



a division of Flower Girl Greetings, LLC
writings by Beth Ann Phifer

Who is the Apple of His Eye?

A Message for Today

April 1, 2025



Contents

- Preface
- Three Religious Books of the First Century
- Rabbi Yeshua and the Torah
- Yeshua and the Hypocrisy of the Religious Leaders
- Today
- Going Forward
- Prayer

Preface

The apple of the eye is the pupil, the most tender, cherished, and protected part of the body that allows light and sight to enter. The apple of God's eye is a Hebrew metaphor and represents His most cherished possessions. The Scripture contains just a few passages about the apple of the eye; they refer to **His people** being the apple of *His* eye and **His teaching** being the apple of *His peoples'* eyes.

Yahweh's most cherished possessions are His people and His teaching. Here are the verses:

- Deuteronomy 32:9-11 – Of Jacob's inheritance, Moses said, "He found him in a desert land and in the howling wasteland of a wilderness; He encircled him, He cared for him, He guarded him as the **apple of His eye**. As an eagle stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, He spread His wings, He caught them, He carried them on His pinions."
- Psalm 17:8 – David prayed, "Keep me as the **apple of the eye**; Hide me in the shadow of Your wings."
- Zechariah 2:7-8 – "You, Zion! Escape, you who are living with the daughter of Babylon. For the Lord of armies says, 'After glory He has sent me against the nations that plunder you, for the one who touches you, touches the **apple of His eye**.'"
- Proverbs 7:2 – "Keep My commandments and live, and My teaching as the **apple of your eye**."
- References of how cherished we are to Him as believers are replete throughout the New Testament stated in other words. John 3:16, Ephesians 1, and John 10:14-16 are just a few.

Three Religious Books of the First Century (Tedious, but important)

In the first century AD in Israel during Roman rule, Yeshua (Jesus) walked on the earth and ministered to a diverse group of people – priests, Levites, Sadducees, Herodians, Zealots, Essenes, Pharisees, and the common people. A mixture of religious thought was represented among these Jewish people, but we could loosely separate them into two groups – those who revered and adhered to the Tenakh and those who revered the Mishnah and the Talmud over the Tenakh. So, what is the difference?:

1. **Tenakh** (Te-na-kh) is an acronym that combines the three parts of the Hebrew Bible. It is mentioned 50 times in the New Testament with the word *Scripture*. After having been passed down orally through the centuries, these words were finally recorded and completed in about 200 BC. The Tenakh includes:
 - **The Torah** – the first five books spoken to Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). The Torah is the same as the *Law, Teachings, Commandments, Precepts, and Ordinances* of the Lord spoken of in King David's Psalm 19:7-11. The Torah is the oral Law passed down.
 - **The Nevi'im** – the Prophets' writings (both the Major and Minor Prophets).
 - **The Ketuvim** – the Writings which included history and poetry – (Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles).

2. **The Mishnah** – According to words from the introduction of Herbert Danby's *The Mishnah* translated from the Hebrew (Pages xiii and xiv), "The Mishnah (meaning teaching by repetition) may be defined as a deposit of four centuries of Jewish religious and cultural activity in Palestine beginning in the earlier half of the second century BC and ending with the close of the second century AD." It includes the Torah ordered topically, as well as the "traditions of the elders" and reinterpretations "to meet the needs of changed conditions." It does not include the Prophets or the Writings of the Hebrew Bible.
3. **The Talmud** – According to A. Cohen's *Everyman's Talmud* (Page iii), "The Talmud is a work wherein is deposited the bulk of the literary labors of numerous Jewish scholars over 700 years, roughly between 200 BC and 500 C.E. [AD]." The Talmud is a compilation of interpretations, opinions, and discussions about the Mishnah. It is a commentary on the Mishnah.

In the first century, Yeshua referred to these commentaries (that were outside of the Tenakh) *the traditions of men*, because they often nullified the Scriptures of the Jewish Bible. Just like today in many translations, the interpretations were often skewed to procure power for a select, elite group of people. The greed and lust of men's hearts made their way into these opinions of the original writings in ways Yahweh never intended.

