

YAIY BEACON

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The War in Ukraine: Idea or Ideal?
Dwelling Safely in the Land
Objections to The Day of Trumpets?
Once Saved, Always Saved?
Welcome to Hell
Syncretism

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.

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The War In Ukraine: Idea or Ideal?

idea \ n **1 a** : a transcendent entity that is a real pattern of which existing things are imperfect representations ... **2** : a visible representation of a conception : a replica of a pattern ... **3 b** : an indefinite or unformed conception

ideal \ n **1 a** : a standard of perfection, beauty, or excellence ... **2** : [exemplary] taken as a model ... **3** : practice that values subjective types or aspects that affirms preeminent value

- *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*. G. & C. Merriam Company, 1967

Imperfect, visible representation of an indefinite or unformed conception ... a replica of a pattern – best describes Putin's unprovoked aggression against, and military incursions into, Ukraine that in but a few months, has transformed its "black earth" into a scorched wasteland soaked with the blood and tears of a people who during the more than 30 years since their independence from the 70-year old Bolshevik reign of terror, had undergone a real metamorphosis into a major producer of agricultural and industrial goods that now lay, as but a valley of Hinnom.

No war of recent memory has captured the ire, and near unanimity of the global community. One hundred forty-one nations of the 195-member General Assembly of the United Nations in early March, condemned Putin for his inaugural of this war, being prosecuted on the premise of eradicating *NAZI* ideology; assisting pro-Russian secessionists; and preventing a Sovereign Nation from applying for admission into the *North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)* – a mutual defense alliance – but which has murdered untold thousands of civilian Ukrainian lives; internally displaced, and made refugees of millions seeking asylum in other countries; and, irreparably destroyed a nation's vital infrastructure ... not to mention to the cost to his own country in human resources, exhaustion of both civilian and military morale, and the national economy.

The United States, as of this writing – thirteen weeks into Putin's War – has committed and will deliver by the end of May, more than 45.3 billion dollars in war and munitions material and humanitarian aid to assist Ukraine's defense of its homeland and redress the distress of its people.

NATO nations also have provided military assistance and sanctuary and refuge for its people who have fled their country under siege by the Bully. Unfortunately, Ukraine is not a member of *NATO* and is precluded from receiving combat assistance, and has only recently, formally applied for membership in the European Union – an application which could be deferred from consideration by Brussels until the war has ended and

which might not be approved even, if the country doesn't emerge victorious, having overcome the prowess of the Bully.

And so, apart from independent mercenaries who don't particularly have "a dog in the fight," no nation has committed troops to the affray ... taking instead, the safe view from outside looking in, taking notice alright, of older men, women and children being slain, execution style; gazing upon satellite images of what appears to be mass graves and of a topography once productive, now reduced to rubble and a military junkyard; taking notice of women, young and old, being raped; and of tens of thousands transported to undisclosed destinations in Russia and others, frightened civilians – destitute, afflicted, tormented – some 4 million of whom, having risked traversing combat zones to find refuge to compassionate and hospitable neighbors to the west; while staying behind, huddled in basements, and in dens and caves of the earth are starved, and starving, owing to the bully pledging that not even a fly would get through and undertaken by Russia's military disrupting supply lines of food, water, and medicine. Nevertheless, courier-volunteers associated with Western charitable enterprises under the auspices of NGO's (Non-governmental organizations) have, and are, risking their lives to minister to the lives of others, months now under the siege of the Oppressor.

However, apart from dollars and euros in military and humanitarian assistance that are able to get through what Putin's fly is not, much of all that is the rest of the world – like Luke's certain priest and Levite who, in seeing one lying by at roadside, wounded by thieves and left there, half-dead in what was yet half-alive, passed by unconcerned to the other side (Luke 11:30-37) – maybe, just like much of all that is the rest of the world, under cover of *He that passes by, [and] meddles with strife [belonging] not to him, [is like] one that takes a dog by the ears,* Proverbs 26:17.

But let's look at this "meddles with strife belonging not to him." Could it not be argued, that in providing dollars and euros in military aid and humanitarian assistance, these are already meddling with strife belonging not to them, and that just maybe, stopping short of committing human resources in assisting Ukraine in their noble undertaking of preserving the prosperity of a nation's life, all the rest of the world is but doing little more than dismissing a

more active response by saying, "be ye warmed and filled?" (James 2:16).

Certainly, no one – with perhaps the exception of the Bully, Vladimir Putin, who in ideology, is little different from Adolf Hitler and Josef Stalin – wants a wider conflict. But so long as the West is content with imposing economic sanctions which have not been to date, quite so effectual in retarding Putin's conquest, issuing from the lip condemnatory rhetoric without putting its fist where its mouth is, has but encouraged the Bully who is even now, making plans to carve a land route into Moldova (itself, formerly a satellite Socialist Republic) ostensibly to "liberate" Russian separatists where his armies will continue to replicate a pattern of aggression.

And so, what needs to be asked, are, "Where will his next incursion take him?" and, "What could have been done more, that all that is the rest of the world has not done?"

In these perilous times, unsure is the contemporary wisdom that suggests that a people, any people, have the leisure to "pick their battles." For Putin sees himself reinventing the Soviet system with himself as head-of-tyranny.

But meanwhile, all that is the rest of the world, like a certain priest and a Levite passing by to the other side, noisily protesting with the lip (which will scarcely assuage the distress of millions made subject to Putin's carefree annihilation of a people) and charging him as a war criminal (for which crimes against humanity, he will not likely suffer penalties) but confirm their impotence ("fear hath torment," 1 John 4:18). All that is the rest of the world, unwilling to militarily intervene on grounds that such intervention may potentially ignite a spark that brings on an apocalyptic WW III, prefer instead – at the expense of a nation-state being destroyed along with the genocide of its people – not to collectively risk standing up to the Bully with the deployment of counter-offensive means with which to conclusively thwart his enterprise.

