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BEACON

JULY-SEPT. 2024 - SPREADING THE WORD THROUGHOUT THE WORLD - YAIY.ORG



False Teachers and Their Doctrines
Simon Peter: A Case Study
Two Leavened Loaves
Know Your Enemy (Who is Satan?)
Tribulation, "This, Too, Shall Pass"
Identifying Esau and Ishmael

INTRODUCTION

Churchianity in general has not been faithful in following the Bible. Surprisingly, many of today's popular teachings and customs are not based in Scripture. We strive to return to the old paths of truth that have largely been ignored, and obediently follow in the footsteps of the Redeemer of Israel, Jude 3.

We observe the weekly Sabbath (on the seventh day) known as Saturday, just as did the Savior, Luke 4:16, as well as Paul and the Apostles, Acts 13:42-46; 17:2; 18:4.

We also call our Heavenly Father by His revealed, personal Name Yahweh, which He says is His memorial Name forever, Exodus 3:15. Most pastors, Bible scholars, and seminary students will acknowledge that Yahweh is the correct Name of the Heavenly Father. The short form of His Name, Yah, can be seen in many words, including the most popular hallelujah ("halleluYAH," meaning, "praise you Yah"). It is also found in the suffix of Biblical names like IsaYAH, (Isaiah), JeremYAH (Jeremiah), NehemYAH (Nehemiah), and ObadYAH (Obadiah).

Our membership comes from nearly all denominations and all walks of life. Most began searching for deeper truth when they learned that their former affiliation was teaching another Evangel from what they found in Scripture. We continue to search the Bible for deeper understanding. We believe that the Bible teaches a way of life through the commandments in the Old Testament and from the same example of obedience given us by our Savior in the New Testament.

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MISSION STATEMENT

Our Mission and purpose is to reach people around the world with the message of the revealed personal Names of Yahweh and His Son Yahshua, the Messiah, as well as teaching the salvational truths that have been neglected for centuries.

YAIY BEACON magazine, is published quarterly by Yahweh's Assembly in Yahshua.

This magazine is sent free of charge, made possible through the tithes and offerings of those who desire to see the light of truth shine in our day.

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CONTACT US

MAIL: YAIY
2963 County Road 233
Kingdom City, MO 65262
PHONE: 1-573-642-4100
FREE : 1-877-642-4101
EMAIL: beacon@yaiy.org
WEB: www.yaiy.org

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Sabbath Services @1:30 pm CT



FALSE TEACHERS and their DOCTRINES are an ABOMINATION



False teaching can harm brethren's faith, and so this is a warning to be aware.

*Be diligent to present yourself approved to Elohim as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the Word of Truth. But avoid worldly [and] empty chatter, for it will lead to further unrighteousness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, [men] who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some. Nevertheless, the firm foundation of Elohim stands, having this seal, "Yahweh knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who names the Name of the Master is to abstain from wickedness," 2 Timothy 2:15-19. (**New American Standard Bible** used throughout, unless otherwise noted.)*

Worldly and empty words lead to unrighteousness. Hymenaeus and Philetus are named as two having departed from the truth, saying, the resurrection had already occurred – either the false Greek teaching an immortal soul is gone to heaven upon death of the physical being, or the idea that those who had died have already been raised, in which case those who are alive are left behind. Paul asserts this spurious doctrine overthrows the faith of some, that is, sets them on a course apart from the proper understanding of the truth of Yahweh's Word. The Apostle Paul needed to address this false teaching of "going to heaven when you die" which has become so prevalent among Christianity.

And so, we might ask, "Where do these false teachings come from?"

The Mystery of Lawlessness

Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Master Yahshua Messiah and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of Yahweh has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for [it will not come] unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called deity or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of Elohim, displaying himself as being Elohim ... For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains [will do so] until he is taken out of the way. Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Master will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; [that is], the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. For this reason Elohim will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4, 7-12.

"The mystery of lawlessness is already at work," is speaking of the man of sin who is yet to be fully manifested as the one whose coming is with the activity of Satan. When Yahweh says He'll send "a deluding influence," He is saying, He will allow the mystery of lawlessness to take place, that is, Satan's influence will be allowed. Those who forsake Yahweh will be deceived by Satan in various ways. In the meantime, Satan as the prince and power of the air (Eph. 2:2), disguised as "an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14) is deceiving the world (Rev. 12:9). And his ministers are countering, corrupting, deceitfully handling, and making private interpretation of the Word of Yahweh, but they and their false, abominable doctrines are, and will be, exposed.

Behind the Scenes

Behind the scenes we know there are both good and evil spirits. Indeed, where good is, evil is also present. There are angels, for example, that hold back the winds of wrath (Rev 7:1). But there are also doctrines of demons promoted in the latter times (1 Tim. 4:1).

The way to counter error is to proclaim the Truth. Darkness is exposed by light and questions are answered with the truth (Acts 8:30-31). But those under the influence of Satan and their own flesh, and who deny Yahweh's Word, end up unable to understand the truth (Rom. 8:7). Yahshua made it clear when He said, "he who has an ear to hear, let him hear" (Rev. 2:7, ff). In other words, some are not going to understand, but not everyone has an ear to hear the truth – neither in the first century, nor yet in the 21st century. But during this time, 'willing' deafness is worse.

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, 1 Timothy 4:1-2.

Deceitful spirits? Doctrines of demons? What do they look like? Paul gives a couple of examples:

- men who forbid marriage, and who
- advocate abstaining from foods which El has created to be gratefully shared by those who believe and know the truth (1 Tim. 4:3).

Some religious bodies forbid marriage of their priests which has resulted in some having become sexual predators among children. Others forbid, or at least frown upon, eating meat or drinking alcoholic beverages which result in countermanding what Scripture allows and, subsequently, producing an aberration of the Word and creating traditions that make for factions and a falling away from the faith.

We can marry, but we are not to defile the marriage bed by deviant sexual behavior. Deviant behaviors like adultery and sodomy and perversion of gender identity are listed in Scripture as prohibited, banned, and forbidden. And everything created by Yahweh and sanctified by His Word to be clean is good, and not to be rejected.

The "mystery of lawlessness," is an interesting term. It is a mystery why anyone would commit lawlessness against the Creator of the Universe, yet that is what we see today. And false doctrines are part of this lawlessness which inflict damage to the Holy Scripture and to people whom the Scripture is purposed to sanctify.

False Prophets and False Teachers

To the Law and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them, Isaiah 8:20, KJV.

An identifier of false teachers is what they teach. For if what they teach is not according to the Word of Yahweh, then it is said they have no *shaw-khar'r*, **Strong's Exhaustive Concordance**, H.7837, (literally, *dawn* or *day* (-spring)). The understanding implied here, is that false teachers have no light, teaching correctly the Laws and Testimonies from Scripture, but only darkness.

Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn [bushes] nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits, Matthew 7:15-20.

Fruits here, is deeds. If someone is not following the teachings of Scripture, you'll see it in their deeds which, by the way, all mankind will be judged (Rev. 22:12).

Moreover, Yahshua, after explaining false prophets will be known by their fruit, declares, "*Not everyone who says to Me, 'Master, Master,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father Who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Master, Master, did we not prophesy in Your Name, and in Your Name cast out demons, and in Your Name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS,'"* Matthew 7:21-23.

We are instructed to turn away from, and give no attendance to, those not teaching the truth of Yahweh's Word as it leads to death, even if they proclaim good works in Messiah.

Thus says Yahweh of hosts, "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are leading you into futility; they speak a vision of their own imagination, not from the mouth of Yahweh," Jeremiah 23:16.

For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision (pharisaical Jewry), who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not [teach] for the sake of sordid gain, Titus 1:10-11.

The pharisaical Jews promoted false doctrines and so also, did the Sadducees.

And Yahshua said to them, "Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." They began to discuss among themselves, saying, "[It is] because we took no bread." But Yahshua, aware of this, said, "You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread? Do you not yet understand or remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets full you took up? Or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many large baskets you took up? How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees, Matthew 16:6-12.

Then, and now, some teach for hire ... tickling itching ears, telling them what they want to hear in exchange for making merchandise of their substance. *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths, 2 Timothy 4:3-4.*

The Apostle Peter corroborates Paul's warning:

*But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Sovereign that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you ... 2 Peter 3:1-3, **KJV**.*

This is the time we are in today, and they (false teachers with false doctrine) are saying the same things they said to deceive the people in the past.

And so, who despises Yahweh, if it's not the very ones who are willing to disregard His admonitions?

They keep saying to those who despise Me, "Yahweh has said, 'You will have peace'; and as for everyone who walks in the stubbornness of his own heart, they say, 'Calamity will not come upon you,'" Jeremiah 23:17.

Though this also spoke to Judah before the Babylonian captivity and destruction of Jerusalem, we may understand it speaks to those who will, at the end of the age when tribulation shall come upon the whole world because of their disobedience to

His Word, presume to say, "Hey, there's no harm that will come to us." "We are covered by grace!" "The law has been done away with!" "Just believe!"

But to them who know not they are but opposing themselves, we say, as the prophet, *Behold, you are trusting in deceptive words to no avail. Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery and swear falsely, and offer sacrifices to Baal and walk after other deities that you have not known, then come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My Name, and say, 'We are delivered!'— that you may do all these abominations? Has this house, which is called by My Name, become a den of robbers in your sight? Behold, I, even I, have seen [it],* declares Yahweh, Jeremiah 7:8-11.

"Deities you have not known." Could this describe all the sports figures and Hollywood 'players' to whom people today, give their undivided attention? More attention is accorded them – even by believers, falsely so-called) – than to proper worship of Yahweh. Given the choice, many, more than a few, too, would prefer watching a 2-3 hour movie featuring their favorite 'player(s)', or watching a 2-3 hour ball game, than sitting and giving audience to a 1-hour, Scripturally correct message. This is the society we live in today, and only a precious few are coming out, and becoming separated from, the false teachings which held them in captivity.

