

# Exiles?

## READING

John 17  
Daniel 12  
Philippians 2  
Romans 12

*Shining is about being different.*

*About not being willing to conform.*

*And about not compromising who we are in Yeshua.*

The seeds for this article come from the book Exiles by Mike Frost. There is also a 3 part study series which I recommend.

The first time I went to China I was really annoyed that nobody ever lined up. They just push in to get what they want, and if you don't push, you don't get. When I asked my Chinese friend why everyone was so rude, they just said, "In China that isn't rude. That's just how we do things here." It still felt rude to me. I could tell I didn't fit in. I could tell that they were different. That they thought differently to me.

Do you ever feel like you don't fit in? Like everyone around you is from another culture? That people should treat each other better. Be more respectful. Show more love. But that the world is going a different way. Becoming more angry, more violent, more self centred, more entitled.

I struggle that people seem so addicted to video games and TV shows. The newspapers are even reporting Game of Thrones like it's real news. Half the people on my morning train just stare mindlessly at their smartphone screen.

It also seems like everyone is desperate to make money, to buy bigger houses and fancier cars. Like status and financial independence is the ultimate goal in life.

And they cling to life because it's all they have. They will spend whatever it takes to stay alive one more day.

Yeah, I don't belong here. I'm different. I don't fit in at all.

In Daniel and Jeremiah we read the story of how Israel was carried off into captivity in Babylon. At first they thought their stay would be temporary, but then Jeremiah received a word from Yahweh, "Build houses, dwell in them. Plant gardens, eat their fruit." They realised that they were not just in temporary captivity. They realised that they had to live in exile until Yahweh restored them to their home in the promised land. For 70 years.

But how do you do that? How do you live as a good Jew surrounded by a culture that doesn't even recognise your god, or understand your culture, or your religious requirements to only eat certain animals, and to slaughter those you do eat in a particular way?

How do you live a certain way, the way you know God wants you to live, when the whole world around you not only doesn't live that way, but who don't even value your way of life at all?

We're like that too. We're not from here. We don't fit in here. We're exiles.

Yeshua's prayer in John 17 talks about this.  
Being in the world, but not of the world.

Yeshua lived in the world for 30 something years. But he wasn't OF the world for a single second.

In contrast to many modern Western Christians. Who seem so concerned that the world doesn't reject them that they have become so much like the world that it's hard to tell them apart. 50 years ago the church was concerned about wolves in sheep's clothing. Now we have to be so careful of sheep in wolves clothing.

It's usually pretty easy to tell when someone you meet is a foreigner. Not from here. Petros calls us, (Christians), sojourners and expatriates. Whether we are travelling through or actually living here, we are not from here. That should be obvious to anyone who meets us.

Is it? Is it obvious to everyone that you're not from here?

In Daniel 12 God tells him that the wise will shine like stars in the darkness. Paul says the same thing to us in Philippians. That we should shine like stars in this wicked and depraved generation.

This is how we can live as exiles. In the world but not of it.

Not corrupted by the darkness that surrounds us, but shining out like a star as we live by the spirit, not by the flesh.

Nobody looks at the night sky and doesn't notice the stars.

In fact, those very stars, distant pinpoints of light, often make all sorts of people wonder about their life. Their purpose. Their origins. Their god.

We can have that same effect. When we shine like stars in our crooked and depraved generation. Just by shining. We can make people question. We can cause them to seek their maker. We can get them to wonder where they come from, and where they're going. Just by shining.

So how do that? How do we live here in exile?

Paulus tells us in Romans 12 not to conform to the world around us.

So should we live separately from them and have nothing to do with them?

Should we judge them and point out their sinful lives?

Should we tell them that God hates them and is angry with them?

Is that shining like stars? Or is that just us being judgemental hypocrites?

Is that love? Or is that just to make ourselves feel better about our own issues?

Or should we become like them so we fit in and they accept us?

Should we make sure we don't offend them by talking about our belief in front of them?

Should we just blend in?

Is that shining like stars? Or is that just avoiding the awkwardness and pain of rejection?

We can live among them without conforming. Without losing our identity.

But we have to pay the price of not belonging.

But shining like stars isn't about being in their face either.

It isn't about preaching judgement. It's not about confrontation.

It isn't even about pushing the gospel on people who don't want to hear.

Shining is about being different.

About not being willing to conform.

And about not compromising who we are in Yeshua.

It's about having different priorities than they do. About having God's priorities.

About not wasting your life playing video games, or watching a TV series like it was real life. About focusing on things above like it says in Colossians.

About not being desperate to be rich so you'll feel secure. But feeling secure because Yahweh, your heavenly father has your back, even with things are tough.

Shining attracts people.

Some of those people will hate you because you're shining light into their life but they only feel safe in the darkness. Where they can hide from who they really are.

But some of the people you attract will want to shine like you.

Yeshua said, "While I'm in the world, I'm the light of the world."

Yeshua shone like the sun. Bringing the light of the day into the world.

But we can be content to shine like stars. Like little pinpoints of light only visible in the night sky.

Maybe you feel like you can't even shine that brightly.

But even a candle shines in a dark room.

You can be a candle. Right?

Shine. However bright. In exile. Until Yahweh calls us home.