Indeed, taken as a model, best describes the Ukrainian ideal – a David standing against the Bully who, like Goliath three millennia before him, stands and as much saying, "I defy the armies of the world this day" (see 1 Samuel 17:10). And all the armies of the world, like the armies of ancient Israel, fleeing from before him, sore afraid (1 Sam. 17:24).



The resolute determination of a people to sacrifice their lives for an ideal should serve as exemplary to all that is the rest of the world... to all that is the rest of the world determined instead, to abstain from engaging risk to its own security from the aggrandizing spirit of the Bully unless, of course, there is come a jeopardy to its own national interest.

Quite, gone is the West's ideal of making "the world safe for democracy" – displaced, in favor of what advances national economies of oil and mineral resources; displaced, in favor of warding off threats and hazards to a people's avocations of leisure; and maybe even, displaced, in favor of sating the appetites of peoples' stomachs.

Lastly, we have prayed ... even boldly, making petition of Yahweh, even invoking the Words of the Psalmist, "*It is time for Thee, O Yahweh, to work ...*" (Psa. 119:126). We have, on behalf of the Ukrainian people, made intercession that He would, as in the deliverance of Israel 3 and ½ millennia ago from the Pharaoh of the oppression to get Himself honor upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen that all the Egyptians should know that He is Yahweh (Exod. 14:17), also to get Himself honor upon the aspiring Czar, and upon all his host, upon armored personnel carriers, short- and long-range artillery, aircraft and warships; and biological and chemical munitions.

Nevertheless, we allow that what we perceive as His tardiness to intervene in this affair of men, is attributable to Him as Sovereign and Supreme Creator in Heaven and over all the fullness of the earth, which is His, the world, and the inhabitants thereof (Psa. 34:1), having no need to give an account of any of His matters (Job 33:14) to any and that it could just be, that rather than He sovereignly executing His time to work, He is waiting for some other – even, all that is the rest of the world ... yes, maybe even, because of their national interests – to become a laborer together with Him in this undertaking or, that perhaps this is but a ramping up of the beginning of sorrows toward that end which is not yet (Matt. 24:8, 6).

- Elder John W. Reece

2023
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Dwelling Safely in the Land



In just six months, 2022 is headed toward becoming in our lifetime, a phenomenal year with ...

- runaway inflation, in the grocery, at the pump
- undisciplined and unrestrained Government spending
- nuisance of homeless people camping on urban green spaces, on city streets, and in abandoned/vacant buildings
- urban hate crimes (homicides) motivated by white supremacy ideations
- mass shootings in grocery stores, church houses, and elementary schools
- increased housing costs: mortgage interest/rent
- supply chain/manufacturing problems: e.g., infant formula, computer chips for everything from automobiles to appliances
- food insecurity, both here and abroad... exacerbated by Putin's War and climate change
- tensions between pro-choice and anti-abortion factions
- tension between parents and school administrations as to the place of Critical Race Theory being taught in public school curricula
- COVID fatigue exacerbated by mixed messaging protocols from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- influence of "woke" ideology on Western culture and its institutions
- the specter of the Axis of Evil expanding Putin's War, with the United States caught in the middle

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It's a Jungle out There

It's a jungle out there, sure enough – intense in undergrowth and making it all but impossible, except to Him Who is Sovereign and Supreme, to cut through it all and bring order out of what man has made to become chaos.

Though occupying our attention – you can't at all fail to give notice – these issues must not be thought comprising all the socio-economic woes that stand in contrast to the actualization of **Life, and That More Abundantly**.

All these and much more are the beginning of sorrows striding toward the end. Taken singly or as a whole, each can, and does, impinge upon the mental wellness of those concerned with the direction toward which society, the economy, and national security are moving.

And concern over these, will move even a person of faith to become agitated, aggravated, and irritable and yearn for the good old days, a simpler time when one didn't have to watch his back ... and, moreover, be tempted to defy Solomon's observation that it was not wise to ask, "What is the cause that the former days were better than these?" (Eccl. 7:10).

Indeed, given the course he followed toward perdition, and the situation of living in this *present evil world*, well might we question even, his wisdom having excelled all that came before and after him.

Yes, we who profess ourselves trusting in, and acknowledging Yahweh in all our ways are particularly challenged during **these perilous times**.

For our faith in Him supplying all our need according to His riches in glory and not suffering us to famish and be forsaken and ourselves, begging bread should not, but may, make us to fear that which is coming upon the earth and suffer the torment common to every other. But what choice do we have, if we purpose to survive and emerge from **these perilous times**, overcoming all, if now we should faint in the day of this adversity? For to not endure this time is to manifest our strength is small and position us scarcely able to long survive and emerge from that greater tribulation which lay ahead of us.

Let us, therefore, pray that Yahweh will renew our strength to endure to whatever our end shall be, that we might be saved.

Leviticus 25:18-19

These two verses are but one illustration of many throughout the breadth of **His Book** – that is, the issuance of a Commandment, followed immediately with a Promise. Come from the TORAH *parashah behor*, "on the mountain" – one of the shortest weekly *parashah* readings in the TORAH – and assigned the week ending May 21st, occurred coincidentally with the mass shooting by an 18-year-old, self-styled white supremacist and whose murderous hate crime on the Sabbath at a Buffalo TOPS grocery took the lives of ten.

The next day, at an ethnic Taiwanese first-day church, one person was killed and others injured by an active Chinese-American shooter, whose dispositions were in line with the leadership of the Peoples Republic of China who are poised to take Taiwan while the West is distracted by, and its resources are drawn away to assist Ukraine in its war with Russia.