And of abominations? simply defined: utterly detestable, and forbidden by Yahweh – stealing, murder, adultery, giving false witness, etc. – things contrary to, and at enmity against, His Laws.

No discussion about false prophets/teachers, however, would be complete apart from speaking about some prominent misunderstandings among religious circles today, concerning the Apostle Paul's writings which Peter, his peer, affirms some things are hard to understand which the unlearned and unstable twist, as they do all the rest of the Scriptures (2 Pet. 3:16).

We'll next focus our attention to Romans, Chapter 14, and recommend a combined study on the Apostle's other writings in Colossians, Chapter 2 and Galatians, Chapter 4.

Romans 14

One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables [only] ... and he who eats, does so for Yahweh, for he gives thanks to Elohim; and he who eats not, for Yahweh he does not eat, and gives thanks to Elohim, Romans 14:2, 6b.

For everything created by Yahweh is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the Word of Yahweh and prayer, 1 Timothy 4:4-5.

I know and am convinced in the Master Yahshua that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Messiah died, Romans 14:14-15.

First of all, one cannot sanctify by prayer what has not first been sanctified by the Word of Yahweh. Concerning foods, Yahweh has defined what constitutes food. What He forbids as food, we pay attention to. It doesn't mean we can't be vegetarian. After all, 'green food' – "every plant yielding seed" and "every tree which has fruit yielding seed" (Gen. 1:29) – was commanded to be eaten from the beginning. But as the ark was prepared for its sojourning, Yahweh, in His instructions to Noah, distinguished clean from unclean (Gen. 7:2). Only after the flood, and after Noah had disembarked from off the ark, did Yahweh allow clean animal meat in man's diet (Gen. 9:3), (Request our in-depth study booklet, entitled, ***Yahweh's Food Laws, Clean or Unclean.***)

These letters were addressed to them who would have understood the message. The customs and manners of the pagan cultures of the time provided for offerings made to a pantheon of deities, and that what was not consumed by sacrifice, was then marketed in the public square. But Paul did not, and would not have, nullified the dietary laws of the Torah which clearly delineates what is acceptable as clean from what is not (Lev. 11; Deut. 14). The Scriptures, which included Torah, made the food laws clear to those coming into the faith in Messiah.

Nevertheless, with respect to eating meat, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 8:8, "we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do" (***NIV***). For "the kingdom of Elohim is not meat and drink" (Rom. 14:17, ***KJV***). The main point of Romans, Chapter 14, is not harming one's brother because of his opinions.

But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Messiah

died, 1 Corinthians 8:9-11.

Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions for conscience' sake; FOR THE EARTH IS YAHWEH'S, AND ALL IT CONTAINS. If one of the unbelievers invites you and you want to go, eat anything that is set before you without asking questions for conscience' sake. But if anyone says to you, "This is meat sacrificed to idols," do not eat [it], for the sake of the one who informed [you], and for conscience' sake; I mean not your own conscience, but the [other] man's; for why is my freedom judged by another's conscience? If I partake with thankfulness, why am I slandered concerning that for which I give thanks? Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of Elohim. Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or the assembly of Yahweh, 1 Corinthians 10:25-32.

Sacrificial food was an issue for both gentile assemblies living in the pagan polytheistic societies of Rome and Corinth, both of which marketed meat offered to their deities, and needed to be addressed. Some brethren chose to just eat vegetables, because it was a safer option. They may have even considered how the animals – clean animals – were sacrificed. Was it done in a kosher way? Were the clean, separated from touching the unclean, etc.?

A secondary issue might have been that some, perhaps arrogant, wise in their own conceits, were passing judgment upon others whose faith-convictions were not as strong. Paul charged these rather, *Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not [just] please ourselves. ... Now accept the one who is weak in faith, [but] not for [the purpose of] passing judgment on his opinions,* Romans 15:1, 14:1. In other words, they should shut their mouths and not make mountains out of molehills, neither major in minors but respect the brethren.

Fasting is also addressed in chapter 14 of Romans.

One person regards one day above another; another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it for Yahweh ... Romans 14:5-6a.

The message is clear and consistent in these verses. Love the brethren, and don't be arrogant.

For other concerns raised by *antinominalists* – those who teach the Law was blotted out, taken away, and nailed to a cross – we would recommend our Combined Study entitled, ***Paul and The Law***, which discusses many of Paul's writings used by some to justify lawlessness,

and which also affirms that Paul was in agreement with the Law, and with the Messiah, Who also uplifted the Commandments of Yahweh. Let's finish with what the Apostle Peter has to say.

Paul's Writings Used to Justify Lawlessness

*But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, **spotless and blameless**, and regard the patience of our Master [to be] salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all [his] letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which **the untaught and unstable** distort, as [they do] also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of **unprincipled** (wicked, **KJV**. Original word means lawless) **men** and fall from your own steadfastness,* 2 Peter 3:13-17.

But the writings of Paul, like the truth, needs no defense. The Apostle Peter here warns unequivocally, that **untaught and unstable, unprincipled men** – neither spotless, nor blameless, but sinners teaching the Law was blotted out, taken out of the way, and nailed to Messiah's stake – will employ trickery, craftiness, deceitful scheming and promises of liberty, perverting and distorting the Scriptures by which, they toss men to and fro, and carry them about diverse, strange doctrines (Eph. 4:14; 2 Pet. 2:19).

And which of his writings are customarily used to try and show the abolition of the Law? These are principally, the letters to the Romans, Galatians, and Colossians.

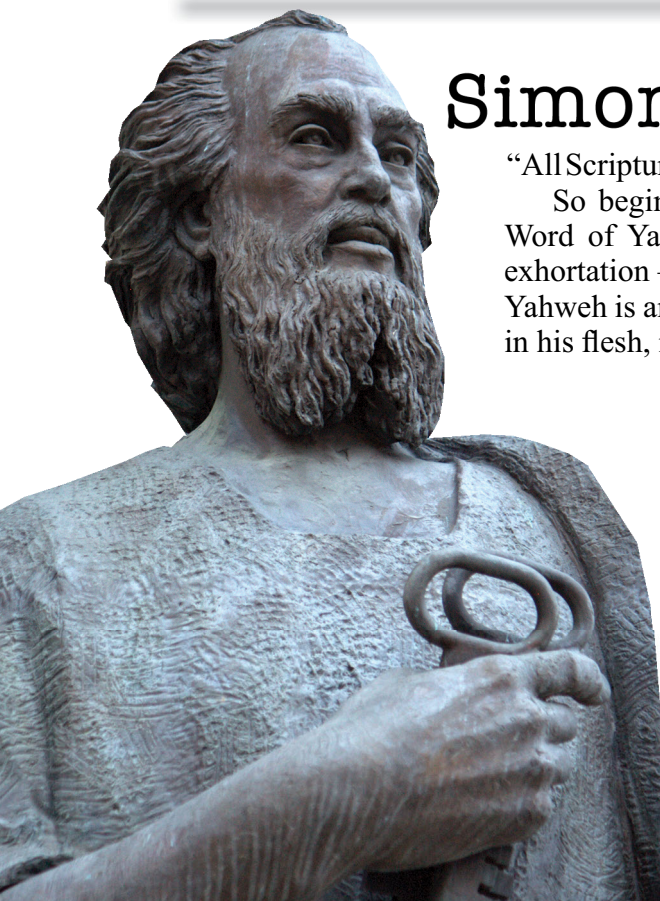
Conclusion

*By this we know that we love the children of Yahweh, when we love Yahweh and observe His Commandments. For this is the love of Yahweh, that we keep His Commandments; and **His Commandments are not burdensome**. For whatever is born of Elohim overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Yahshua is the Son of Yahweh? 1 John 5:2-5.*

We overcome the world, as our Master Yahshua, by our obedience to His Law. Satan, and alternatively, his ministers, teaches against Yahweh's Laws and walks contrary to them as do his followers.

Though many are following the broad way that leads to destruction, may Yahweh help us to keep the narrow path that leads to eternal life

- Elder David Brett



Simon Peter: A Case Study

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of Elohim, and is profitable...” (2 Tim. 3:16).

So begins the Apostle's consideration of the five administrations of the Word of Yahweh: correction, instruction in righteousness, reproof, rebuke, exhortation – and ordinarily provided an Assembly in that order, too. Because Yahweh is an Elohim of process and order, and knows what is in man – that is, in his flesh, no good thing (Rom. 7:18) – he must be,

- corrected of his error;
- instructed in righteousness;
- permitted space to be (re)proved, lest he should have returned to the vomit and mire of what was assumed remitted him by grace;
- rebuked if he should continue therein; and,
- exhorted to continue steadfastly in that which he has received.

Of course, because the pull of strongholds of rebellion are intense and set at variance with, at enmity against, and contrary to what is good, acceptable, and perfect, some will not much advance beyond correction and, therefore, what is set apart must be

withheld from them, lest the Message become subject to violence and the messenger to torment.

But the accounts given us in Scripture are “profitable” toward promoting another purpose, too.

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope, Romans 15:4. (The **King James Version** used throughout.)

Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition ... 1 Corinthians 10:11.

Simon Peter: Beneath the Bluster, Some Good

We have considered one certain personality; one to whom the Master had said, *Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren,* Luke 22:31-32.

Simon is introduced to us at once proud, impetuous and outspoken and often perhaps, afterward wishing he had instead exercised demurrer, keeping quiet and not had the embarrassment of the Master’s rebuke in the presence of his peers. Nevertheless, beneath the bluster, was a contrite, penitent spirit ... one worthy of our emulation.

His introduction to the Master apparently, occurred by way of his brother Andrew, formerly a disciple of the Immerser who had identified Yahshua as the Lamb of Elohim (John 1:36), who, after having given audience to Him, sought Him out, and spent that day with this Man from Galilee, presumably hearing further, the Good News (John 1:35-39). Afterward, he found his brother Simon, and excitedly announced that he had found the Messiah (John 1:41-42).

