4:9; Rom. 16:20; 1 Thess. 5:3; 2 Thess. 3:16).

50. "Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth" (Matthew 5.5).
51. "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace" (1 Corinthians 14:33).
52. "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of Peace" (Rom. 10:15).
53. "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace' and the God of love and peace will be with you" (2 Cor. 13:11).