Then, Tuesday, May 24th as pupils and their teachers were anticipating a summer break from their academics, another 18-year-old was able to find entry into an elementary school classroom and murder 19 primary

grade students and two faculty members.

In Matthew, Chapter 24, Yahshua prophesied about pestilence, famine, earthquakes in diverse places, wars and rumors of wars as those things of judgment becoming the outcome of men's lawlessness. Who would have thought however, that these apocalyptic events would have occurred in our lifetime?

Bad things happening aren't confined to distant places anymore. They're occurring in our town; our neighborhood, our homes. Today, in these perilous times, when nothing has restrained the imagination of reprobate minds given over to evil, one can't be sure that a trip to the grocery; or to school; or to church; or a picnic at the city park, that they'll safely return home ... or even, at home, that some mischief won't befall them by the hand of a family member or a drive-by shooter.

One might conclude, and his conclusion would be warranted, that there is something in the air – yes, more like the rulers of darkness and spiritual wickedness in high places, going up and down, and to and fro, with but one thing in mind: to kill and destroy.

People, minding their own business and without thought of bringing harm to any other, are targeted by others whose reprobate minds fail the answer of a good conscience, void of offense. And admittedly, it is hard, for people of faith to get their heads around all that is happening out there. However, as it was in a former time, so it is today – the earth was, and is, filled with violence and men had, and are, corrupting their way upon the earth.

And so, two questions come to mind: "Where is Yahweh, that He permits such evil?" and "Why do bad things happen to good people?"

Well, first of all, Yahweh is where He has always been. And of Him permitting such evil? What would you have Him do, arbitrarily rescind man's exercise of free will?

"Oh, only if that exercise of free will brings injury to others," you say.

Well, then, perhaps you should consider your own exercise of free will bringing injury to others, the next time you open your mouth and allow sarcasm to fall out; or the next time you become angry and give another a piece of your mind, or slap their face, or think about odd ways to get even.

Romans 3:10-18, 23

The Apostle's discourse here, echoes the Psalmist's observations that:

- "... *there is none that doeth good*" (Psa. 14:1);

- "... if there were any that did understand, *and seek Elohim*" (Psa. 14:2);
- "They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy: *there is none that doeth good, no, not one*" (Psa. 14:3);
- "... their inward part *is* very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulcher; they flatter with their tongue... They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison *is* under their lips" (Psa. 5:9, 140:3);
- His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud ..." (Psa. 10:7);
- "Their feet run to evil, they make haste to shed innocent blood... wasting and destruction *are* in their paths" (Isa. 59:7);
- "The way of peace they have not known ..." (Isa. 59:8).

We assume that people to whom bad things happen are good but then, can we really discern the thought and intent of others' hearts? The Scripture says the heart is deceitful above all and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9) which debunks the contemporary notion that man is basically good.

We ourselves, upon examination and proving ourselves whether we are obedient in all things, will discover that at any moment, we are not about the business of walking circumspectly and discerning what constitutes the abundance of our hearts. The Truth is, at any moment, we are still, but wretched and in need of being delivered from this body of death!

Even Messiah, Who was the express image of Good, refused the appellation of the young rich ruler who addressed Him as "Good Master," saying, "Why callest thou Me good? *there is none good but One, that is, Eloha*" (Mark 10:18).

After all that has been said here, we should ourselves inquire, asking the same questions – perhaps even, asked of others more worthy than we, who, upon hearing for the first time the Message that is able also, to "deliver us from evil,"

- "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:38) ...
- "Master, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6)... "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30)...
- "... what doth hinder me...?" (Acts 8:36)...
- "What lack I yet...?" (Matt. 19:20)...
- "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" (Mark 10:17).

“... And Ye Shall Dwell in the Land in Safety”

That’s not the same thing as saying there will be safety in the land. For there won’t be, it being not at all different from what it was in the days of Noah: the earth, filled with violence and man having corrupted his way upon the earth (Gen. 6:11-12) – only that you shall dwell safely in the land.

We should, just like the faith heroes of Hebrews Chapter 11, be willing to expect to endure cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment. We should be willing for His sake, to expect to become destitute, afflicted, tormented; or to wander about in deserts and in mountains and having no longer any certain dwelling place, to take refuge in dens and caves of the earth and then maybe afterward, be slain (Heb. 11:26-28).

And yet, why should not we, as Noah, also find grace in the eyes of Yahweh? (Gen. 6:8). Why should we not dwell safely in the land as did Noah and his immediate family, though all about him was ... and among us is, the corrupt and violent way of mankind? Why should not we be among the elect, for whose sake those days of trouble should be shortened? (Matt. 24:22). Why should not we be among them of whom the Master affirmed, *But there shall not an hair of your head perish*, Luke 21:18?

Yes, why should not we dwell in the land in safety, except we like most every other, also neglect a heart’s Obedience to the Commandments of Yahweh. A heart’s Obedience, we say, and such little cost to self in exchange for one’s finishing his course having *dwelt in the secret place of the Most High and abided under the shadow of the Almighty ... not afraid of the terror by night; for the arrow that flieth by day; for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; for the destruction that wasteth at noonday*, Psalm 91:1, 5-6.

Some of us may be appointed to bear the burden and heat of our day ... like our Master, not accepting deliverance. But others of us, who have made Yahweh our refuge, even the Most High our habitation (Psa. 91:7, 9) and are abstaining from ALL appearance of evil (1 Thess. 5:22) by,

- ruling our spirits (Prov. 25:28);
- bringing our every thought, word, hearing, sight, and deed into captivity to the obedience of His Commandments (2 Cor. 10:5);
- walking circumspectly (Eph. 5:15);

- pondering the path of our feet (Prov. 4:26);
- as a prudent man, looking well to our going (Prov. 14:15) and foreseeing trouble, hiding ourselves (Prov. 22:3);
- guiding our affairs with wisdom, understanding, and discretion (Psa. 112:5);
- not otherwise tempting Yahweh (Deut. 6:16); but
- watching, and praying always, that we may be accounted worthy to escape ... the weapons that are formed against us – lest they should prosper (Isa. 54:17) – and all these things which are coming to pass (Luke 21:36)

... so that we, may only with our ears, hear and with our eyes, see **terror, the arrow, the pestilence, the destruction that wasteth** and a thousand falling at our side, and ten thousand at our right hand and quite, without **terror, the arrow, the pestilence, the destruction that wasteth coming nigh us**.

