

Yeshua Commissions 12 of His Talmidim to Be His Emissaries To Be Like Yeshua Means – To Affirm Others

In my last post, we finished our series entitled *"To Be Like Yeshua Means ~ To Serve Others."* In this new series, we will begin to explore the concept to be like Yeshua means to *affirm others* by examining Yeshua's instructions to his talmidim found in Chapter 10. However, before we begin, let me set the context and the stage by quoting the last few verses of Matthew 9, beginning at verse 35.

"Yeshua went about all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and weakness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were harried and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his talmidim, 'The harvest is rich, but the workers are few. Pray that the Lord of the harvest will send out workers to gather in his harvest.'" ~ Matthew 9: 35-38

In reading this passage, I couldn't help but think of the ministry of Rabbi Sha'ul as he conducted his itinerant ministry after his conversion.

Yeshua Calls Twelve

"Yeshua called his twelve talmidim and gave them authority to drive out unclean spirits and to heal every kind of disease and weakness." ~ Matthew 10:1

Yeshua had many talmidim, some of whom were merely "hangers-on," and some who were truly converted (see John 6:66). From this large group of followers, Yeshua selected a smaller group of twelve men; and these He called *apostles*. This word comes from the Greek word *apostello*, which means "to send forth with a commission." Stern translates this word as **"emissaries"** which has the same meaning. It was used by the Greeks for the personal representatives of the king, ambassadors who functioned with the king's authority. To make light of the king's envoys was to be in danger of insubordination. In our culture, we would call them *ambassadors*; representing their respective countries.

A man had to meet certain qualifications to be an emissary of Yeshua. He must have seen the risen Messiah (1 Corinthians 9:1) and fellowshiped with Him (Acts 1:21-22). He had to be chosen by the Lord (Ephesians 4:11). The Emissaries laid the foundation of the messianic movement (Ephesians 2:20) and then passed from the scene. While all believers are sent forth to represent the King (John 17:18; 20:21), no Believer today can honestly claim to be an emissary; for none of us has seen the risen Messiah (1 Kefa 1:8).

Yeshua's commission to these twelve men is not our commission today. He sent them only to the people of Israel. ***"To the Jew first"*** (Romans 1:16) is the historic pattern, for ***"Salvation comes from the Jews"*** (John 4:22). These twelve ambassadors announced the coming of the kingdom just as John the Baptist had done (Matthew 3:2) and Yeshua Himself (Matthew 4:17). Sad to say, the nation rejected both Messiah and His ambassadors, and the kingdom was taken from them (Matthew 21:43). The Lord's commission to us includes ***"from all nations"*** (Matt. 28:19-20) not just the nation of Israel. We preach the Gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24). Our message is, ***"Messiah died for our sins,"*** and not, ***"The kingdom of heaven is at hand."*** The King has come; He has already suffered, died, and risen from the dead. Now He offers His salvation to all who will believe.

The choice of **twelve** men is highly symbolic. The number twelve corresponds to the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28), showing the continuity between the old religious system and the new one based on Yeshua's message. Yeshua looked upon His mission as the gathering of the true people of God. These men were the righteous remnant (the faithful believers throughout the Tanakh who never abandoned God or His law) who would carry on the work the twelve tribes were chosen to do - to build the community of God. These were the righteous remnant chosen out of the apostate nation and given a twofold responsibility: (1) to represent

the nation before God; and, (2) to reach the nation for God. These twelve men had Yeshua's **authority** over the forces of evil. Yeshua empowered his talmidim **to drive out unclean spirits**. The talmidim could speak the word, and God's power would cast out the demons. Yeshua also gave these talmidim power **to heal every disease and wickedness**. It was important that they have these powers because Yeshua was extending His mission through them. Yeshua directly confronted demons and sicknesses. The talmidim carried Yeshua's purpose and his power.

Like us, the talmidim represented a wide range of backgrounds and life experiences, but apparently they may have had no more leadership potential than those who were not chosen. The one characteristic they all shared was their willingness to obey Yeshua. Messiah calls us today. He doesn't twist our arms and make us do something we don't want to do. We can choose to join him or remain behind.

When Messiah calls you to follow him, how do you respond? Have you given him only a halfhearted commitment or your whole heart? As His modern-day talmidim, has He given us the power to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness? I'm convinced that He continues to empower His believers within the messianic community to do just that – but that is a teaching for another time.

Who Are the Twelve?