There was never anything wrong with rabbis (teachers) interpreting the words of Scripture for their current time. This was necessary because the words were originally meant for a very ancient culture. But the wrong came with the evil intent of man's heart, with the insidious interpretation for the purpose of manipulation, power, and control.

Rabbi Yeshua and the Torah

Rabbi Yeshua was sent "only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24). He came to rightly interpret the truth of Scripture to the Jewish people and to expose the false shepherds, so that His sheep could share the truth with the nations of the world. He did not oppose the Law, as some have taught. Rather, He opposed its false interpretation. He translated the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings (the Tenakh or Hebrew Bible) perfectly in His life and words. (For more detail, please read *In His Dust – 5. Abolishing and Fulfilling* at ShaleFragments.com)

The Apostle John wrote, "the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Yeshua the Messiah." (John 1:17) In other words, Yeshua fully lived God's heart of grace and truth expressed in the Torah. He filled the Torah full with its intended meaning. He did not abolish or replace it. Rather, He showed the eternal, continuing value of it as God's revelation of His heart.

The Torah did not initially reach its intended purpose because the Holy Spirit was required to interpret and fulfill it. After His resurrection, Yeshua sent the Holy Spirit to His disciples to enable them to be His hands and feet in the world. The prophets had foretold of the new heart that would be given! (See Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-26; Joel 2:28).

When we receive Yeshua (the Father's sacrifice for our sins), He imparts the Holy Spirit to us and gives us a new heart. The Law is now written on our hearts, and the Holy Spirit fulfills the Law in and through us as we yield to Him. (See Romans 8:1-4; 2 Corinthians 3:2-4)

Yeshua and the Hypocrisy of the Religious Leaders

(In the Gospel account of John, the term "the Jews" refers to the religious rulers of the day.)

Yeshua came to Jerusalem for the last time just before the week of Passover descending the Mount of Olives on a donkey to the cheers and admiration of the crowd of common people to whom He had ministered in love (see Zechariah 9:9). Soon, He was starkly confronted by the hypocrisy of the religious rulers who magnified their traditions above Scripture to promote their own power and to satisfy their greed.

Examples from the Gospel accounts of the exploitation of the religious rulers through their own traditions are too numerous to mention here, but two key rules they imposed were the forbiddance of healing on the Sabbath and the devaluation of women:

- **The Sabbath** – Never in all of Scripture did Yahweh prohibit healing on the Sabbath or any other day. Healing was always welcome because it flowed from His character.
- **Women** – Nor did Scripture teach that a woman should cover her hair or not learn Torah (although it was the custom of the time). Michael Card in his book *Luke, the Gospel of Amazement* (Pages 140-141), writes regarding the incident between Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-42,
“The notion that it is more admirable for a woman to sit and learn as opposed to working in the kitchen would have been little less than seismic in Jesus’ time. Mary’s choice [to sit at Jesus’ feet to learn], although it goes against every conceivable standard for women in Jesus’ day, is commended. This is an example of one of the most radical paradigm shifts for women in the entire Bible.”

Over and over again, Yeshua chose to heal on the Sabbath and to elevate the value of women in order to expose the hypocrisy of the religious rulers.

Yeshua’s ultimate rage in the face of the hypocrisy

During the week of Passover before Yeshua gave His life for the sins of the world, He displayed the rage of God the Father against the hypocrisy and cruelty of these rulers who skewed God’s Word to subjugate and suppress the people for their own advantage.

Consider the following harsh words from the Father’s heart expressed through Yeshua toward the Jewish religious rulers who propagated and imposed their traditions to the nullification of Scripture:

- “Did not Moses give you the Law and yet none of you carries out the Law?” (John 7:19a)
- “You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also.” (John 8:19)
- “I go away, and you will seek Me and will die in your sin. Where I am going you cannot come.” (John 8:21)
- “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father.” (John 8:37-44)
- “If you were blind, you would have not sin; but since you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.” (John 9:41)
- “But you do not believe because you are not of my sheep.” (John 10:26)
- “I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?” (John 10:32)

Just before Yeshua died, He said, “Now judgment is upon this world, now the ruler of this world shall be cast out. And if I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to Myself.” (John 12:31-32)

Today

It’s the same today. There are factions of people in Israel and around the world who desire to adhere to the Hebrew Bible (the Tenakh) while others adhere to their own traditions that they call the Torah, but it is not.