We are not told here, that Simon so appreciated his encounter with the Lamb that he forsook his fishing enterprise. This was to occur later, when an opportunity presented itself to the Master as the people urged Him on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, to speak to them the Word (Luke 5:1). Accordingly, Yahshua, finding Simon and his partners (his brother Andrew, and John and James, the sons of Zebedee), washing their nets required Simon to launch out from the shore where, from sitting in the craft, He addressed the people (Luke 5:2-3).

Following His discourse, He charged Simon to let down his net for a catch ... a catch that had eluded this experienced fisherman who had toiled the night before so that now, with the net about to rend and

the boat about to capsize, the marvel of it all moved this rugged mariner to fall down at the Sovereign’s knees and confess, saying, “Depart from me: for I am a sinful man, Master” (Luke 5:3-8). (See also the parallel account in Matthew 4:18-22.)

Convicted. Contrite. Penitent. Yes, this one – a man of like passions as we, but often ambivalent – could also present himself haughty, proud, insolent and subject as well, to the correction and rebuke of the Master.

Simon was at once a man of strange contradictions: naturally impulsive, but tender-hearted and affectionate; at times presumptuous, then timid and cowardly; self-sacrificing, yet inclined to be self-seeking; gifted with Spiritual insight, but slow to comprehend and apprehend Truth; made two great confessions of his faith on Yahshua, then cancelled the two by three denials.

Among them whose ears had heard, whose eyes had seen, and whose hands had handled, Simon often assumed more than he could handle. At one time, following the feeding of 5,000 beside women and children (Matt. 15:13-21), the Master directed His disciples leave as He sent the multitudes away. On a tempest-tossed sea, and in the dark of an early morning, Yahshua advanced toward their craft and Simon, willing to test the apparition, made request that he be permitted to walk upon the water (Matt. 15:24-28). It was a test, Simon would fail (Matt. 15:30) – a test, we often fail ... in thinking ourselves to be stronger than what we appear before Him to be.

Before Honor ...?

Among the first after Nathanael to confess Yahshua as ha Maschiah, Ben Elohim (the Messiah, the Son of Elohim), he couldn’t yet handle too much commendation among his apostle-peers. For when their Master – elated that one among them should so acknowledge Him – began to relate to them the sufferings and death awaiting Him at Jerusalem by the hands of the elders, the chief priests, and scribes of the people, it was Simon who incurred the displeasure and rebuke of the Sovereign One for daring to challenge the Latter’s purpose for having been born, and the cause for which He had come into the world (Matt. 16:13-24).

Then, we have his second affirmation of his Master Yahshua in the account of John, Chapter 6. Yahshua was concluding His discourse on Himself being that Bread of Life come down from Heaven and had just asserted that except a man should eat His flesh, and drink His blood, he had no life in him (John 6:48-53). The narrative concludes with

many of His disciples judging His Word too hard, and offended, they left Him (John 6:60). Turning Himself to the twelve, the Master asked them, “Will you also go away?” to which Simon replied, perhaps as much in the others’ behalf, “Master, to Whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that you are the Messiah, the Son of the living Elohim” (John 6:67-69).

Then on the eve of His passion in Gethsemane’s garden in the mount of Olives ... when Yahshua’s hour had drawn near to fulfill the Promise of the ages, He foretells their behavior, saying, “All you shall be offended because of Me this night” (Matt. 26:31). But, oh, not Simon. For though all men should be offended in Him, he would not so. Indeed, he should die with Him and so let on, all the rest (Matt. 26:33, 35). But Gethsemane’s nightfall prompted sleep that should yield later, to temptation that might have been thwarted if they which were there, had instead deferred to diligence and vigilance.

And though later, with the advance of the mob led by Judas, that familiar friend now turned traitor, and emboldened to strike with the blade, he would, like the others – just as the Master had foretold – turn tail, and flee (Matt. 26:47-56). Perhaps curious, he found himself in the courtyard of Caiaphas’ palace where assembled was a tribunal of the scribes and the elders of the people to try Yahshua on charges that He had consistently violated the Sabbath through the administration of corporal works of mercy and that He had, through the affirmation of His teaching and His miracles, made Himself the Son of Elohim (Matt. 26:58).

There, Simon’s earlier pronouncement of loyalty would be tested, as he might have hoped to have remained *incognito* among others with whom he was sharing a place at fireside (for it was cold) but whose persistence challenged his acquaintance with this Man from Galilee (Matt. 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:25-27).

Which Sorrow? Of the World, Or Penitent?

Convicted? Contrite? Penitent? The cock crowing upon his third denial, and his seeing his Master as the Latter was being transferred to a hearing before Pilate, brought to his remembrance words spoken unadvisedly, but hours before (Luke 22:61-62). What amends might now he make, as he should be denied opportunity to become reconciled to His Master? Perhaps now, the best he could hope for was to remain sequestered with the ten (John

20:19)... albeit, though it should be for fear of the Jews who would be anxious also, to implicate all who had been in complicity with Him Whom they had given a new title, “that deceiver” (Matt. 27:63).

But Yahshua’s prayers for Simon – He is, after all not willing that any should perish, but that all would come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9) – was, as we shall learn, to prove both effectual and according to His Father’s will.

And very early in the morning the first of the week, they (Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome) they came to the sepulcher at the rising of the sun. ... And entering into the sepulcher, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he said to them, “Be not affrighted: You seek Yahshua of Nazareth, which was impaled: He is risen; He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him. But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goes before you into Galilee: there shall you see Him, as He said to you, Mark 16:2, 5-7.

One might wonder, “tell His disciples and Peter?” Why should Peter receive the Master’s singular acknowledgment?

In John, Chapter 21, and some little time after Yahshua had appeared to the ten – for Thomas was not among them – Simon Peter announced to Thomas, Nathanael, and the two sons of Zebedee, and two others, “I go a fishing” (John 21:2).

As the narrative unfolds, it appears that Simon had not yet brought resolution to his “misdeed” following Yahshua’s arrest, though he might have had opportunity following the Master’s resurrection and subsequent apparitions to those whom He had loved. Often, however, when time is permitted to lapse from the moment of transgression without resolving the grievance of the soul, one can become past feeling, his conscience seared with a hot iron ... until perhaps, reckoning is unavoidable.

That the Master would select this occasion that Simon might opportune to bring closure to what he had permitted to defer, is noteworthy.

Likened to another experience to which Simon could relate (Luke 5:5), these experienced fishermen had toiled all the night without success (John 21:5). As dawn came, they heard One calling from the shore of the Sea of Galilee, “Children, have you any meat?” (John 21:5). Their reply, “No,” was answered with instruction to cast their net on the right side of the boat, whereupon they gathered a multitude of fish that placed their nets and their

vessel in jeopardy (John 21:6).

John's identifying the Voice upon the shore as Yahshua's moved Simon to retreat to the sea (John 21:7, "for he was naked") ... in want of suitable apparel but more so, "naked" before Him to Whom all judgment was committed (John 5:22) and before Whom, all things are naked and opened to Him with Whom we have to do (Heb. 4:13).

And then, we read of a most gracious gesture inaugurated by Him Whose love extended beyond the stake, to one who, because Yahshua had prayed for him, could afterward declare his own unworthiness to have obtained mercy, be counted faithful, and appointed to ministry.

Yes, by a simple question, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" (John 21:15-17) ... asked three times, the debt of Simon's thrice-denial was cancelled.

However, though this profound gesture of the Master extending forgiveness for the expression of a heart's frailty agitated our subject (John 21:17), his sensibilities were overshadowed by his requiring to know the estate of a peer (John 21:21).

But, no matter. For Yahshua Who knows the end of a matter even before its inception, anticipated that when once Simon and the others would become endued with Power from on High, that the course of His intercession – "when you are converted, strengthen your brethren," Luke 22:32 – would yield Spiritual fruit, as occurred when on a notable Pentecost, and following ten days of tarrying for that Promise of enduement, Peter and the eleven stood and rehearsed such sayings of old time and now, their fulfillment. So moved were the assemblage, that they complimented his discourse with a query of their own: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). And then, this Apostle who had opened his mouth for the first time and spoken as an Oracle, embraced the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven and opened the Way, the Truth, and the Life to about three thousand, declaring, "Repent and be immersed every one of you in the Name of Yahshua the Messiah for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

Conclusion: Finally, Bearing Fruit to Perfection

And what more needs to be said, but that this man Simon who had before been with his companion John but judged unlearned and ignorant (Acts 4:12), now stood before, and withstood more learned men than he; without fear, challenging them of religion; resolved he could speak nothing but what he had

seen and heard (Acts 4:20) and that it was far better to obey Yahweh than men (Acts 5:29).

This one, we say, to whom the First Assembly looked for direction. This one, to whom was accorded the first miracle of the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 3). This one, who gave witness to the Power of the Holy Spirit to reveal what was in the hearts of men; by whose word of knowledge and discernment of spirit, some would fall; and by whose mere shadow, many with diverse afflictions were healed (Acts 5). This one, who together with his Apostolic peers, met the indignation of Sadducee and Pharisee alike, not with excellency of speech or wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power, declared he the testimony of Yahweh (Acts 4 and 5). This one, before whom neither one sick of the palsy, nor another who had taken her bed in death, proved to be too great a challenge to make whole and return to life (Acts 9). This one, through whom it was Yahweh's good pleasure to reveal that He could make of two – Circumcised and Uncircumcised ... clean and unclean – but *echad*, one new man (Acts 10). This one, who could stand unapologetically before his company in Jerusalem, for the defense and confirmation of Truth (Acts 11). This one, prominent among the chosen and ordained in Jerusalem to whom the elders accorded respect and honor, as was fitting to a father (Acts 15).

