

An Hebraic Proof that Rav Sha'ul (Apostle Paul) did not “Write Scripture” in Ephesians 4:26

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*Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:
Ephesians 4:26*

It is thought by Christian commentators that Ephesians 4:26 constitutes a sublime example of a New Testament author, in this case the Apostle Paul, originating scripture, as it is thought co-equal in authority with that of the Hebrew Tenach. We will show this is not the case at all, but rather Paul is doing an Hebraic “Midrash”, an exposition of one or more ideas **found in the Torah**. This passage is frequently cited in support of the claim that Paul was “writing scripture” because one of the ‘church fathers’, Polycarp, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, said, “*So then, as prescribed in these writings, be ye angry and sin not, and let not the sun go down upon your wrath*”.¹

Does this quote by Polycarp mean Paul was writing a new commandment?

The first part of the verse,

רָגַזוּ וְאַל-תִּחַטְּאוּ

Be ye angry, and sin not

from Ephesians 4:26 is a quotation of Psalm 4:5². However, what follows in the same sentence

let not the sun go down upon your wrath

does not *seem* to have any Tenach reference, thus the assumption that Paul is actually emanating a new passage of scripture. A depiction of a totally unprecedented nuance of thought is understood to have been given to Paul by the Ruach haKodesh, because this appears nowhere in the “Old Testament”.

This is the line of reasoning employed by Christian commentators and authors to project the image that ‘New Testament’ writings were sovereignly endowed with the same authority as the Hebrew texts referred to also by Paul in his second epistle to Timothy,

And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. II Timothy 3.15

It appears these writers have somewhat anachronistically overlooked the fact that the holy scriptures referred to in this verse could only have been the Hebrew Tenach because the ‘New Testament’ was

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1. Shma-Israel.org translation from the original Latin. (the only known manuscripts for chapter XII are in Latin, not Greek)
 2. All passage quotations are King James Version unless otherwise noted.

neither finished nor compiled into any sort of canon when this epistle was written. This is of such great consequence that we can not over-state it. Although any prophetic, anointed writing such as Paul's epistle to the Ephesians can be accepted as useful, a line has to be drawn somewhere. If not, a condition that we live with today, namely that there are *irreconcilable differences* between the Hebrew Tenach and certain passages of the ‘New Testament’, makes faithful living unattainable. It should be evident to everyone that there can only be one standard by which to live. A full discussion of this is outside the scope of this document, but we will be treating this subject in depth in the near future.

So, if Paul is not originating a new commandment, where did this idea come from? In short, the answer is that it is a Midrash drawn from multiple Torah verses.

If we look again at Ephesians, in the previous verse, 4:25, he says,

Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

In Hebrew, the bold type is expressed by

וְדַבְּרוּ אִתְּ-רֵעוֹ (HNT) ³

The word we are interested in is רֵעוֹ (re'oh, [his] neighbour). Messiah taught us ‘who is our neighbour’ in the parable of ‘The Good Samaritan’ (See Luke 10:27-37). Now, when Paul says “*speak truth to your neighbour*”, he is relating how to love your neighbour after the manner that Messiah was teaching.

So the Midrash of Ephesians, then, is relating itself to Leviticus 19:18,

לֹא-תִקֵּם וְלֹא-תִטַּר אֶת-בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ

Do not avenge, nor maintain an account against the sons of your people. (SHMA) ⁴

Some versions say “do not bear a grudge” and this is also a good translation. The verse continues,

וְנָאֲהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה

and you shall love your neighbour as yourself. I am Hashem. (SHMA)

This could also be said, “*You shall express love for your neighbour as for yourself*”. The words in blue are the same in both passages (neighbour).

3. Salkinson-Ginsberg Hebrew New Testament, 1886.

4. SHMA – The Shma-Israel.org Translation of the Bible.

Returning to Paul’s Midrash, in verse 25 the Apostle Paul’s intent is to “expound” on the meaning of Leviticus 19:18, so he says “*speak truth to your neighbour*”, which is to be motivated by love, of course. Moreover he continues, “*for we are members one of another.*” That is an idea found in the first part of the Torah verse we are discussing (Lev. 19:18),

אַתְּ-בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ

The thought expressed here is that they are *your people*, i.e., members of one another.

Paul’s Midrash continues in the following verse of Ephesians,

Be ye angry, and sin not

which, again, he chose to quote from Psalm 4:5, because it supports the teaching of Torah directly, and then he says, “*let not the sun go down upon your wrath*”. Returning to the original question, is this completely new scripture? Is Paul teaching some new idea only just recently conceived by Hashem? In effect, is he giving a ‘new’ commandment for ‘new’ covenant believers?

Here we can dispense with that possibility, because Paul is *combining* several related themes from Torah. The first is from Leviticus 19:18. We said earlier, “maintain an account” with your neighbour, in translating this verse. This is the idea expressed by the Hebrew נוֹטֵר (*noter*). A related idea is to “*seek to exact payment*” and this leads us to the Torah of Deuteronomy 24:15,

בְּיוֹמוֹ תִתֶּן שְׂכָרוֹ וְלֹא-תָבוֹא עָלָיו הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ

At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it;

It speaks of maintaining an account for longer than a *day*, and identical terminology is used in Ephesians 4:26 when expressed in Hebrew,

וְלֹא תָבוֹא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ

and let not the sun go down (HNT)

For those who are Hebrew literate, it is obvious that Paul uses precise wording from the Torah in formulating his exhortation. He did **not** originate any new scripture. He is teaching the Torah principle that we mustn’t maintain an account of wages owed for longer than a day, and his Midrashic extension to this principle is that we should not maintain an account of wrongdoing for any longer than this. So, in fulfilling the principle of Deuteronomy 24:15, we shall also fulfil the commandment,

Do not avenge, nor maintain an account against the sons of your people and you shall love your neighbour as yourself.

I am Hashem.