

*Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.*

ESV **2 Peter 1:10**

As an early teen, my family attended a local congregation of a larger “Sabbath keeping” church organization that produced its own hymnal. At that time, most of the hymnal’s songs were based on the Psalms and with music and lyrics arranged by the brother of the organization’s founder. Though not a psalm, one of those songs was entitled “Not Many Wise Men Now Are Called”, taken from 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 26. The first stanza goes like this:

Not many wise men now are called, Not many noble brethren;  
Not many mighty, chosen ones, For you see your calling:  
Sons of God, you are called, Not because of greatness;  
Even the wisdom of mankind, Is to God but foolish.

Being *called* was a very important topic in that church. My understanding at that time was that very few people in this age had been *called* by God, and that those of us who were, were *called* to be a part of “the Work” – the “Great Commission” of getting God’s message of the Kingdom out to the world. Though I still pretty much adhere to the same belief as before, I always struggled with reconciling the idea that only a few were *called* when Yeshua seemed to indicate otherwise. After all, He said in one of His parables –

<sup>KJV</sup> **Matthew 22:14** For many are **called**, but few are **chosen**.

So over the years I studied into this apparent contradiction and came to see that the former organization was right, but for the wrong reasons. They apparently mistook being *called* for being *chosen*.

In this study, we will see what the scriptures have to say about what I call “the believer’s calling”. What we are going to find is that many believers have not only missed what it means to be *called*, but also who is *called*, and for what purpose they are *called*. In this study we will answer these questions:

- What does it mean to be *called*?
- Who is *called*?
- For what purpose are we *called*?

## What is a calling?

When we think of being *called* by God, we generally think in New Testament terms. Passages like –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Ephesians 4:1** I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the **calling** to which you have been **called**,

- are oftentimes referenced when one begins to talk about a person’s *calling*. Because this is a popular passage, let’s look at two common words used in regards to a *calling* that are found in it.

In the above passage, the Greek word for *calling* is “klesis” {klay’-sis} (Strong’s 2821) which means a *calling* or an *invitation*. “Klesis” is the noun form of the verbal root “kaleo” {kal-eh’-o} (Strong’s 2564) which means “to call, to invite”. “Kaleo” is a very common Greek word with no spiritual significance. Nevertheless, of the 11 times its noun form “klesis” is used, it conveys a “divine” *calling*.



Along with being a summons, the root form (*kaleo*) is sometimes used to place a name on someone. One example is found in Matt. 1:21 where it says –

“and thou shalt call (*kaleo*) his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.”

In this case, to give a person or thing a name by calling it something implies that the person or thing is to perform an action or fulfill a role for which he or she has been called. For instance, when we here in the United States address a person as “Representative Jones”, we do so because that person has been elected to “represent” a constituency in the US House of Representatives. Thus when the angel spoke to Joseph in regards to the child of his betrothed Mary, he indicated that the child would be called “Jesus” because the child would “save His people” (Jesus’ Hebrew name is Yeshua, which means “salvation”).

Another example is that of Yeshua calling his disciples – two of which were James and John.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Matthew 4:21** And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them.

Their calling was to become His disciples, which in Jewish context of the day meant that they were to become like Him.<sup>1</sup>

What we see then is that (in the biblical sense) when a person is *called*, he is summoned to appear for the purpose of fulfilling a role or responsibility.

A modern day example would be that of being called to serve on a jury. One would likely get a “summons” in the mail to appear at the court house on a certain date. For those of you who are familiar with this, you know that simply showing up doesn’t make you a part of the jury. Though all who are summoned are called to be jurists, in most cases only a few will be chosen, and not until the attorneys and the judge make that determination.

The point here is that our *calling* has to do with being summoned – to appear in the presence of someone at that person’s request. So in the context of Matt. 22:14 where it says–

“many are **called**, but few are **chosen**”

we can understand that to mean “many are *called* to appear, but of those who are *called*, only some are *chosen*. So why would that be the case? Why would some be *called*, but not *chosen*. To understand, let’s take a deeper look into the parable in which that statement was made.