These are the second set of 10 Commandments given to us, so that we, might escape the corruption that is in the jungle of this world, and become secure from the violence by which all that is the rest of the world, has become overcome.

Conclusion

Let us then give diligence, therefore, in these perilous times, to make our calling and election sure and earnestly contend for the faith that has, and is, being delivered to us ... willing now, through reproof, correction, instruction, and exhortation, to become perfected in that which we lack.

- Elder John W. Reece



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Objections to The Day of Trumpets?

Over the years, we have given messages about the Day of Trumpets concerning:

- Yahshua's return on the last Trump;
- The fact that observing Trumpets reminds us what Yahweh has done in the past and what He will do in the future for us;
- Archaeological aspects of Trumpets, such as the Arch of Titus showing silver trumpets removed from the second Temple;
- And, even the various Trumpet blasts, which were used from everything from a local gathering to a trumpet call to go to war;
- As well as all seven Trumpet blasts of Revelation;
- And the reading of the book of Zephaniah.

But one thing we haven't talked about are the objections to the Day of Trumpets. Why, knowing the rich history and future fulfillment that the day of Trumpets represents, would anyone not want to observe this Day?

Catholic and Protestant commentaries address the symbolism of Trumpets as pointing to Yahshua's return. Their denominations see Pentecost – the pouring out of the Spirit – significant, and observe it. One group even call themselves Pentecostal.

But why do most not regard the Day of Trumpets, as with all of the seven annual Feasts (see Leviticus 23)? Isn't the return of Yahshua, just as significant as the pouring out of the Holy Spirit? Maybe even more so? After all, His second coming will usher in the Kingdom on earth – for one thousand years of true peace and prosperity. Why would any object to a Kingdom of peace and prosperity?

We Are NOT Jews!

Catholics and Protestants claim Abraham as their father. Yet he was neither Jew nor Israelite. What distinguished him from every other of his generation, is that He received an exceeding and great precious promise, because he obeyed Yahweh, kept His charge, His commandments, His statutes, and His laws (Gen. 26:5). It is through his seed; his descendants would be numbered as the stars of heaven and all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

“All the nations of the earth?” Nevertheless, the first objection is that this was for Jews! People will say, “This is a command to the Jews.”

Yet, there may not be any greater reason for keeping the commandments, statutes and laws of Yahweh than this: The exceedingly great blessings which comes from doing them.

Yahweh promised through Abraham, that he would be blessed through Isaac. (Jacob is one of Isaac's sons, whose name was later changed to Israel.) From Israel came forth 12 sons, to whom through Moses, Yahweh gave appointed times – the weekly Sabbath (Shabbat) and seven annual High Sabbaths (*Shabbathons*) – which they should proclaim as holy convocations.

Because Yahweh pronounced His blessing through Abraham's seed to "all the nations of the earth" (Lev. 23:2), these appointed times cannot be thought as the Jews' Holy Days. Neither are they Israel's Holy Days, but rather Yahweh's Holy Days. They are observed by all who would become a special, set apart people. Let us read the Apostle Paul's words concerning this blessing that has come to "all the nations of the earth":

*You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; for if Elohim did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either. Behold then the kindness and severity of Elohim; to those who fell, severity, but to you, Elohim's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for Elohim is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the [natural] branches be grafted into their own olive tree? Romans 11:19–24. (*New American Standard Bible* used throughout, unless otherwise noted.)*

This "olive tree" is the whole house of Israel of which Jeremiah 11 speaks, and with whom Paul says Yahweh is not done. Paul in Romans, chapters 9–11, confirms the lost tribes of Israel which were dispersed and make up the Gentiles (Nations), are able to be made partakers of the commonwealth and the covenants of promise (Eph. 2:12). It is true, the Jews, they to whom the Oracles were committed

(Rom. 3:2), should not disregard or despise what Yahweh is doing but be afraid, lest they be cut off, too. The false doctrines of Replacement Theology and Dispensationalism which are dispelled by the light of the Truth.

*Behold then **the kindness and severity of Elohim;** to those who fell, severity, but to you, Elohim's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for Elohim is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree? Romans 11:22–24 (**emphasis** ours).*

And concerning the Day of Trumpets, the fourth of the seven Annual High Sabbaths, we read, *Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'In the*

seventh month on the first of the month you shall have a rest, a reminder by blowing [of trumpets], a holy convocation. You shall not do any laborious work, but you shall present an offering by fire to Yahweh, '" Leviticus 23:23–25.

Under Grace, Faith, Belief, etc.

The history of Israel reveals that they did not keep the commandments, statutes, and laws of Yahweh. For this reason, they were, and are, cut off until the fullness of the Gentiles is come. Their history is recorded for our instruction (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11) and so, we need not make the same error in judgment.

Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS, WHERE YOUR FATHERS TRIED [ME] BY TESTING [ME], AND SAW MY WORKS FOR FORTY YEARS. THEREFORE I WAS ANGRY WITH THIS GENERATION, AND SAID, 'THEY ALWAYS GO ASTRAY IN THEIR HEART, AND THEY DID NOT KNOW MY WAYS'; AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, 'THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.'" Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls



away from the living Elohim. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is [still] called “Today,” so that none of you will be **hardened by the deceitfulness of sin**. For we have become **partakers of Messiah**, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end, while it is said, “**TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS, AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME.**” For who provoked [Him] when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt [led] by Moses? And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? [So] we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief. Hebrews 3:7–19 (emphasis ours).