What more needs to be said than this about that man once proud, impetuous, outspoken ... and later judged ignorant and unlearned by them which professed themselves to have letters having learned – yes, who had afterward become a Servant transformed, renewed in the spirit of his mind (Rom. 12:2); not striving; gentle unto all men; apt to teach; patient (2 Tim. 2:25); and through the medium of his pen, and with the Keys, opened the Kingdom to strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (1 Pet. 1:1), and who left us this legacy: that we should show forth the praises of Him Who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous Light (1 Pet. 2:9) and Who has therewith, given us an exceeding great and precious promise, that in having escaped the corruption that is in the world, we might become partakers of His nature (2 Pet. 1:5) and receive to ourselves, inheritance of a Kingdom undefiled and incorruptible (1 Pet. 1:4).

- Elder John W. Reece



Two Leavened Loaves

Could the two loaves offered at Pentecost (Lev. 23:17) be symbolic of the Holy Spirit? Or, more specifically, that leaven is symbolic of the Holy Spirit? This is often thought to be the case for those who believe they should have leavened bread for Passover. This, however, is easily refuted (Exod. 12:8; 1 Cor. 5:4), but the question nevertheless “arises” (no pun intended).

They will bring up that it was at Pentecost in the New Testament that the Holy Spirit was first given, and these two leavened loaves are the first-fruits offering! While we don’t have a problem with the two loaves representing the first-fruits offering, even being symbolic of a saved people (likely, the two houses of Israel), nowhere in the Scripture does it say that leaven is the Holy Spirit or that His people are to be “leavened.”

We are the *salt* of the earth (Matt. 5:13). Dan Israel, in his book, ***Christianity Unmasked***, points out that “Salt resists the action of leaven.”

Leavening

Leaven is an active agent or catalyst that puffs up and expands bread and is descriptive of things that can slowly grow and expand. However, the connection that is made between leaven and Yahweh’s Spirit is a dangerous one since according to Scripture, “unleavened” bread is used as the Passover symbol for Messiah’s body.

Making “symbolic” or “revelation” reasoning of plain, “Though Shalt Not” prohibitions forbidding the use of leavening for Passover (Exod. 23:18, 34:25) is foolhardy.

Consider jumping from grape juice to regular water for the Passover cup. Sound foolish? It shouldn’t, that is, if we implement the same reasoning that has been used to make the jump from using unleavened bread to regular bread for the emblem of Yahshua’s body.

There are “living waters” which we know refer to the Spirit, but we do not, therefore, say it is His blood and that we should have it in the Passover cup, do we? Of course not. Yet, isn’t that the same as equating “living bread” with the bread of the Passover?

There is a “grasping for straws,” so to speak, by trying to pull more out of John 6:51 than what is there. It says, *I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.* (The **King James Version 1900** is used throughout, unless otherwise noted.)

Isn’t there the same connection for the “living water,” as well? Doesn’t He say His “blood is drink” (John 6:55), and if the “living water” is what He is offering, then shouldn’t we drink of regular water as a symbol of His blood? Obviously, NO, we should NOT. But let’s put three Scriptures from John in a particular order, first starting with the woman at the well who couldn’t understand why a Jew was asking a Samaritan, such as she, for a drink of water:

Yahshua answered and said unto her, “If thou knewest the Gift of Elohim, and Who it is that saith to thee, ‘Give me to drink;’ thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water,” John 4:10.

For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed, John 6:55.

In the last day, that great [day] of the feast, Yahshua stood and cried, saying, “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink,” John 7:37.

Let’s not be deceived, just as there are Scriptures to show that “regular water” is not what we should put in the Passover cup, there are Scriptures to show that “regular bread” is not to be taken as an emblem of the Messiah’s body.

Satan works in the *spiritual* realm, too. The natural man cannot receive those things which are spiritual, because spiritual things are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:14). So then, “living water” and “living bread” are terms that must be spiritually discerned, and are as common bread and water.

Scripture Confirms Scripture

Let's examine Matthew 13:33:

Another parable spake He unto them: “The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.”

We read in this parable of a woman hiding leaven in three measures of flour. On the surface, it looks like this is a good thing. What it was, however, was a bad thing.

First, let's look at the woman. The woman could be good, but in this case, she's bad. (Not all women found in the Bible, symbolic or otherwise, are always good women.) This woman in Yahshua's parable could be likened to the woman, Jezebel, mentioned as a teacher among the Assembly in Thyatira (one of the 7 Assemblies, Rev. 2:20) or metaphorically, that wicked woman referred to as the “mother of harlots” in Revelation 17:1-7 who made others drunk with her immorality.

Second, we read this damaging statement. The woman was “hiding” or “hid” the leaven in the flour. This is not normal. A woman, when putting yeast in a recipe, does it openly. Let's think about how it might look as the parable describes it. She looks around, and when no one is looking, she “hides” yeast in the flour. Why is there a sense of deception here?

Now, we come to the third word, which we want to examine closely. The Greek word for “measures” is **Strong's** #4568 *saton* or more correctly, *sata*. This word is taken or translated from the Hebrew word #5429 *seah*, which is a measurement in Hebrew meaning 1/3 of an *ephah*.

$1/3 \text{ seah} + 1/3 \text{ seah} + 1/3 \text{ seah} = 1 \text{ ephah}$. An *ephah* of flour is a common thank offering or what is called a meal offering. According to the Torah (Lev. 2:11), a meal (grain) offering has NO LEAVEN added to it.

The *ephah* meal offering, set forth as a commandment, represents the future Kingdom. Note its significance in the following passage from Ezekiel that references the Feast of Tabernacles, a figure for the seventh millennial kingdom:

And he shall provide as a grain offering an ephah with a bull, an ephah with a ram, and a hin

of oil with an ephah. In the seventh [month], on the fifteenth day of the month, at the feast, he shall provide like this, seven days for the sin offering, the burnt offering, the grain offering, and the oil, Ezekiel 45:24-25, NASB. (See also, Ezekiel 46:5, 7, 11.)

Matthew, Chapter 13, provides us with six “kingdom of heaven” parables, each introduced by, “The kingdom of heaven is like[ned] ...” (Matt. 13:24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47), though their timing is understood “at the end of the age.” The children of the Kingdom are the representatives of this coming kingdom but are placed at the “end of the age” when corrupt things are happening.

Imperfection

As already mentioned, the two leavened loaves probably point to the two houses of Israel, symbolically the leavening may actually represent imperfection. (Read our study on *The Hope of Israel*.)

Thou shalt be perfect with Yahweh thy Elohim, Deuteronomy 18:13.

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect, Matthew 5:48.

But though Israel followed after the law of righteousness, they had not attained to righteousness (Rom. 9:31). And neither have we, thus the commandment:

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of Elohim, Romans 12:2.

The process is ongoing, and Satan accuses the brethren along the way (Rev. 12:10). Does he accuse the brethren without cause? Are the brethren perfect? Are you perfect?

Could it be that the unleavened showbread (Exod. 25:30), symbolic of the 12 tribes of Israel, and refreshed every Sabbath upon the Table, represents what we should be? Paul urges us, *Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be (for this is what we should be) a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Messiah our Passover is sacrificed for us, 1 Corinthians 5:7.*

Yahshua Is/Was Perfect

Yahshua was perfect and without sin; He was without corruption; He was without false teachings; He was without malice, and He was without any other negative or wicked attribute (Heb. 4:15, 9:28; 1 John 3:5). We follow His footsteps knowing He was right in everything that He did because He

followed the Father's lead in everything (1 Cor. 11:3; 1 Pet. 2:21-22; John 5:30).

In 1 Corinthians 5:7, Paul is rebuking those who allowed a sin-sick individual, one who was having relations with his stepmother, to be among them in the congregation. Paul stressed the point with the brethren.

*It is reported commonly that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not so much as named among the Gentiles – that one should have his father's wife. And ye are **puffed up**, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I indeed, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Master Yahshua Messiah, when ye are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Master Yahshua Messiah, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Master Yahshua. Your glorying is not good. **Do ye not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?** 1 Corinthians 5:1-6, **NKJV**.*

We should strive for purity in all facets of our life; we should make sure the doctrine we teach is correct. To do otherwise, is to miss the mark. We have often lived a way contrary to Scripture but now, we are away the old "leavened" man and become a new "unleavened" man in our thoughts, words, and actions.

As we strive to overcome the world, we prepare to be changed from being mere mortal to becoming immortal when we are changed into spirit-beings at Yahshua's return (1 Cor. 15:52) – without the slightest hint of leaven, a spiritual priesthood completely free from error of any kind and truly perfected as Messiah is, and as Yahweh has always wanted us to be.

This is an unmistakable hope that we have, that Yahweh looks at the heart and accepts imperfect people. And we are confident of this very thing: He which has begun a good work in us will perform it until the day of Yahshua the Messiah (Phil. 1:6). Indeed, He will perfect those things concerning us (Psa. 138:8) so that at the last trump, we may be raised up and changed in the twinkling of an eye (1 Cor. 15:52).

Paul said of himself – and of us, *I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection! But I keep working toward that day when I will finally be all*

that Messiah Yahshua saved me for and wants me to be, Philipians 3:12, NLT.

Hope for the Imperfect

One can be sincere, and yet be sincerely wrong. The "symbolic" meaning of leaven in the two-loaf, first-fruits offering is profound. It teaches us that brethren who may "ignorantly" teach or who have been misled by a false doctrine will have the opportunity to enter into the Kingdom – but only, if they can be corrected and instructed in the Way more perfectly.

Yahshua is recorded in Matthew 5:19, saying, *Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

The one who may be mistaken on a doctrine can make it into the Kingdom – again, if he can be corrected and instructed in the Way more perfectly – as he who is schooled in, and received, sound doctrine.