The setting for the parable is Yeshua’s last trip to Jerusalem to observe the Passover. Whereas before, He would share in the Passover meal with his family and friends, at this year’s Passover, he was going to become the ultimate Passover Lamb.

As He was teaching in the vicinity of the Temple, the chief priests and the Pharisees were challenging his authority to teach. He answered them with three parables, the third of which was about a wedding supper. In the parable, a king was holding a wedding supper for his son and invited those who apparently would have been “family friends”. It appears that his friends were not interested in attending and would not respond to the invitation. Therefore, the king invited the common people – those who would not have been considered friends of the king.

Before continuing with the parable, let’s consider what those “common” people would have faced if they chose to accept the invitation and attend the King’s son’s wedding. They would have had to “count the costs” of attending. Apparently, in Yeshua’s day it was appropriate to wear a “wedding garment” to a wedding supper. I would assume these suppers were somewhat formal, but even if not, the dress must

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.amiyisrael.org/articles/DustOfRabbi/dust-of-rabbi.html>



have been nicer than their everyday work clothes. What's more, the wedding garments would need to be appropriate for sitting at the table of a king so as not to dishonor him.

I can imagine that the original invitees – those who refused to respond – had the appropriate garments in their closet. On the other hand, the common people who accepted the invitation had to determine if they were willing to purchase the appropriate garments. Apparently, they were all willing except for one. That one – though he accepted the invitation – apparently refused to honor the king by dressing appropriately. Nevertheless, he answered the call and showed up to attend the wedding supper, but the king refused to let him in.

So in the parable, many were *called* including the friends of the king and the common people, but only the common people accepted the *calling*. What's more, only those of the common people who had the correct wedding garments were *chosen* to sit at the table. The one without the wedding garment – though *called*, was not *chosen* and was removed.

Though this parable was intended as an indictment against the scribes and Pharisees, it illustrates the point that being *called*, and even accepting the *call*, is not good enough. Only those who were willing to invest in the garments will be *chosen* to have a seat at the table.

The Greek word for “*chosen*” is “*eklektos*” (Strong’s 1588), an adverb that generally means “picked out”, “chosen”, and “elect”. Thus God’s *chosen* are also His *elect*. We can understand that today because in America, we generally “elect” our leaders from a pool of possible candidates.

Though when thinking of God’s *calling* we oftentimes think in New Testament terms, the same concepts were used in the Old Testament when speaking of ancient Israel – who as we will see – were *called* hundreds of years before the coming of Messiah Yeshua.

The Hebrew equivalent of “*kaleo*” is “*qarah*” (קָרָה – 7121), a very common Hebrew word. One of the early uses of it is in Gen 28:1 where Isaac called for Jacob to tell him not to take to himself a Canannite wife as did his brother. In this case, Jacob was simply being summoned, but “*qarah*” can also be used to place a name on something or someone in order to define its purpose. An example is when God called the earth “*day*”.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Genesis 1:5** God called (*qarah*) the light Day, and the darkness he called (*qarah*) Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

In this case, the *calling* of the “*Day*” was to be illuminated by the light, and the *calling* of the “*Night*” was to remain dark so as to obscure<sup>2</sup>. What this implies is that when a person is given a *calling*, they are to fulfill the purpose of that *calling*. In the above example, if the Day refuses to have light, it is not fulfilling its *calling*. The same applies to the Night - if it does not provide a means by which a person can hide, then the night is not fulfilling its *calling*. In that context, if Yeshua does not provide salvation, He is not fulfilling His *calling*.