Sin is the transgression of the Law (1 John 3:4), yes. But also, “whatever is not from faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23). Transgression of the Law and unbelief – that is what we need to avoid.

Yahshua came as a sacrifice for sins, so we are justified in Him. That is our assurance, if we hold firm our faith to the end and do not provoke Him by continuing in sins.

There are those who do not keep the Day of Trumpets; they think because they have faith or belief, they can disregard His instructions. But they are under the same curse as ancient Israel, because of their unbelief. From Romans 11:22 and 23, let’s look at the conditional “if” statements again: “if you continue in His kindness ... if they do not continue in their unbelief.” The conditional “if” statements are there as a warning.

Paul is not deceived; he knows anyone doing his own will instead of Yahweh’s, will not continue to receive Messiah’s favor. For Messiah did not intend we should continue in sin, but rather be dead to it (Rom. 6:12–15).

Refraining from keeping the Day of Trumpets as an appointed time for holy convocation and as a Sabbath rest, is not doing Yahweh’s will. His Commandment is the expression of His will. Disobedience to His Commandment is disobedience to His will.

For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES. Anyone

who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on [the testimony] of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of Elohim, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY.” And again, “YAHWEH WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE.” It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living Elohim, Hebrews 10:26–31.

Objections to the Day of Trumpets? With the Day of Trumpets, as with all the set apart shabbathon, we are coming to a clear understanding Yahweh is preparing us for rulership in the coming Kingdom. In doing such things, we are looking toward the One Who will usher it in.

Again, objections to the Day of Trumpets? To object to keeping Trumpets is like saying to Yahweh, “I don’t care what you say to do, I won’t do it.” Is this anything new?

Thus says Yahweh, “Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; and you will find rest for your souls.” But they said, “We will not walk in it.” And I set watchmen over you, [saying], “Listen to the sound of the trumpet!” But they said, “We will not listen,” Jeremiah 6:16–17.

Today, too, people acknowledge Yahweh’s Word is good and that they need to walk in It. But, yet, they will make their excuses, saying, “That’s Jewish” or, “We’re under Grace in Messiah” or, “We’re no longer under the Law” and for whom incidentally, “for the lawless and disobedient,” the law was specifically made (1 Tim. 1:9 **KJV**).

Return to His Ways, Path, and Law

Near is the great day of Yahweh, near and coming very quickly; listen, the day of Yahweh! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. A day of wrath is that day, a day of trouble and distress, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet and battle cry against the fortified cities and the high corner towers. I will bring distress on men so that they will walk like the blind, because they have sinned against Yahweh; and their blood will be poured out like dust and their flesh like dung, Zephaniah 1:14–17.

“A day of trouble and distress?” Why? Because, “they have sinned against Yahweh.” Sin has become

“*Near is the great day of Yahweh, near and coming very quickly;*”
-Zeph 1:14

the reason for Yahweh's wrath and indignation, and men's tribulation and distress (Rom. 2:8, 9).

Therefore hear, O nations, and know, O congregation, what is among them. Hear, O earth: behold, I am bringing disaster on this people, the fruit of their plans, because they have not listened to My words, and as for My law, they have rejected it also, Jeremiah 6:18–19.

This was spoken to Judah who was about to go into a 70-year captivity in Babylon. But these words are also applicable to anyone not walking in Yahweh's ways, path or laws today..

In the meantime, what are we supposed to be doing? We must blow the trumpet! We must let people know about what the Heavenly Father is desiring from us, and why He sent His Son. We must take on the principle taught through the prophet Ezekiel.

Son of man, speak to the sons of your people and say to them, "If I bring a sword upon a land, and the people of the land take one man from among them and make him their watchman, and he sees the sword coming upon the land and blows on the trumpet and warns the people, then he who hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, and a sword comes and takes him away, his blood will be on his [own] head. He heard the sound of the trumpet but did not take warning; his blood will be on himself. But had he taken warning, he would have delivered his life. But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet and the people are not warned, and a sword comes and takes a person from them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require from the watchman's hand," Ezekiel 33:2–6.

There are consequences for not heeding the trumpet call. After all, it is a warning. These are the days for which it was written: *Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of Yahweh; and that He may send Yahshua, the Messiah appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which Elohim spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time, Acts 3:19–21.*

Repent and return? Times of refreshing, come from the presence of Yahweh? Restoration of all things? Can one walk with Yahweh, by sinning against Him? No. How does one walk with Yahweh?

Doesn't observing the day(s) He has set apart from every other allow this to take place. You know, like the Day of Trumpets – as the sign that a people are set apart – representing one's striving lawfully to walk unto all pleasing.

Yet, will men object. No wonder there is a famine on the land. Oh, not a famine for bread or thirst for water, but for hearing the Words of Yahweh (Amos 8:11) and by Which, man does live (Deut. 8:3).

And then, people will stagger from sea to sea and from the north even to the east; they will go to and fro to seek the Word of Yahweh, but they will not find it," Amos 8:12. Then, they'll seek the True Bread, the Word of Yahweh, but He'll not be found of them, except in judgment.

Good News!

He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. You will give truth to Jacob [and] unchanging love to Abraham, which You swore to our forefathers from the days of old, Micah 7:19–20.

On that day the deaf will hear words of a book, and out of [their] gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see. The afflicted also will increase their gladness in Yahweh, and the needy of mankind will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. For the ruthless will come to an end and the scorner will be finished, indeed all who are intent on doing evil will be cut off, Isaiah 29:18–20.