In the Master's parable of the sower (Mark 4), He makes allowance for the diversity of rewards commensurate with every man's several ability (Verse 20). For there are degrees of rewards reserved for Yahweh's people, commensurate to the diligence each gives in making his calling and election sure (2 Pet. 1:10). Revelation, Chapters 2 through 3, clearly teach that they who "overcome" the world and Satan's destructive ways and "endure to the end" will be given different rewards, including eternal life (Rev 2:7, 10-11, 17, 26-28, 3:5, 12, 21).

The parable of the talents also suggests different levels of rewards (Matt 25:14-30). The one who doesn't get anything is the one who does nothing, thus confirming that one reaps what he has sown.

Conclusion

We must be careful when discussing "symbolism," as it can draw a person away from true Scriptural teachings.

We are not perfect, but we strive toward perfection. The two "leavened" loaves offered at Pentecost are representative of Yahweh's people who by faith proceed toward that day at the sounding of the last trump, when they shall become changed – unleavened, and accepted in the Beloved (1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:16; Eph. 1:6). But for now, the closer we are to Yahweh, such as the twelve loaves in front of the Holy of Holies, the less leavened we will be.

- Elder David Brett



Know Your Enemy

(Who is Satan?)

Satan in the Hebrew language is *hashatan* (meaning, the adversary). He was a beautiful angelic cherub, said to be the one who had covered the holy mountain of Yahweh. But now, is the ruler of this world; an accuser of the brethren and an enemy of Yahweh and Yahshua.

Satan, before the Garden of Eden

Originally named in Hebrew “*helel*,” meaning, “son/bringer of dawn/light” (Latin: *lucifer*), we read the following.

How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning (helel), son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart, “I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of Elohim, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.” Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit, Isaiah 14:12-15. (The **New American Standard Bible** is used throughout).

Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, “Thus says the Sovereign Yahweh, ‘You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of Elohim; every precious stone was your covering: the ruby, the topaz and the diamond; The beryl, the onyx and the jasper; the lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald; and the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, was in you. On the day that you were created they were prepared. You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you [there]. You were on the holy mountain of Elohim; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you,’” Ezekiel 28:12-15

This is a figurative representation given in Scripture for Satan. The king of Babylon is mentioned in verse 4, an allegory for Satan. The anointed cherub is a covering over the throne of Yahweh. That is how some have pictured Satan before his fall. Now, he’s pictured as a serpent and dragon.

The Serpent

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which Yahweh Elohim had made. And he said to the woman, “Indeed, has Elohim said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden’?” Genesis 3:1.

Craftiness is Satan’s scheme of which we must not be ignorant (2 Cor. 2:11). For he uses things in the world to distract and ultimately, to kill us.

Satan will use, even ministers of apostasy to deceive people, alleging the Messiah came to do away with Yahweh’s eternal laws. Read our studies on **Why Biblical Law?** and **Why Grace Leads to Obedience**.

But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of [devotion] to Messiah. For if one comes and preaches another Yahshua whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different evangel which you have not accepted, you bear [this] beautifully, 2 Corinthians 11:3-4.

Bearing it beautifully is a sarcastic way of saying they seemed not to care that they were walking in error. To go against Yahweh’s instructions is to miss the point that devotion to the Son, is devotion to the Father. John 17:21-23 declares that Yahweh and Yahshua are One in goals, purpose, and actions. None will teach anything contrary to His Word if they are

devoted to the Messiah, Whom they will honor for His sacrifice, which has saved them from the penalty of sin. On the other hand, devotion to this world, i.e., to our flesh, is certain death.



The Dragon

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, Revelation 20:1-2.

John believed the devil is real and Paul, too (2 Corinthians 11:3) in his account of what occurred in Genesis 3:1-6. But now, and before Satan is removed, he opposes us and tries to return us back to the vomit and mire of our past and subsequently, death.

With his removal, Messiah will reign for 1,000 years on the earth. It will be a time of peace and prosperity, without Satan's presence exercising subtlety and cunning craftiness to distract and draw people away to work unrighteousness.

The Coming Kingdom and Judgments

"But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and he will put the sheep on His right and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' ... Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels,'" Matthew 25:31-34, 41.

This agrees with the Master's earlier discourse on the ten virgins, five wise and five foolish, and his parable of the distribution of the talents.

While we may not completely understand the timing of His judgment, we do understand that at the second resurrection, the books will be opened, and some will be judged and cast into the lake of fire. Lawlessness will not be tolerated in the Kingdom as in this world. No one gets away with anything. What

a person sows, he will reap.

Therefore, judgment is not measured until the Master comes, when He will bring to light things hidden in darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts. Then, each man's praise will come to him from Yahweh, as it says in 1 Corinthians 4:5. Here, Paul confirms that there will be judgment when Yahshua returns.

Satan Opposes Brethren

In Job, chapter 1, we read that Yahweh initiates a conversation with Satan who had come among the sons of Elohim who were going before Yahweh. Yahweh said to Satan, *"Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing Elohim and turning away from evil,"* Job 1:8.

We can imagine that Yahweh was like a happy father at that moment and showed Satan that man could do well if he wanted to.

Subsequently, Yahweh delivered to Satan all that Job had, and he was allowed to bring injury to Job's substance. This prince of the power of the air even inflicted the loss of Job's children. Yet, through all this misfortune, Job kept his integrity and didn't sin.

At first, in chapter 1, Yahweh withheld Job's person from the devil's wiles. In the second chapter, the sons of Elohim with Satan among them, again presented themselves before Yahweh. This time, however, the conversation between Yahweh and Satan took a different turn. Read our study on ***Who are the Son's of Elohim?***

Satan is an adversarial accuser. In his second exchange with Yahweh, *Satan answered Yahweh and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. However, put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face." So Yahweh said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life,"* Job 2:4-6. Such confidence Yahweh had in this blameless and upright man, Job.

We could also call the devil a troublemaker when he moved King David to count Israel.

Then Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel. So David said to Joab and to the princes of the people, "Go, number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan, and bring me [word] that I may know their number." Joab said, "May Yahweh add to His people a hundred times as many as they are! But, my master the king, are they not all my master's servants? Why does my master seek this thing? Why should he be a cause of guilt to Israel?" 1 Chronicles 21:1-3.

David's fleshly pride prompted this taking of a census. Pride can move us, too, if we allow it. David's proceeding in this undertaking met with grave consequences as the account reveals (1 Chron. 21:11-15).

The Apostle Peter, reveling in the Master's commendation of His recognition of Him as the Son of Yahweh, afterward was chastised for his challenging the Master's foretelling the disciples the cause for which He had come into the world. Rebuking Peter, Yahshua told him, "Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on Elohim's interests, but man's" (Mark 8: 33b).

Satan was also said to have bound a woman for eighteen years, which may also be a Hebrew idiom (Luke 13:16).

The Apostle Paul was hindered by Satan, as well, though we are not told how. To the Assembly at Thessaly, Paul wrote, *For we wanted to come to you – I, Paul, more than once – and Satan hindered us*, 1 Thessalonians 2:18.

Moreover, to the Assembly at Corinth, he wrote:

And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me – to keep me from exalting myself, 2 Corinthians 12:7.

While "messenger of Satan" is more of an idiomatic phrase, it also confirms Paul knew that there is an evil personage called Satan the devil (Greek *diabolus*, meaning accuser).

Satan, more often than not, figures in the problems we experience in this life. However, we can choose to walk a better path, even if we are physically hindered. Remember Job?

Paul admonishes Timothy that none should be soon set as an elder after conversion, saying,

[And] not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil, 1 Timothy 3:6.

In wildlife, predators seek after the young and weak. Satan, too, is a predator, seeking new converts but who over time, become more robust in their faith and less likely to fall into Satan's trap.

Overcoming Pride

But He gives a greater grace. Therefore [it] says, "ELOHIM IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." Submit therefore to Elohim. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to Elohim and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded, James 4:6-8.

The key is maintaining a humble heart-attitude that submits to Yahweh's will. Humility and submission to Yahweh's will enables us to resist Satan's influence. Of course, knowing His Word, relying on His Spirit and not leaning upon our own understanding, are imperative (Prov. 3:5).

Pride may have been our past, but it shouldn't be our present.

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest, Ephesians 2:1-3. Being a humble son of obedience is the opposite of being a son of disobedience.

Satan, the prince of the power of the air, is also a spirit which has the ability to influence spiritually. Of interest is that the word spirit, often translated *ruach* in the Hebrew or *pneuma* in the Greek, means life or being, or representing the mind or essence of a person – essentially the attitude that one conveys.

*And He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him. But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem. When His disciples James and John saw [this], they said, "Master, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what **kind of spirit** (*pneuma*) you are of; for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." And they went on to another village*, Luke 9:52-56.

In this case, *pneuma* or spirit is likened to the spirit or heart-attitude of someone. It could have just as well been said, "you don't know whose spirit you're emulating." That heart-attitude or spirit is subtle, and proceeds from Satan and his demonic forces.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world [forces] of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly [places], Ephesians 6:12.

Knowing these things, and the other truths of Yahweh's Word, and what the Messiah had done for us – that is, destroying the works of the devil (1 John 3:8) – helps us to stand firm and overcome pride or anything else that exalts itself before Yahweh.

The Apostle John in 1 John 2:13-14 says, *I am*

writing to you, fathers, because you know Him Who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him Who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the Word of Elohim abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

Encouraging words of affirmation. We can all use encouragement at times because Satan doesn't rest, and his influence is prevalent in the world.

Satan's Attributes

As we've already seen, Satan is subtle and cleverly deceitful, and furious, knowing his end is coming. Before the end, however, there will be all sorts of satanic signs and false wonders manifested by the anti-Messiah (2 Thess. 2:9-10). Other areas of Scripture give us more insight, as well, so we need not be ignorant of his schemes (2 Cor. 2:11). For this reason, we must know the True Messiah, so we can identify the false one.

Be of sober [spirit], be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour, 1 Peter 5:8.