To summarize what it means to “be called”, it simply means you have been summoned to perform a function. In other words, *you have a purpose!*

## Who is Called?

In the song “Not Many Wise Men Now Are Called” (taken from 1 Corinthians 1:26) Paul stated that God tends to *call* the foolish, the weak, and the despised of the world. Seldom does He *call* those from nobility or those who are looked upon as being wise. Such was the case with the first “*nation*” God called –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Hosea 11:1** When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I **called** my son.

<sup>2</sup> “darkness” = “*choshek*” – darkness, obscurity, be hidden, secret place



According to the prophet, Israel was *called* while still in Egypt; while they were still slaves. Since slavery is not a very “noble” profession, we could assume that Paul’s statement to the Corinthians could apply to Israel – and we would be right. In an end-time prophecy for Israel where God says he will gather her back to Him once again – we find that Israel was *called* (and *chosen*) long before the coming of the Messiah and the supposed “birth” of the church.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Isaiah 41:8-9** But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have **chosen**, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; <sup>9</sup> you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and **called** from its farthest corners, saying to you, "You are my servant, I have **chosen** you and not cast you off";

As before, the word “called” in this passage is “qarah”, but we also see the word “chosen” which is the Hebrew word “bachar” (בָּחַר – 977) which simply means “to choose, to elect”. The Greek equivalent to “bachar” is “eklektos” which we discussed earlier.

“Bachar” has a number of derivatives and similar sounding words which in the Hebrew language implies they have similar meanings. One such word is “bachiy” (בָּחִיךְ – 972) which is the noun form of the root word “bachar”. So “bachiy” means “elect” as in “your are my elect”. If the New Testament had been written in Greek, the passage –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Matthew 24:22** And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the **elect** those days will be cut short.

Since - as we will see – Israel was given an “irrevocable calling”, it makes sense that God cannot let all humanity perish during the referenced calamity because Israel will still have an unfulfilled *calling*.

It is interesting to note that in every place in the Bible where the word “bachiy” is translated “elect”, it refers to Israel.

A couple of other words are “bekowr” (בְּכוֹר – 1060) which means “firstborn or firstling” and “bikkuwr “ (בִּכּוּר – 1061) which means “first-fruits”. Both of these words carry the concept of being the *elect* or *chosen* and are used fondly of God in regards to Israel – even Israel in her fallen state.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>ESV</sup> **Jeremiah 31:8-10** Behold, I will bring them from the north country and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, the pregnant woman and she who is in labor, together; a great company, they shall return here. <sup>9</sup> With weeping they shall come, and with pleas for mercy I will lead them back, I will make them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble, for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my **firstborn**. <sup>10</sup> "Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away; say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock.'

So Israel was the first nation or people to be *called*, and according to Paul –

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Romans 11:29** ... the gifts and the **calling** of God *are* irrevocable.

Since the terms used in the New Testament are basically the same terms used of Israel in the Old Testament, could not Paul’s audience be that same people – the Hebrews? If that’s the case, and if we can determine Israel’s purpose – her *calling* – we should be able to determine ours as well.

<sup>3</sup> This prophecy was given to Jeremiah approximately 150 years after the northern tribes of Israel (called “Ephraim”) were taken captive by the Assyrians.



As Paul indicated, the first *called* people were not mighty, they were not noble, and they certainly were not wise. They were a bunch of slaves who worshipped a pantheon of gods. But what about us? Can we be called? Certainly!

God always allowed a person to “join” in with the people of Israel, because Israel – for all practical purposes – is simply a people who worship and follow the God of Israel.<sup>4</sup>

Before looking at the purpose for Israel’s calling, it is important to realize that - except for a short period of time during the latter years of King David and the early years of King Solomon - Israel never fulfilled her calling. Because she did not, God scattered both the northern and southern tribes of Israel throughout the nations as was prophesied by Moses.<sup>5</sup>

When God began to restore Israel’s *calling*, He only *called* the remnant. Paul understood that would be the case, and in his letter to the Romans – where he was trying to explain what was happening in the believing synagogues of his day<sup>6</sup> – he quoted a prophecy of Isaiah.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Isaiah 10:20-22** In that day the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no more lean on him who struck them, but will lean on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.<sup>21</sup> A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God.<sup>22</sup> For though your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return. Destruction is decreed, overflowing<sup>7</sup> with righteousness.