But the Master affirmed, "Peace I leave with you: My peace I give to you: not as the world gives, do I give to you" (John 14:27). The world talks about peace, but the world has no peace, neither joy, because it does not obey His commandments. It does not practice righteousness. But if obedience to His commandments and righteousness were observed, sin would cease. Spiritual deafness and spiritual blindness would come to an end, and there would be peace and there would be joy.

Yahweh's promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, will be fulfilled. At Yahshua's return in the coming Kingdom, *those who err in mind will know the truth, and those who criticize will accept instruction, Isaiah 29:24.* Traditions, "falsehood, futility and things of no profit" (Jer. 16:19) which oppose Yahweh's laws will be dissolved and men's behavior will become transformed as they receive

“
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Yahweh;”
-Acts 3:19

correction and instruction in righteousness. Then, will all nations be established in righteousness and truth, and experience peace, joy, hope and abundant life in a Kingdom that will have no end.

Thy Kingdom Come

But now Messiah has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep ... But each in his own order: Messiah the first fruits, after that those who are Messiah's at His coming, 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23.

For the Master Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of Elohim, and the dead in Messiah will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Master in the air, and so we shall always be with the Master. Therefore comfort one another with these words, 1 Thessalonians 4:16–18.

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality ... The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to Elohim, Who gives us the victory through our Master Yahshua Messiah. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Master, knowing that

your toil is not in vain in the Master. 1 Corinthians 15:52–53, 56–58.

Accompanying these events, we believe the physical people who are coming into the Kingdom will learn and be converted. Then, at the second resurrection, we believe there will be countless more who will accept Yahweh and do His will.

Conclusion

Objections to keeping Trumpets? Who could object to the Feast of Trumpets, heralding that coming, notable Day of the Master? The Master, Who is now giving us hope and a resolve to persevere and overcome all that is in the world. A world destined to perish in the face of His judgment. We don't have any objections, and we hope you don't either.

And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for Elohim with Your blood [men] from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them [to be] a kingdom and priests to our Elohim; and they will reign upon the earth," Revelations 5:9–10.

There is nothing better than having become the Bride, preparing now for the future return of our Husband, Yahshua Messiah; prepared, awakened and ready for that Day, a Day which will be like no other.

-Elder David Brett

PREPARE FOR THE COMING KINGDOM...

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O.S.A.S.



Once Saved, Always Saved?

In the churches of Christianity, behind the pulpit stands a preacher... his eyes fixed upon the assembly before him. His hands tremble slightly, as he raises a hand, points to the heavens and shouts with great enthusiasm, "Will the Almighty allow even one of His servants to become lost? Will He deny even one of those who have been called by Him entrance into the Kingdom? I tell you, 'NO'."

Some of us have heard something like this – a claim that the Father will never allow someone, who was once found, to be lost again; or that He will never remove mercy from those upon whom He has bestowed mercy. Oh, no! They claim that one's eternal salvation is assured, and that it cannot be lost. But is it true?

When I was in Christianity, I had heard this message many times. But it was a long time before I, through study, tested its verity. Eventually though, I became a Berean and studied diligently and Yahweh revealed to me what I will share with you in the following discourse.

O.S.A.S., or Once Saved, Always Saved – what is this doctrine of *eternal security*? And what are the foundational Scriptures employed in its defense?

Choice! It's All about Choice

Proponents of eternal security often use the following four verses of Scripture, as fundamental to their profession that one cannot lose their salvation:

And I give eternal life to them; and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, Who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand, John 10:28-29. (**New American Standard Bible** used throughout, unless otherwise noted.)

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angel, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of Elohim, which is in Messiah Yahshua our Master, Romans 8:38-39.

Key words in these passages, are "no one" and "any other created thing." They who promulgate this heresy defend their position declaring that "no one," neither "any other created thing" can snatch us away, or separate us from the love of the Sovereign One – that is, "nothing" apart from ourselves. These verses omit CHOICE, and they omit SIN.

In the Torah, Yahweh holds out both blessing and life and cursing and death (Deut. 30:19) to each of us and urges us, moreover, to choose life. It's all about CHOICE. Good CHOICES produce good things; bad CHOICES incur bad things. And of SIN? Have you ever read Isaiah 59:2, in which Yahweh says, *But your INIQUITIES have made a separation between you and your Elohim, and your SINS have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.*

In the Messianic writings, the Evangelist John declares that everyone who practices SIN is lawless (1 John 3:4).

Salvation is not a one-time event. It is a process – a process of justification (rendered, innocent or righteous) and sanctification (meaning, purification or holiness) and accomplished as we grow in grace and in knowledge, abandoning and separating ourselves from SIN. It is still, enduring to the end (Matt. 10:22, 24:13):

- working out one's salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12);
- giving diligence to make one's calling and election sure (2 Pet. 1:10);
- earnestly contending for the faith delivered us (Jude 1:3).

The Apostle Paul said it this way: As we therefore receive Yahshua the Messiah, we should walk in Him (Col. 2:6).

O.S.A.S. proponents assert we who oppose their doctrine are trying to work out our salvation, declaring that we don't believe in the full, complete and perfect redemptive work of the Messiah. They take the stand that nothing must be done to inherit salvation, that it is a free gift.

But if that were true, what do we do with the Apostle's affirmation that not the hearers of the Law are justified before Elohim, but the doers of the Law (Rom. 2:13) ... and confirmed, moreover, by a second witness, **But be ye doers of the Word, not hearers only, deceiving your own selves,** James 1:22 *KJV*.

Indeed, if that were true, what should we make of Paul's conclusion, toward the end of his life,

I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course. I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Master, the Righteous Judge, will award me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing, 2 Timothy 4:7-8.

If O.S.A.S. were true, what should we make of him writing,

"But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith... For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine ... and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths" (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 4:3, 4).