"These are the names of the twelve emissaries: First, Shim'on, called Kefa, and Andrew his brother, Ya'akov Ben-Zavdai and Yochanan his brother, ³ Philip and Bar-Talmi, T'oma and Mattityahu the tax-collector, Ya'akov Bar-Halfai and Taddai, ⁴ Shim'on the Zealot, and Y'hudah from K'riot, who betrayed him." ~ Matthew 10:2-4

In verse 1, these men are called **talmidim**; here, the word **emissaries** is used to stress their role as messengers, **sent ones**. The first name recorded was **Shim'on**, to whom Yeshua had given the name **Kefa** (Peter) meaning "stone" or "rock." Kefa had been a fisherman (Matthew 4:18). He became one of three in Yeshua's core group among the talmidim. He also confessed that Yeshua was the Messiah (Matthew 16:16). Although, later, Kefa would deny ever knowing Yeshua, he eventually would become a leader in the Jerusalem messianic community, write two letters that appear in the Bible (1 and 2 Kefa), and be crucified for his faith.

Andrew his brother. Andrew was Kefa's brother and also a fisherman (Matthew 4:18). Andrew had been a disciple of John the Baptist and had accepted John the Baptist's testimony that Yeshua was **"the Lamb of God."** He had left John to follow Yeshua and then had brought his brother Shim'on to Yeshua (John 1:35-42). Andrew and John were Yeshua's first talmidim (John 1:35-40); Andrew then had brought Kefa to Yeshua (John 1:41-42).

Ya'akov Ben-Zavdai and Yochanan his brother. Ya'akov (James) and Yochanan (John) had also been fishermen (4:21). James would become the first emissary to be martyred (Acts 12:2). John would write the Gospel of John, the letters of 1, 2, and 3 John, and the book of Revelation. The brothers may have been related to Yeshua (distant cousins); thus, at one point their mother requested special places for them in Messiah's kingdom (Matthew 20:20-28).

Philip. Philip was the fourth to meet Yeshua. John 1:43 states, **"The next day Yeshua decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, 'Follow me'."** Philip then brought Nathanael (also called **Bar-Talmi** – John 1:45). Philip probably knew Andrew and Kefa because they were from the same town, Bethsaida (John 1:44).

Bar-Talmi. Scholars think that Bar-Talmi is the same person as Nathanael. In the list of talmidim here and in Mark, Philip and Bar-Talmi are listed together (Mark 3:18); in John's Gospel, Philip and Nathanael are paired up (John 1:45). Thus, it stands to reason that since John does not mention Bar-Talmi and the other Gospels do not mention Nathanael, then Nathanael and Bar-Talmi must be the same person. Bar-Talmi was

an honest man; indeed, Yeshua's first words to him were, **"Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false"** (John 1:47). Bar-Talmi at first rejected Yeshua because Yeshua was from Nazareth. But upon meeting Yeshua, his attitude changed, and he exclaimed, **"Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"** (John 1:49).

T'oma. We often remember this disciple as "Doubting Thomas" because he doubted Yeshua's resurrection (John 20:24-25). But he also loved the Lord and was a man of great courage. When Yeshua determined to return to Judea and enemy territory, T'oma said to the talmidim, **"Let us also go, that we may die with him"** (John 11:16). T'oma was tough and committed, even if he tended to be pessimistic. Thus, when the other talmidim said that Yeshua was alive, T'oma did not believe them. However, when T'oma saw and touched the living Messiah, doubting Thomas became believing T'oma.

Mattityahu, the tax collector. Matthew, described himself by his former profession, probably to show the change that Yeshua had made in his life. He had been a despised outcast, but he had abandoned that corrupt (though lucrative) way of life to follow Yeshua.

Ya'akov Bar-Halfai. This disciple is designated as *son of Halfai* to differentiate him from James the son of Zebedee (and brother of John) in Matthew 10:2. He is also called **"Ya'akov the younger"** (Mark 15:40). Matthew is also called "son of *Halfai*" in Mark 2:14, but this Ya'akov and Mattityahu were probably not related.

Taddai. Taddai is also called **"Y'hudah son of James"** in Luke 6:16 and Acts 1:13.

Shim'on the Zealot. Shim'on was probably not a member of the party of Zealots, for that political party did not appear until 68 CE. Most likely the word "Zealot" that is used here indicates zeal for God's honor and not extreme nationalism; it was an affectionate nickname.

Y'hudah from K'riot, who betrayed him. Y'hudah's hometown was K'riot in southern Judea (see Joshua 15:25), making him the only one of the Twelve who was not from Galilee. It was Judas, son of Shim'on Iscariot (John 6:71), who would betray Yeshua to his enemies and then commit suicide (Matthew 27:3-5; Luke 22:47-48).

The list of Yeshua's twelve talmidim does not give us many details - probably because there were not many impressive details to tell. Yeshua called people from all backgrounds and occupations - fishermen, religious activists, tax collectors. He called common people and uncommon leaders; rich and poor; educated and uneducated. Today, many people think only certain people can follow Messiah, but this was not the attitude of the Master himself. God can use anyone, no matter how insignificant he or she appears. When you feel small and useless, remember that God uses ordinary people to do his extraordinary work.

In my next post, we will continue to explore the instructions that Yeshua gave to His emissaries.