According to the prophet, though all Israel suffered under the scattering, a righteous remnant will appear from among them. Jeremiah prophesied the same –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Jeremiah 23:3** "Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply.

And in Jeremiah 31 – the “New Covenant” portion of his prophecy, Jeremiah said -

<sup>ESV</sup> **Jeremiah 31:7** <sup>7</sup> For thus says the LORD: "Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and raise shouts for the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, 'O LORD, save your people, the remnant of Israel.'

So if you are *called*, you are *called* to be a part of Israel – either as a bloodline descendant or “grafted in” – it does not matter – you will still be Israel.

## For What Purpose are we Called?

When God called Abraham, He told him to separate himself from his country, his extended family, and his father’s house. When He called Israel, He told them much the same thing –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Leviticus 11:45** For I am the LORD who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy."

Later on, He said to them –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Leviticus 20:25-26** You shall therefore separate the clean beast from the unclean, and the unclean bird from the clean. You shall not make yourselves detestable by beast or by bird or by anything with which the ground crawls, which I have set apart for you to hold unclean.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.amiyisrael.org/articles/UnderstandingIsrael/understanding-israel-who-is-israel.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Leviticus 26:33; Deuteronomy 28:64

<sup>6</sup> Romans 9:27 quoted from LXX

<sup>7</sup> Literally “swept away”



<sup>26</sup> You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.

Not only were they to be a physically separate nation, they were to conduct themselves in such a way that would be distinct from the people of other nations. The Hebrew word for “holy” is “qodesh” (קֹדֶשׁ – 6944). It’s a word that simply means “to be separate”. Being “holy” is what ancient Israel was *called* to be. That was their calling. By simply being holy, they would fulfill God’s purpose for *calling* them. They would have been a light to the nations.<sup>8</sup>

That – in a nutshell – is what we’ve been *called* to be. We have been *called* to be Holy – just as Yeshua was *called* to be Holy –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 1:35** <sup>35</sup> And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy - the Son of God.

Paul starts his letter to the Romans by reminding them of their *calling* –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 1:7** To all those in Rome who are loved by God and **called** to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The word “saints” in this passage is from the Greek word “hagios” (Strong’s 40) which simply means “holy”. Since those spoken of in Romans are “holy” and since ancient Israel was called to be “holy”, we should be able to see what it means to be holy by looking at what God instructed Israel. What we will find is that some of the ways the people made themselves “holy” was through their diet (Lev. 20:25-26), Sabbath observance (Exodus 31:14), and by avoiding any form of demonic contact (Lev. 20:6). Later God summarized it all by stating –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Numbers 15:40** “... you shall remember and do all my commandments, and be **holy** to your God.”

God gave Israel His Torah, – His instructions for life – and *called* them to observe it so they would be a living example to the nations of how a people who walked in His way would prosper and have peace. In his words to the second generation of Hebrews after coming out of Egypt, Moses said –

**Deuteronomy 4:5-8** See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. <sup>6</sup> Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ <sup>7</sup> For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? <sup>8</sup> And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?

That is the primary way we display our “holiness” and live out our *calling*. Some 1400 years later, Peter said the same thing to his audience, who if you examine closely, are descendants of the same people Moses spoke to.

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Peter 2:9** But you are a **chosen** race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

<sup>8</sup> Isaiah 58:1-10; 60:1



So the *calling* is the same. God does not change<sup>9</sup> so therefore His *calling* does not change. But we can be more specific. God does show us a number of additional ways we can walk out our *calling*. For instance, we can shower Him with praise, not just in prayer, but by acknowledging and proclaiming His great works in our lives.