Faith + Works + Endurance = Salvation

Obedience that is shown by works remains a choice and an action. They who neither choose to obey, nor to do, are neither justified and sanctified, nor will they find admittance into the Kingdom!

James, the brother of our Master, posits that faith without works is dead. He asks rhetorically,

Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son

Isaac on the altar? ... And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? James 2:21, 25. He concludes, therefore, that as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead, James 2:26.

So, we can see that according to the Word, if our faith lacks works, faith can't save us. Consider this: If Noah, when warned of the coming flood, hadn't built the ark as he was instructed, but ignored Yahweh's command, would his faith have saved him? The conclusion of Scripture, is, "NO." Faith only works to our benefit if it is accompanied by obedience to the Commandments.

So far, we have seen that ONCE SAVED, ALWAYS SAVED is Scripturally indefensible. But wait! There's more. If ONCE SAVED, ALWAYS SAVED is true and correct, what was the point and need of the reproof, correction, instruction, rebuke, exhortation (2 Tim. 3:16, 4:2) – the five administrations of the Word – mentioned not only by the Apostle, but also found replete in the Tanach (the Old Testament).

And of enduring to the end? The writer of the Book of Hebrews charges us to lay aside every encumbrance and the sin that would, and does, so easily beset us from running the race set before us (Heb. 12:1). The Apostle Paul, also likened this life of faith and obedience to running a race, and urged his charges to so run that they might win (1 Cor. 9:24). Yes, to run with endurance and with patience, because this race is not a sprint, but a marathon and much stands between us and the finish line.



The Place of Suffering

Proponents of O.S.A.S. haven't considered, evidently, that Yahweh in His Word never promised us a smooth and calm passage, only a safe landing if we endure. With both much tribulation (Acts 14:22) and persecution (2 Tim. 3:12) will we enter into the Kingdom.

Suffering? Oh, yes! The Master suffered and left us an example that we, too, would suffer (1 Pet. 2:21). We must face many trials, perhaps not so trying as the Apostle who catalogs his sufferings in 2 Corinthians 11:22-28, but trials nonetheless. Hebrews 11:32-38 relates that many suffered for righteousness' sake and concluded of them, "Of whom the world was not worthy" (Heb. 11:38).

We must finish the race but, in doing so, it not only requires endurance through the trials of our faith but wisdom, too. Our adversary uses many tricks, snares, and distractions to prevent us from completing our course of faith.

Our walk in the Faith should mirror that of ancient Israel. Yahweh heard the appeal of Israel for deliverance, from their labors in Egypt. With a strong hand, He broke the power of Egypt, the symbol of sin. In a similar manner, Yahshua's death on the stake broke the power of our sin.

Nevertheless, we, like Israel, are in a wilderness. Many of Israel grumbled and wanted to return to Egypt. Ten times they tempted the Elohim of their deliverance so that they perished in the wilderness and were prevented from entering the Promised Land and into His rest because of their disobedience.

Likewise, if we aren't walking in obedience and found faithful in enduring suffering, we may also be barred entrance into His rest and denied admittance into His Kingdom and eternal life. We should not look back as they. "For any who once puts his hand to the plow and looks back is unfit for the Kingdom" (Luke 9:62). *Remember Lot's wife*, Luke 17:32 **KJV**.

Our old ways are in the past, and should remain there, buried... drowned in pure water by the washing of the Word.

What about the Vomit and Mire?

They, which think to support the heresy of O.S.A.S., say that if someone walks away, they never really believed. Perhaps they should review the authority of Scripture:

For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Master and Savior Yahshua Messiah, they are again entangled

in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "A dog returns to its own vomit," and, "A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire," 1 Peter 2:20-22.

The Master, too, speaks about a house that is exorcised of an unclean spirit, but because it is not furnished, the unclean spirit returns with seven ... more wicked than itself, to assume again residence in that house (Matt. 12:43-45).

A corroborating third witness comes from Hebrews 6:4-6 **KJV**:

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the Heavenly Gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the Good Word of Elohim, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they impale to themselves the Son of Elohim afresh, and put Him to an open shame.

So, it is possible to fall away and make it impossible to be renewed to repentance. Keep in mind, they which have fallen away were once established in the Faith; that they were not, as the O.S.A.S. folk conjecture, weak in the Faith of Messiah.

Moreover, in Hebrews 10:26-31, there proceeds a warning about willfully continuing in sin after coming into knowledge, that Messiah's blood will not cover willfully continuing in sin – that is, falling away – and by doing so, one is excluded entry into the Kingdom.

As we posited earlier, salvation is a continuum – we are not saved, we are being saved ... its evidence manifested when we receive His commendation, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25:21 **KJV**).

In Matthew 13:3-9, Yahshua relates a parable of a sower who went out to sow seed, which is an allegory to the Word being sown among men. Some fell beside the road, and the birds came and consumed it. Other seed fell upon rocky places, and sprang up but when the sun rose, it was scorched and died because it had no root in depth of soil. Others still, fell among thorns which choked them out. Lastly, some seed fell on good soil and yielded a crop, thirty-, sixty-, a hundred- fold as much as had been sown.

In the parable, Messiah made it clear that all of the Seed (the Word) produced a measure of faith, but when elements contrary to its growth resisted the Word's production, immediately the Seed died. Only That Which fell upon good, fertile ground of the heart yielded increase that both remained and abounded to the account of them who had endured all the elements of our metaphorical birds, sun, and thorns.

Yes, though many will say on that great and notable day, "Master, Master, did we not prophesy in Your Name, and cast out demons in Your Name, and do many mighty works in Your Name?" (Matt. 7:22) only to hear His reply, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness" (Matt. 7:23).

