

YAKETY YAK AND BLAH, BLAH, BLAH
A Devotional Meditation from
Exodus 18:1-20:26; Isaiah 6:1-7:5, 9:6-7; Jeremiah 31:31-34;
Mark 10:17-22; 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:1-6
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January 22, 2022



Daughter looking a phone and ignoring her mother. Photo by verkeorg (National Centre for the Development of Online Youth Work, Helsinki, Finland), February 19, 2016, via [Flickr](#).

We have a joke in our family about the “mother’s curse.” That’s what happens when a mother says to her daughter or son, “I hope one day you have a child exactly like you!” When my mother-in-law pronounced the “curse” on one of her sons, he is reported to have said, “Mom! That’s a terrible thing to say!”

The “mother’s curse” appeared in my family when my sister called our mother to apologize for the way she had treated her when she was growing up. She explained that her own daughter, who had just turned 11, was treating her the same way.

The cycle repeated years later when my sister’s daughter had a little girl of her own. She would call my sister and say, “I look at her and know exactly what she’s thinking.” Meaning, of course, that her mind was going over the same disrespectful thoughts my niece had considered when she was 11.

Mothers seem to suffer the most painful wounds of childish disrespect, but fathers suffer as well, as do all other authority figures. We tend to ignore, belittle, insult, disobey, and rebel against even the kindest and most well-meaning of authorities, from parents to teachers to supervisors to police officers to presidents. The irony is that we continue this tendency even after we ourselves become authority figures and establish rules of our own. “Why can’t they just obey?” we ask. We believe we have established good standards to ensure peaceful interaction, cultivate healthy habits and attitudes, and create conditions for self-improvement, but that’s not what those under our authority understand. Whether it’s the sullen teenager, the disgruntled employee, or the hardened criminal, they see our rules as nothing more than encroachments on their personal space, free time, and desire to do what they want to do when they want to do it. We try to reason with them, but all they hear is, “Blah blah blah” and “Yakety yak.”

This part of our humanness is no laughing matter. It’s an endless struggle for power over one another. We can negotiate a ceasefire from time to time, but we never reach true peace. The best we can do is achieve a set of minimal expectations that hold off active hostilities. For example, a parent and child can agree that the child must clean his

room and take out the trash before going out to play. The child then does just enough to satisfy the parent and earn the right to escape her attention for a while.

Here's another example:

As *Yeshua* was setting out on His way, a man ran up to Him, fell on his knees before Him, and asked, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" "Why do you call Me good?" *Yeshua* said to him. "No one is good except One—that is God. You know the commandments, 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony,' do not cheat, 'honor your father and mother.'"

The man responded, "Teacher, all these I have kept since my youth!"

Looking at him, *Yeshua* loved him and said, "One thing you lack. Go, sell as much as you have, and give to the poor; and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me." But at this statement, the man became sad and went away grieving, for he had much property.

Mark 10:17-22 TLV

It seems the man in this story was looking for assurance about the minimal requirements he had to meet to gain eternal happiness so he could satisfy those requirements and live the rest of his life as he pleased. Then the unexpected happened: *Yeshua* pointed to those very things the man was going to use to live as he pleased, and told him he had to get rid of them in order to gain eternity. From that man's perspective, it looked like God was moving the goal posts, and that no amount of effort on his part would ever get him to the place where he could have his own way in life.

He was right, of course. No amount of checking the boxes and following the rules gets us into heaven, or guarantees our peace and happiness on earth, yet that's exactly what we keep pursuing. We follow in the footsteps of our Hebrew ancestors. They heard directly from God's mouth the same commandments *Yeshua* affirmed as guides for human behavior, and it frightened them. Mind you, hearing God speak and seeing manifestations of His glory on Mount Sinai would be enough to frighten anyone, but that didn't stop Moses from seeking a relationship with the Almighty. We could say he was the exception, a man specially called by God, if it weren't for what God said to Moses just before summoning the people to deliver the Commandments to them:

Moses went up to God, and *ADONAI* called to him from the mountain saying, "Say this to the house of Jacob, and tell *Bnei-Yisrael*, 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I carried you on eagle's wings and brought you to Myself. Now then, if you listen closely to My voice, and keep My covenant, then you will be My own treasure from among all people, for all the earth is Mine. So as for you, you will be to Me a kingdom of *kohanim* [priests] and a holy nation.' These are the words which you are to speak to *Bnei-Yisrael*."

Exodus 19:3-6 TLIV

These words lead us to believe that the whole nation of Israel was specially called by God. Actually, that's what we're supposed to believe. If we ask why Israel is called the Chosen People, the answer is in these words of God. These words are a proposal of marriage which Israel readily accepts. Upon hearing their acceptance, God, the

Bridegroom, gives the standards by which He expects His bride to conduct herself, and in so doing to make herself ready to become one with Him forever.

That was ancient Israel, we might say; these requirements applied only to them. But then we read these same words of God echoed by the apostles Peter and John:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

1 Peter 2:9 TLV

To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood and made us a kingdom, *kohanim* to His God and Father—to Him be glory and power forever! Amen!

Revelation 1:5-6 TLV

This is the call to the whole world to become part of this holy, covenant nation of Israel and be united to our Creator and Redeemer. Accepting this call requires far more than lip service and checking the blocks. It requires us to lay aside enough of ourselves so our Bridegroom can begin transforming not just our behavior, but our attitudes, motivations, and perspectives. Our very identity merges with His and becomes something far more wonderful than anything we could become on our own.

As marvelous as this sounds, our ancestors had trouble with it, as the Bible tells us:

All the people witnessed the thundering and the lightning, and the sound of the *shofar*, and the mountain smoking. When the people saw it, they trembled and stood far off. So they said to Moses, "You, speak to us, and we will listen, but do not let God speak to us, or we will die."

So Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid, for God has come to test you, so that His fear may be in you, so that you do not sin." The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.

Exodus 20:18-21 TLV

Yes, entering into a relationship with our Maker is scary, but what's scarier is dying to ourselves. That means relinquishing the right to do as we please, and instead obeying our Master to the point of following Him even into the darkness. Do we trust Him enough to do that? Is unity with our Maker as part of His special people worth the price of our lordship over our own lives?

This is the question we must all answer to the One Who asks it. We can yield to Him and come to know His voice, or we can cling to our tiny allocations of time and space, where the sound of His voice is nothing more than "Yakkety Yay" and "Blah blah blah."