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Psalm 145:3-4** Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised; And His greatness *is* unsearchable. <sup>4</sup> One generation shall praise Your works to another, And shall declare Your mighty acts.

By doing so, we are inviting Him to dwell with us; after all -

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Psalm 22:3** But You are holy, Enthroned in the praises of Israel.

We can also be prepared to teach a person about God’s way should they come ask about it. God *called* Israel to be a nation of priests<sup>10</sup>. Though that specific *calling* has yet to be fulfilled, it is still our *calling*. So how can we live it out? By performing one of the roles of the priesthood – that is, to teach the Torah.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Malachi 2:7** For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.

Being versed in the scripture well enough to explain it to others is part of our *calling*. But we must be able to do so in a way that a person is able to accept. Philip, one of Yeshua’s disciples, had prepared himself sufficiently that when he told to do so, he was able to teach a prophecy to the Ethiopian eunuch –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Acts 8:30-31** So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" <sup>31</sup> And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

To underscore our responsibility in that area, let’s consider a couple of other passages -

<sup>NKJ</sup> **1 Peter 3:15** But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; <sup>16</sup> having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.

<sup>ESV</sup> **2 Timothy 4:2** preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

The key word in both of the above passages is the word “ready”. To be “ready” is to be prepared so you can answer a question. This is not talking about becoming a street preacher. Instead, it is to be proficient enough in the scriptures that if asked to explain a scripture to someone who comes to you with a legitimate question, you are able to do so

“But”; you might say ;“those were “Biblical” times, and we’re not living in those times”. That’s correct. We today are a remnant; and not only a remnant – a remnant living in exile – exiles in a foreign country. So how can we fulfill our calling in this land?

Thankfully, we are not the first to face this dilemma. Apparently, most of the apostle’s work was done in Asia Minor, and area that was at that time under Roman rule. It was to those people that Peter, James, and Paul addressed most of their letters, and gave instructions on how to live out their *calling*. To the Ephesians Paul wrote –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Ephesians 4:1-3** I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the **calling** to which you have been **called**, <sup>2</sup> with all humility and gentleness, with

<sup>9</sup> Malachi 3:6

<sup>10</sup> Ex. 19:6



patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup> eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

To walk implies you are on a path with a goal in mind, and the word “peace” is “eirene” (Strong’s 1515) which means “peace between individuals”; “harmony”. What Paul is teaching is that everyone should walk this path together - not as robots – but as musical instruments that form a harmony. As a group or community, we have the opportunity to display God’s blessings more so than we could do by ourselves. Each of us has a part to play, and as Paul mentioned to the Romans<sup>11</sup>, we are different parts of the same body.

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Colossians 3:15-16** And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Peter adds a few more points –

<sup>ESV</sup> **2 Peter 1:5-10** For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, <sup>6</sup> and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, <sup>7</sup> and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. <sup>8</sup> For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.

Notice that Peter states that if these qualities are increasing in our lives, we will be effective and fruitful in our *calling*, and it is by our fruits that we are rewarded.<sup>12</sup>

So this is the job set before us. This is how we as individuals and as part of the congregation of Israel are to conduct ourselves, and if we do so – as Peter said – we will never fail in our *calling*.

## Conclusion

As God’s people, we have a purpose. It’s more than just living a Torah lifestyle, it includes becoming a people that others can recognize as God’s people who also “just happen to follow the Torah”. I’m not really sure how to accomplish it, but I’m sure we can. And if we do, I believe we will not only be *called*; we will also be His *chosen*.

I want to conclude with a very encouraging statement from Paul to the congregation in Rome that was struggling with how to become an example of God’s way of life. He said -

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 8:28-30** And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are **called** according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup> And those whom he predestined he also **called**, and those whom he **called** he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Shalom Aleichem

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<sup>11</sup> Romans 12:4

<sup>12</sup> Mark 4:21; Luke 3:9; John 4:35-36; John 15:8, 16