Just as in the book of Job (Job 1:7), Satan roams around to and fro, just like a lion seeking prey. He has ministers, appearing righteous (2 Cor. 11:15) but are far from righteous, as Yahshua pointed out when He dealt with them.

You are of [your] father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own [nature], for he is a liar and the father of lies, John 8:44.

These were hard words, but He knew their hearts, by the fruit of their lives (Matt. 7:16, 23:13-15). They were submitting not to Yahweh's Spirit but rather to Satan's spirit and influence.

They, with their father, Satan, pervert Scripture. Even today, false ministers, who knowingly steal and lie, are without excuse. Others who are ignorantly caught up in the lies of Satan will hopefully repent when confronted with the truth.

In Matthew, chapter four, we read the account of Yahshua being tempted by Satan.

And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of Elohim, command that these stones become bread." But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ONEVERYWORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE

MOUTH OF YAHWEH'." Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of Elohim, throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU'; and 'ON [their] HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE'." Yahshua said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT YAHWEH YOUR ELOHIM TO THE TEST'." Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me." Then Yahshua said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP YAHWEH YOUR ELOHIM, AND SERVE HIM ONLY'." Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and [began] to minister to Him, Matthew 4:3-11.

Satan knows Scripture, too, but Yahshua rightly divides it.

In the parable of the wheat and tares, Satan is identified as the enemy.

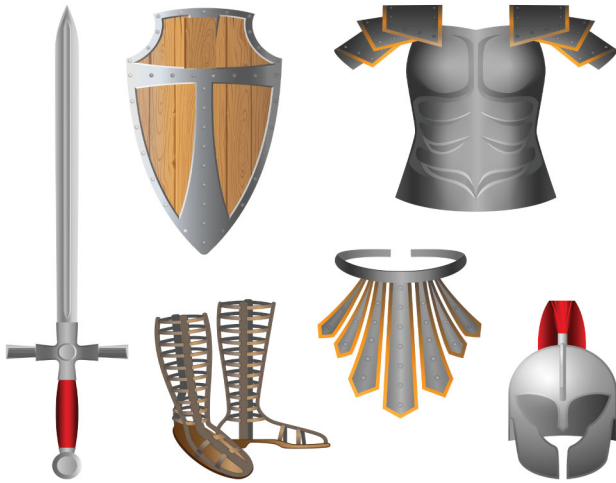
Yahshua presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' The slaves said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn,'" Matthew 13:24-30.

Yahshua, to Whom all judgment is committed, may be thought as the landlord and the tares, the planting of Satan. But in the end, at the harvest, the tares will be uprooted and burned ... before, the wheat is brought into the barn.

The Armor of Yahweh

What can we do besides maintain humility and nurture a close relationship with Yahweh? The answer is to put on the armor of Yahweh.

The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and
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put on the armor of Light. Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Master Yahshua Messiah, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to [its] lusts, Romans 13:12-14.

The world offers many provisions for mankind's lusts, the end of which is death. But being in the Light of Yahweh and loving Him provides an excellent reward for the future (Isa. 64:4, 65:17; 1 Cor. 2:9).

But since we are of [the] day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. For Elohim has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Master Yahshua Messiah, 1 Thessalonians 5:8-9.

Here, we begin to gather information about the armor of Yahweh – the breastplate of faith and love that covers and protects the heart ... not only the front but the back, as well. This breastplate was a standard issue for Roman soldiers in Paul's day, and here, the Apostle metaphorically relates this physical armor to the spiritual. We can be thankful for the Messiah, the Author and Perfecter of our faith.

The helmet here is related to the hope of salvation, which covers and protects our minds.

Ephesians 6:13-17 details others parts of the armor.

Therefore, take up the full armor of Elohim, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE EVANGEL OF PEACE; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil [one]. And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of Elohim, Ephesians 6:13-17.

The belt is likened to the truth, which holds things in place. The breastplate is described as righteousness that includes loving Him and keeping His commandments (John 14:21, 23).

Any soldier will have a good pair of shoes – or in the case of the Middle East, in the 1st century, a good pair of sandals – useful for taking the Good News to mankind. The Good News is that through the Messiah, peace and reconciliation can be achieved between our heavenly Father and us (Isa. 52:7; 2 Cor. 5:18).

The sword represents the Word of Yahweh, “living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). In wartime – and we are set at war “against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12) – the sword is considered both a defensive and offensive weapon. And no good soldier would allow his sword to become dull. So, for us, studying the Word of Yahweh is necessary both to keep sharp and to know how and when to use it.

In Conclusion

Knowing our enemy, and, alternately, knowing our Savior, will benefit us both now, and in the end. Satan is crafty, ruling the world and whom, we must steadfastly resist in the faith. We are not to let down our guard, but we are to walk circumspectly (Eph. 5:15). We are to walk, not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit of Yahweh (Rom. 8:4).

The Messiah gave His life for us to overcome Satan's destructive ways. Satan wants nothing more than for us to forsake the Truth and walk away. But we must not do that because we have victory in Yahshua, the Salvation of Yahweh.

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Yahshua, the Author and Perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the stake, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of Elohim. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart, Hebrews 12:1-3.

Yahshua endured hostility from sinners, just as we do. But now we know who is behind that hostility. We now know who our enemy truly is.

- Elder David Brett

TRIBULATION

"This, Too, Shall Pass"



We are children in the sight of Yahweh. He cares for us, loves us, and will wipe away every tear. Because of this, there is promised protection and guidance.

*But now, thus says Yahweh, your Creator, "O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine! When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you, Isaiah 43:1-2. (The **New American Standard Bible** used throughout, unless otherwise noted.)*

Perseverance through Testing

Protection, guidance, and help. This is the expectation of obedient children if they are pleasing Yahweh. As a reminder, the blessings and curses are made clear in Leviticus, chapter 26, and Deuteronomy, chapter 28.

Because you have kept the Word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, [that] hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth, Revelation 3:10.

But what is the Word of His perseverance, or steadfastness? **The United Bible Society** suggests the phrase, "have kept the word of My perseverance," is essentially saying, "have followed My teaching" or "have obeyed My commands." The Philadelphia Assembly is acclaimed and noteworthy for keeping His Word (i.e., teachings and commands).

And of testing? We know Yahweh tests us, just as He had with His people, Israel.

You shall remember all the way which Yahweh your Elohim has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His Commandments or not, Deuteronomy 8:2.

And, as He had with his prophets:

As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the Name of Yahweh. We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of Yahweh's dealings, that Yahweh is full of compassion and [is] merciful, James 5:10-11.

Yahweh is full of compassion and is merciful toward us, as well. None of us can say we experienced what Job endured. Yet, despite what he went through, he maintained his good character. *He said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. Yahweh gave and Yahweh has taken away. Blessed be the Name of Yahweh." Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame Elohim, Job 1:21-22.*

Neither has anyone experienced such a contradiction of sinners against oneself as Yahshua, Who suffered even to the shedding of His blood (Heb. 12:3).

Their attitudes and perseverance were recorded as an example to us (1 Cor. 10:11). Tribulation, trial, testing is common to all men. However, we have the promise He will not allow us to experience more than what we can handle but will, with tribulation, trial, and testing, make a way of escape that we might endure them (1 Cor. 10:13).

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but Yahweh is faithful to deliver one out of them all (Psa. 34:19). Tests of our faith don't make character. Tests of our faith reveal character. Therefore, there is cause to persevere in tribulation, rejoicing in the hope of deliverance (Rom. 12:12). With a lifetime of experiencing trouble, the Psalmist – probably, King David – penned this tribute to Yahweh:

O Elohim, You have taught me from my youth, and I still declare Your wondrous deeds. And even when [I am] old and gray, O Elohim, do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to [this] generation, Your power to all who are to come. For Your righteousness, O Elohim, [reaches] to the heavens, You who have done great things; O Elohim, who is like You? You who have shown me many troubles and distresses will revive me again, and will bring me up again from the depths of the earth. May You increase my greatness and turn [to] comfort me. I will also praise You with a harp, [even] Your Truth, O my Elohim; to You I will sing praises with the lyre, O Holy One of Israel. My lips will shout for joy when I sing praises to You; and my soul, which You have redeemed, Psalm 71:17-23.

I have trusted in Your lovingkindness; my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation. I will sing to Yahweh, because He has dealt bountifully with me, Psalm 13:5-6.

Yes, He has. He has with us, too. May rejoicing in His salvation become our attitude, as well.

Having a Right Attitude

For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in Elohim who raises the dead; who delivered us from so great a [peril of] death, and will deliver [us], He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us, you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through [the prayers] of many, 2 Corinthians 1:8-11.

But in everything commending ourselves as servants of Elohim, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger, in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love, in the word of truth, in the power of Elohim;
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by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left, by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; [regarded] as deceivers and yet true; as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things, 2 Corinthians 6:4-10.

At times, what we go through is like the Apostle Paul describes here – he and his company, and well might he have spoken for the other apostles: “burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life.”

But note his confidence. He said, “that we would not trust in ourselves, but in Elohim who raises the dead; who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us.” Note also his acknowledgment of the brethren's prayers and his gratitude, first and foremost, to Yahweh.

It's NOT About the Money

Though poor of the wealth of this world, they were, and we are, rich through the promise of the inheritance of the Kingdom in Messiah Yahshua.

It's much more important now, that through tribulation, trial and testing, our character be proven acceptable in Yahweh's sight. And so, we face difficulties preparing ourselves to ultimately reign with Yahshua in the Kingdom.

For all things [are] for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of Elohim. Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal, 2 Corinthians 4:15-18

Knowing that some better and enduring substance is being prepared for us, we understand the reason for and adjust our attitude toward tribulation, trial, and testing. And so, whatever our circumstances, we need to be thankful.

For in time past, they were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated ([men] of whom the world was not worthy),

wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, Hebrews 11:37-39.

