



SHARING SCRIPTURE

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The New Covenant

For use: May 30 - June 5

Texts: Jeremiah 31:31–34; Matthew 5:17– 28; Hosea 2:18–20; Isaiah 56:6, 7; Hebrews 8:7, 8; Hebrews 10:4; Matthew 27:51

Upon losing two games in the best-of-seven series against the Pittsburgh Penguins in the opening round of the 2021 Stanley Cup Playoffs, New York Islanders goaltender Semyon Varlamov was benched. He, who up to this point had been a candidate for most valuable goaltender, then watched rookie Ilya Sorokin carry the Islanders to victory with four wins in four games. [1]

Islanders coach Barry Trotz was praised for making the change that propelled his team to the next round. And, of course, Sorokin was the logical choice to hit the ice for the quarterfinals against the Boston Bruins. But after dropping the first game 5 - 2, eyes turned back to Coach Trotz.

During six of the regular season meetings between the two teams, Varlamov reigned in net and garnered an impressive five wins over the Bruins. Trotz therefore had no issue putting Varlamov back in the crease. And Varlamov shone once again, redeeming himself with 39 saves in an overtime victory, helping the Islanders even the series. [2]

While Trotz deserves recognition for making all the right decisions when his players struggle to produce results, how much more does God, our Coach?

This week we study how God designed a new covenant to lead Israel to victory over all life had to throw at them. This covenant was not predetermined, but was brought into play when Israel failed to heed the voice and follow the

instructions of their Coach. Out of God's own goodness was a new game plan drawn up to redeem Team Israel ([Hebrews 8:7-13](#)).

This new plan offers a path of redemption through the life and death of Jesus Christ. In addition to upholding faith in Jesus Christ, Israel would be bound by God's very essence in their minds and hearts. When they rely on a forgiving and loving Creator, God's Spirit can transform their hearts. ([Jeremiah 31:33-34](#)).

However, this change in strategy does not make the first plan obsolete. Rather, the original plan is fulfilled through Christ and should not be ignored ([Matthew 5:17-20](#)). Israel still has an obligation to fulfill from the first covenant: forgiving and loving each other as God has done for them ([Matthew 5:21-26](#)).

In sports and life, things don't always go according to plan. But wise coaching and a call to our identity can set us on the path of redemption.

~Stefani Leeper

[1] <https://eyesonisles.com/2021/05/31/islanders-make-no-changes-lines-give-varlamov-start/>

[2] https://www.espn.com/nhl/recap/_/gameId/401331678

For Reflection

Connecting: How are you doing on your New Year's resolutions? Other personal goals? Have you ever had to reevaluate and make them more attainable? Or were they not challenging enough? Be prepared to share your ideas briefly if meeting with a small group (online if not yet able to safely meet in person).

Sharing: What does [Matthew 5:20](#), in its full context, imply?

1. We must be flawless in fulfilling Levitical Law and also have complete faith in Jesus Christ
2. The Law must be respected even if we cannot fulfil it
3. Relying solely on the Law makes it impossible for us to enter heaven
4. We only need faith in Jesus; the Law is obsolete
5. The Law, when fulfilled by Jesus, is boiled down to acts of love that we fulfil upon our transformation in Jesus
6. Other:

Applying: Revisit one of the goals you considered in the Connecting prompt. Adjust it to make it more attainable but challenging enough that you can grow and document change. Keep a log to mark your progress and prepare small rewards for when you reach milestones. Pray for guidance along the way.

Valuing: Have you had a teacher, parent, pastor, mentor, doctor, or coach who helped you make the adjustments you needed to get back on track? Take a moment to reflect on them; think of what lessons you can take from them in modeling yourself to be a positive influence to someone else.

Other Helpful Resources

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Paul Richardson
Executive Director

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