It is interesting to note that neither the Mishnah nor the Talmud give commentary on the Prophets or the Writings. Could it be that the warnings found in the writings of the prophets, poets, and historical stories glaringly oppose and expose the hypocrisy of these religious rulers? They actually do.

When we say, “Israel is the apple of His eye,” we need to define who and what the apple of His eye is. As mentioned in the Preface and according to Scripture, “Yahweh’s most cherished possessions are His people and His teaching.” Those who follow the evil ways of man’s pride, greed, lust, and inhumanity to man are *not* the apple of His eye according to Yeshua’s words above. Consider Isaiah 58:5-14. His people were always to reflect His character and to be lights to all nations.

As we seek discernment during these critical times, we must remember that the true Jews are those who follow Scripture, the Hebrew Bible. They seek to love God and their neighbor. They might not yet have come to know Yeshua as their Messiah, but as they read and do the truth and see His life in the crimson threads of the verses, we pray they find Him. For Yeshua said, "He who practices truth comes to the light that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God" (John 3:21). He also said in the previous verse, "All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed."

Yeshua took a whip through the Temple against the hypocrisy of the corrupt religious rulers. How do you think He did that? Gently? Kindly? Meekly? No. He was furious. Not only was He angry that they barred the way for the Gentile worshippers to enter His Father's House of Prayer by allowing the moneychangers to exploit them in the outer courtyard of the Temple, but they also barred the way for the common Jewish people to know the freedom found in Scripture.

(A verse hidden in Mark's Gospel (11:11) lets us know that Yeshua's action in overturning the tables of the moneychangers was not impulsive. After His triumphal entry, "Jesus entered Jerusalem and came into the temple area, and after looking around at everything, He left for Bethany with the twelve, since it was already late." Yes, He looked around at everything and knew what He must do.)

The same spirit of control, power, and manipulation has been prevalent for generations in the American church. Leaders have mistranslated Scripture and propagated the traditions of men. Did you know that nowhere in the Bible does it say that women should be silent in the churches?; the Greek and Hebrew original languages simply do not translate as "silent." (For detailed studies on this subject, please search at ShaleFragments.com for the writings, *Missing Perspectives*, *The Breathtaking Beauty of True Submission*, and *The Role of Women in the First-Century Church*.) **You will find that God's elevation of the value of women synergistically elevates the value of men even further in the beautiful way He intended.** As a result of this in-depth study, our marriage has been strengthened with a new peace and understanding.

Going Forward

Let us cling to Yeshua's words to remain discerning. I suggest soaking in the book of John. Allow Yeshua's emotions to be yours as we pray to be His people in the world and as we pray for the nation of Israel.

Let us "Be diligent to present ourselves approved to God as workers who do not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth..." (2 Timothy 2:15) "The firm foundation of God stands having this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His,' and, 'Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to keep away from wickedness.'" (2 Timothy 2:15, 19)

The Prophet Isaiah declared, "And the redeemed of Yahweh will return and come to Zion with joyful shouting and everlasting joy will be on their heads. They will obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing will flee away!" (Isaiah 51:11)

There is a remnant seeking truth. They are the apple of God's eye. Let us support and pray for their protection and salvation! And let us pray that those who do evil will turn from their ways.

Prayer

Father, You gave your beautiful gift of Torah to the Jewish people through Moses at Mt. Sinai. You sent the Prophets who spoke clear instruction of the Torah and who warned about disregarding Your ways. You gave songs, psalms, stories, and history along the way to be Your Shepherd's staff of comfort and guidance. Draw us and draw the Jewish people to Messiah Yeshua. Reveal Him to them in the pages of Scripture. Quicken them with the Ruach HaKodesh, the Holy Spirit, and save and seal them eternally! Amen!