“... did not receive what was promised,” yet – but they will. At this time, they are at peace, sleeping, awaiting the resurrection.

Enduring Without Sin

For you have been called for this purpose, since Messiah also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the stake, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls, 1 Peter 2:21-25.

Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, to the assembly of the Thessalonians in Elohim our Father and the Master Yahshua Messiah: Grace to you and peace from Elohim the Father and the Master Yahshua Messiah. We ought always to give thanks to Elohim for you, brethren, as is [only] fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows [ever] greater; therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the assemblies of Elohim for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. [This] is a plain indication of Elohim's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of Elohim, for which indeed you are suffering, 2 Thessalonians 1:1-5.

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Yahshua, the Author and Perfector of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the stake, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of Elohim. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin, Hebrews 12:1-4.

Contextually, these passages are, (1) speaking

of Yahshua's, and of the Assembly at Thessaly's, example to us of patiently, and without sin, enduring wrongful and unjust persecution; (2) exhorting us to consider and embrace His example, and reminding us that we have not experienced anything like what Yahshua experienced ~ resisting unto blood in striving lawfully in the face of others' sins against us; and (3) enduring wrongful and unjust persecution without becoming weary in well doing and losing heart is easier accomplished when we have first put away the sin in our lives.

Continue in Faith

Strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and [saying], “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of Elohim,” Acts 14:22.

The purpose of this article is to encourage us to continue in the faith. Looking toward the life to come, will, indeed, help us.

So, “let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Yahshua, the Author and Perfector of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured ...” (Heb. 12:1, 2). *For just as the sufferings of Messiah are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Messiah. But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer, 2 Corinthians 1:5-6.*

We are comforted in our affliction because we are not alone. “... the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world” (1 Pet. 5:9). We have each other, but more importantly, we have the Spirit of Yahweh and Messiah, with us.

Unity in Spirit

Now may the Elohim who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Messiah Yahshua, so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify Elohim and Father of our Master Yahshua Messiah, Romans 15:5-6.

Unity in Spirit is what we seek to apprehend and attain; sanctified, to walk on higher ground and along the way, to have a thankful attitude. Such was David's attitude:

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; my cup



cup overflows. Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of Yahweh forever, Psalm 23:4-6.

And such was Yahweh's promise to them for whom the Kingdom and eternity is reserved:

They will not hunger or thirst, nor will the scorching heat or sun strike them down; for He who has compassion on them will lead them and will guide them to springs of water. I will make all My mountains a road, and My highways will be raised up. Behold, these will come from afar; and lo, [these will] come from the north and from the west, and these from the land of Sinim. Shout for joy, O heavens! And rejoice, O earth! Break forth into joyful shouting, O mountains! For Yahweh has comforted His people and will have compassion on His afflicted, Isaiah 49:10-13.

His Promises are Sure

The author of Hebrews tells us that to Abraham, Yahweh had affirmed a promise to multiply his seed. The author then gives us, as “the heirs of the promise,” assurance of hope – by Yahweh's oath, sworn by no greater than Himself – and appropriated by Yahshua's mediation for us.

For men swear by one greater [than themselves], and with them an oath [given] as confirmation is an end of every dispute. In the same way Elohim, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for Elohim to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a [hope] both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, where Yahshua has entered as a forerunner for us,

*having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek, Hebrews 6:16-20. (Read our in-depth study, **Orthodox Believers**, pp. 8-11.)*

We are comforted by these promises apprehended and attained through the mediation of Yahshua, and the exceeding and great promise of the first resurrection. (Read our mini study, **Just One Resurrection?**)

The Benefits

Though we often do not understand why we go through difficult and troublesome times, we should not think it strange concerning the “fiery trials” (1 Pet. 4:12, **KJV**) which should try us as though some strange thing was happening. Benefits come from having patiently endured tribulations, trials, and testings, as the Master Himself affirmed: *By your endurance you will gain your lives*, Luke 21:19. As we learned from Job's experience, he benefited from the trouble through which he persevered and endured. His latter end was blessed twofold more than his former.

To ancient Israel, Yahweh said, *Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction*, Isaiah 48:10. And that He did, beginning in the wilderness through which He led them. Forty years He tested them, to discover what was in their heart, whether they would keep His Commandments, or not (Deut. 8:2).

Are we any better than ancient Israel? Why should we not also be tested and tried, proved whether we will keep His Commandments, or not?

Today, we have Yahweh's Spirit to help us, and for that we are grateful. But that doesn't mean we're excused from experiencing trouble. Indeed, better that we should experience and patiently endure tribulation, trial, and testing now, before the end of the age. We are to pray and be watchful that we might be counted worthy to escape the things that are coming, and even now, we are starting to see (Matt. 24 and Luke 21). All these things are coming upon the earth, and we are to pray that we can stand acceptably before His throne (Luke 21:36).

Our perseverance through trials will also benefit others as a testimony of Yahweh's faithfulness to the Assembly and the world.

So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking Word to no one except to Jews alone. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and [began] speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Master Yahshua. And the hand of the Master was with

them, and a large number who believed turned to the Master. And the news reached the ears of the Assembly at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. Then when he had come and witnessed the grace of Elohim, he rejoiced and [began] to encourage them all with resolute hearts to remain [true] to the Master, Acts 11:19-23.

After Paul's conversion, he became fully engaged in promoting the Good News of Yahshua. Before, however, his breathing threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Master (Acts 9:1, **KJV**), and persecuting them, resulted in them being scattered. And with their dispersion into strange cities, they spread the Good News of the Messiah and testified on His behalf to others. And the Word of Yahweh and His Messiah grew throughout the Middle East.

Later, toward the end of the Apostle's life, his imprisonment even served a greater purpose. Writing to the Assembly at Philippi, he declared,

Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the evangel, so that my imprisonment in [the cause] of Messiah has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Master because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the Word of Elohim without fear, Philipians 1:12-14.

Rejoice in Tribulation

*And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about **perseverance**; and **perseverance**, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of Elohim has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given to us, Romans 5:3-5.*

Perseverance is endurance. We find the same Greek word, *hup-om-on-ay'*, G.5281, **Strong's Exhaustive Concordance**, used for perseverance, and also in this following passage from James 1:2-4, in which it is translated as endurance.

*Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces **endurance**. And let **endurance** have [its] perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing, James 1:2-4.*

In his experience, Peter lists perseverance as the next attribute after faith, moral excellence, knowledge, and self-control, concluding with love, the crowning of all virtues.

Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence,

*and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, **perseverance**, and in your **perseverance**, uprightness, and in your uprightness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Master Yahshua Messiah. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins, 2 Peter 1:5-9.*

Therefore, we must not ask why we must experience tribulations, trials, and testing. These things aim to create Yahweh's character in us, bringing us closer to Him Who is Love (1 John 4:16).

Sometimes, the tribulation we go through is discipline, measured to us because of our actions. But it is imposed upon us for a purpose. *Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but **He [disciplines us] for [our] good, so that we may share His holiness.** All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards **it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness,** Hebrews 12:9-11.*

Conclusion

When we first came into the faith, we didn't know what to experience to bring us to Perfection. But Yahweh has seen us through the difficulties because He was with us and knew that we had committed ourselves to staying on the straight and narrow path.

Like Job, we needed to learn perseverance; we needed to learn endurance; we needed to learn to maintain our integrity. This is all accomplished by persevering through, and enduring tribulation, keeping Yahweh's way of life in our lives, so we can speak like Job, saying, *But He knows the way I take; [when] He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold, Job 23:10.*

If Job could speak directly to us today, about anything we are going through, in fact, if any of the patriarchs who overcame in times past, or the Apostles or other brethren who maintained their integrity and dedication in the face of tribulation, trials and trouble, we're sure they would say to us in any adversity that we go through, that, "This, Too, Shall Pass.

- Elder David Brett

Identifying Esau and Ishmael

Wars and rumors of war currently attend the sliver of land called Israel today ... oh, not all the land promised Abraham, but that will change when the Messiah returns and a complete restoration occurs. Yahweh, Who declares the end from the beginning, will save Israel. Yahweh, Who made a covenant through Abraham to Isaac, will fulfill His promise.

Elohim is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent; has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? Numbers 23:19. (The **New American Standard Bible** used throughout.)

But why is Israel surrounded by so many enemies, and who are these people? They cannot be anti-Semitic, because they are a Semitic people.

Abraham's Other Son

Abram, having received promise that through his seed, a great nation would spring forth, Sarai, his wife being barren, struggled understanding how, at her age, she could conceive. As so often occurs with human nature, she was impatient.

So, Sarai gave her husband Abram, her Egyptian handmaid, Hagar, to provide him a son. (Later, Yahweh changed their names to Abraham and Sarah.) Hagar conceived and brought forth Ishmael.

The angel of Yahweh said to her further, "Behold you are with child, and you will bear a son; and you shall call his name Ishmael, because Yahweh has given heed to your affliction. He will be a wild donkey of a man, his hand will be against everyone, and everyone's hand will be against him; and he will live to the east of all his brothers," Genesis 16:11-12.

Moreover, Scripture tells us that his posterity would be multiplied (Gen. 16:10).

The Ishmaelites, known for their untamed and wild nature, often stir up trouble and frustration, particularly for their neighbor, Israel. Today, they stand as a sizable and recognizable people, surrounding Israel on the north, south and especially, to the east.

The Book of Revelation speaks of a two-hundred million army proceeding from the east (Rev. 9:16). Of these 200 million, the Arab (Muslim) peoples number approximately 25.3 million in Iraq; 67.3 million in Iran; 26.4 million in Saudi Arabia; 29.6 million in Afghanistan; 157.5 million in Pakistan. The sum of these total more than 300 million.

Counting the Muslim demographic of India, China where 1 out of 10 inhabitants is Mohammedan, and Indonesia, and that number is swollen to more than 500 million.

These people are poised to contribute to the friction we see today in the Middle East.

Jacob's Brother, Esau

Isaac married Rebekah, and to them were born twin sons: Esau (hairy), also called Edom (red) and Jacob, from whom came the people called Israel.

But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it be so, why then am I this way?" So she went to inquire of Yahweh. Yahweh said to her, "Two nations are in your womb; and two people will be separated from your body; and one people shall be stronger than the other; and the older shall serve the younger." When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. Now the first came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they named him Esau. Afterward his brother came forth with his hand holding on to Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob; and Isaac was sixty years old when she gave birth to them, Genesis 25:22-26.

When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the field, but Jacob was a peaceful man, living in tents, Genesis 25:27.

Esau, Ishmael's nephew, married one of his daughters (Gen. 28:9) making Esau and Ishmael also related by marriage, and by their similar character.

As a hunter, Esau was skilled in the use of sword and spear. Ishmael, too, was adept at archery (Gen. 21:20). Considering the latter's wild nature, and the both of them possessing an aptitude with field 'artillery', what do you have, but a prowess in making war?

As we noted earlier, from the womb, Esau was contending with his brother Jacob – a rivalry that has marked their relationship throughout history to today.

Esau/Edom against Israel

Today, we are witnessing terrorist attacks involving stabbings with knives (swords and spears) targeting Israelis and American tourists, together with continuing barrages of rockets (arrows) into Israel.

But while Israel prefers peace, it is not going to lay idly by and be walked upon by its neighbors. Of Judah, is it particularly written:

He couches, he lies down as a lion, who dares rouse him? Blessed is everyone who blesses you, and cursed is everyone who curses you, Numbers 24:9. (See also, Genesis 12:3, 27:29.)

Edom and Ishmael are offensive and aggressive by nature, positioning Israel having to be defensive in posture. (Esau became known as Edom, not only because of the redness of skin attending his birth, but perhaps more because of the redness of the pottage for which he exchanged his birthright to his brother, Jacob.)

And Esau said to Jacob, "Please let me have a swallow of that red stuff there, for I am famished." Therefore his name was called Edom. But Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright." Esau said, "Behold, I am about to die; so of what use then is the birthright to me?" And Jacob said, "First swear to me;" so he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew; and he ate and drank, and rose and went on his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright, Genesis 25:30-34.

This passage also manifests his character as a fleshly man, not one who is spiritually-inclined. His nature then is what we see today of his descendants – in the current war ... crimes against humanity, Israeli girls and women being violated, tortured, and murdered, and giving place to the foretelling of the Psalmist,

Remember, O Yahweh, against the sons of Edom the day of Jerusalem, who said, "Raze it, raze it to its very foundation, Psalm 137:7.

The Hebrew wording for "raze" means to leave naked, in the sense of 'indecenty'.

Psalm 83

Psalm 83, written by Asaph, while reminding the reader of past occurrences, speaks also of future events:

O Elohim, do not remain quiet; do not be silent and, O Elohim, do not be still. For behold, Your enemies make an uproar; and those who hate You have exalted themselves. They make shrewd plans against Your people, and conspire together against

Your treasured ones. They have said, "Come, and let us wipe them out as a nation, that the name of Israel be remembered no more." For they have conspired together with one mind; against You they make a covenant; the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, Moab and the Hagrites; Gebal and Ammon and Amalek, Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assyria also has joined with them; they have become a help to the children of Lot, Psalm 83:1-8.

Notice that Edom and Ishmael are at the top of the list of these ten "nations" whom scholars note, currently surround Israel, and which exclaim, "Let's push Israel into the Sea" and, "Death to Israel."

The Psalmist in reply, summons Yahweh to action, saying,

Fill their faces with dishonor, that they may seek Your Name, O Yahweh. Let them be ashamed and dismayed forever, and let them be humiliated and perish, that they may know that You alone, Whose Name is Yahweh, are the Most High over all the earth, Psalm 83:16-18.

Yahweh will answer this call. Obadiah prophesies the end of the Edomites who neither know, nor care to seek, His Name.

"For the day of Yahweh draws near on all the nations. As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head. Because just as you drank on My holy mountain, all the nations will drink continually. They will drink and swallow and become as if they had never existed. But on Mount Zion there will be those who escape, and it will be holy. And the house of Jacob will possess their possessions. Then the house of Jacob will be a fire and the house of Joseph a flame; but the house of Esau will be as stubble. And they will set them on fire and consume them, so that there will be no survivor of the house of Esau," for Yahweh has spoken, Obadiah 1:15-18. (See also 2 Timothy 2:20; Romans 9:13-15, 22-23.)

Ten Nations, Ten Toes?

The Book of Daniel speaks about a ten-nation government at the end of the age. Nebuchadnezzar dreams of a statue of a man with ten toes, and Daniel, inspired by Yahweh, tells what it means.

You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them ... In that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. As the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some

of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle. And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery. In the days of those kings the Elohim of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever, Daniel 2:34, 41-44.

These, this ten-nation government, will be strong in certain respects – world Islamic dominion with Allah worship, Muhammad, and the Quran unifying them – united in mission, yet different by nature (agenda) in reaching that objective.

Conclusion

So, how can we identify Esau and Ishmael?

1. They are a large identifiable people, unruly and wild, causing problems and producing frustration for others.
2. They are aggressive and offensive by nature.
3. They will say things like, “Let’s push Israel into the Sea” and, “Death to Israel.”
4. They neither know Yahweh, nor seek, Yahweh’s Name.
5. They will be united in mission, seeking world Islamic dominion but characterized different by nature (agenda) in reaching that objective.

Nevertheless, Yahweh will have the final Word:

Remember this, and be assured; recall it to mind, you transgressors. Remember the former things long past, for I am El, and there is no other; I am Elohim, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, “My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure.” Calling a bird of prey from the east, that man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it. Listen to Me, you stubborn-minded, who are far from righteousness. I bring near My righteousness, it is not far off; and My salvation will not delay. And I will grant salvation in Zion, and My glory for Israel, Isaiah 46:8-13.

- Elder David Brett



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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q Someone said that Satan is the queen of heaven? They said she was a wife to Yahweh, wrongly attributed to Asherah.

A We agree that the so-called “queen of heaven” is Satan, but so are all the other pagan deities, both male and female, as is the case with Baal, who was considered a male deity and widely worshipped by people in the ancient world. Satan has been known by many names including Baal, Ishtar, Bel, Beelzebub, Tammuz, Krishna, and the list goes on and on. There is nothing in Scripture that says Yahweh was married to the “queen of heaven.”

“Asherah is an ancient Near Eastern mother goddess. In Ugaritic, Akkadian, and similar texts, she is a powerful, important goddess, the mother of the seventy great gods and the consort of El, the chief [Canaanite] god.” BibleOdyssey.com, article ***What Is an Asherah?*** by Ellen White, PhD (not the Ellen G. White of the SDA).

Asherah was evidently a diety of fertility. Some sort of a tall pole symbol carved out of wood was used to represent her. It was cut down by King Hezekiah in Judah (2 Kings 18:4). It was burned by King Josiah (2 Kings 23:4-7, 15). And, under King Asa’s reforms, Maacah, his own mother, was removed from her position, since she put up an Asherah pole, and it was also cut down and burned. Asherah was just a common pagan diety of Judah, who kept resurrecting it throughout their history and whom the good kings destroyed. No relation to Yahweh the Great El. An original Hebrew Title for Him, but borrowed by pagans. (See our mini-study called, ***Is ‘Elohim’ a Pagan Title?***).

In the Hebrew, the word for Satan is #7931 in the Hebrew-English dictionary *hashatan* which means simply “the adversary.” It was NOT a proper noun and no gender was attached to it. In the Greek there are a couple different words, including *kategoros* #2691 which means “the accuser,” in which the Greeks attached the masculine gender, as well. There is no reference to the feminine gender in either the Greek or Hebrew when Satan is referred to.

Q Reading Luke 17:1, “If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him,” and John 21:23, “Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained,” it would seem that forgiveness of another’s trespass is subject to one’s discretion. Comment, please.

A In the Torah, we read: And if any man sin through ignorance, the priest shall make an atonement for him that sins ignorantly, and it shall be forgiven him. But he that sins presumptuously, the same reproaches Yahweh and that soul shall be cut off from the elect because he has despised the Word of Yahweh by breaking His commandment. His iniquity will be charged against him (Num. 15:22-31).

It can be argued that when Yahshua prayed, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34) and that Stephen’s entreaty, “Master, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7: 60), that they for whom the Master and the Deacon Stephen prayed, sinned ignorantly, and that the prayers of the Intercessors might be effectual toward the forgiveness of their sins.

However, when once one comes into a knowledge of what constitutes sin, then according to Hebrews 10:26-17, *If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.*

The presumption of Scripture is that when one is

immersed in Yahshua, that ye has reckoned himself dead indeed to continuing in sin (Rom. 6:3-6, 11) and that he has mortified the deeds of the body (Rom. 8:13). The Scripture reads, furthermore, “And **IF** any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Yahshua the Messiah the righteous’ (1 John 2:1). Notice, the word, **IF**. The Scripture did not read, when.

We conclude, therefore, that one who willfully sins after coming into a knowledge of the Truth stands in jeopardy of tempting Yahweh, Who cannot be tempted (James 1:13) and Who is liable, moreover, to recompense to him that retribution owing to his error.

So, we should not think that we can continue in sin and that grace would commensurately abound (Rom. 6:1).

Because all judgment has been committed to Yahshua (John 5:24) ... Whose judgment is according to Truth (Rom. 2:2), and because we might not be privy to one’s motivations of heart, it would be better to extend forgiveness of another’s trespass – forgiving from the heart (forgetting the transgression, as well) lest Yahshua should retain our sins and reward us accordingly.

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“And it shall be that everyone who calls on the Name of YAHWEH shall be saved.”

Acts 2:21



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