Other O.S.A.S Objections

O.S.A.S. advocates may protest again, saying the fallen away were never in the Faith or that they never believed. But it is clear here that they proclaimed to have in His Name prophesied, cast out demons, and done many mighty works. (Notice, this word *works*.) So, to some degree they must have believed that He had approved of their *works*. (Incidentally, their expulsion from before His presence is attributed to His deeming them workers of lawlessness.) If these, then, possessed a degree of faith, their faith was negated by their having relegated the "handwriting of ordinances" as contrary, blotted out and nailed to the stake (Col. 2:14).

Continuing their protestations, O.S.A.S. proponents will insist that the Holy Spirit can't be taken away from us once we are sealed with the earnest of our inheritance (Eph. 1:13-14). Yet, we are admonished not to grieve the Holy Spirit of Elohim, and we read evidence that the Spirit of Yahweh left one Saul (1 Sam. 16:14-15) because of his disobedience... yes, taken from Saul upon whom earlier the Spirit of Yahweh had come, turning him into another man (1 Sam. 10:6). And seeing Yahweh changes not, and that He has removed His Spirit from people before, could He not, would He not, remove His Spirit from us, too, if we persisted in disobedience to His Commandments?

There remains yet one more, final refutation against this heresy of "Once Saved, Always Saved."

Yahweh in one place declares to Moses, "Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot

The one who overcomes will be clothed the same way, in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the Book of Life, and I will confess his name before My Father and His angels, Revelation 3:5.

The Psalmist David, in his praise to Eloha, petitions the Sovereign One concerning his adversaries, saying,

May they be wiped out of the Book of Life, and may they not be recorded with the righteous, Psalm 69:28.

Note well, the Book of Life makes a distinction between the unrighteous and unfaithful and them which have "by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality" (Rom. 2:7 *KJV*) and who received "eternal life" as their reward.

Again from the Revelation of Yahshua the Messiah, we read:

And all who dwell on the earth will worship Him, [everyone] whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the Book of Life of the Lamb Who has been slain... Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the Commandments of Elohim and their faith in Yahshua... And if anyone's name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the lake of fire, Revelation 13:8, 14:12, 20:15.

“...Let us run with patient endurance the race that is set before us, that after we have done the will of Yahweh, we might receive the Promise.”

Conclusion

This message is not intended to scare anybody away, but to bring a healthy fear; and reverent obedience toward the Father. We can lose our inheritance into eternal life, if we presently waste the substance of the life that has been given us in rebellion or walk away from the Faith that has been delivered to us. In time past, people who were thought established, strengthened, and settled in Faith and belief of the Truth have walked away.

So, for the joy that is set before us, let us run with patient endurance the race that is set before us, that after we have done the will of Yahweh, we might receive the Promise.

-Brother Lucas Bentley

Welcome to Hell

“in journeyings often ... wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins ... in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth ... destitute, afflicted, tormented ... *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils by *mine own* countrymen. *in* perils by the heathen, *in* perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in danger of hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness ... trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment ... tortured, not accepting deliverance ... beaten with rods ... stoned ... as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things ... sawn asunder ... slain with the sword ...”

A collage of words, come severally from 2 Corinthians 11:25-27; Hebrews 11:35-37; 2 Corinthians 6:9-10 (*King James Version* used throughout unless otherwise noted) ... and words brought to mind, as we have been reading a book given us, entitled *Hearts on Fire*, a Voice of the Martyrs publication that reads like the sequel to *Fox's Book of Martyrs* about 8 women who sustained unspeakable indignities to their persons, and yet, remained steadfast and sure in their faith.

The Answer of a Good Conscience

“Welcome to Hell” appears as a subtitle in one account of a section narrating the trials of fifteen year-old Bhutan adolescent, Purnima endured at the hands of her Nepalese tormentors.

And before making protest, saying, “Yeah, but these are 1st day Chr-stians who observe pagan holidays! They are the ones who think and believe L-rd and G-d are the Father’s and the Son’s Names! They also keep the day of the venerable sun as the L-rd’s Day, because this was the day on which they think and believe, the Savior rose from the dead!

We admit to all these things, even as we do to our regard for the fervent-in-spirit and zealously-affected Buddhist monks who may think they’re doing Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha, Enlightened One) service by choosing death by immolation (by fire) to renouncing their false religion.

Nevertheless, as we have been progressing through the text, a recurring question comes to mind: “If these, for whom knowledge of That Which is Perfect is elusive, can suffer the insufferable and, perhaps, for a cause not worthy of death, can I?”

It is a question each of you, too, must answer ... and NOW!

And a secondary question is also prompted: “If these, for whom knowledge of That Which is Perfect is elusive, can suffer the insufferable and perhaps, for a cause not worthy of death, and maintain their endurance predicated upon, *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it [hated] you. ... Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely ... Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven,* John 15:18; Matthew 5:11, 12, can I?”

Again, it is a question each of you, too, must answer ... and NOW!

Yahshua commissioned twelve men and gave them authority and power against unclean spirits; to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease (Matt. 10:1). Before this commendation should go to their heads – as it afterward did, they returning, and affirming, “even the devils are subject to us through Thy Name” (Luke 10:17) – He foretold that they should be delivered before governors and kings, and scourged even. Brother would deliver brother and father, the child, to death; children also, would rise up against their parents and cause them to be put to death. They would be hated of all men for His sake but to not fear them which had power to kill the body, but not the soul, and afterward had nothing more that they could do to them. Yahshua also said that whosoever endured all these tribulations and confess Him before men, He would likewise confess them before His Father, but whosoever among them, would deny Him before men so likewise would He deny them before His Father (Matt. 10:17-23a, 24-25a, 26a, 28, 32-33).

Nevertheless, these who had traversed Palestine with the Master... yes, these whose eyes had seen; whose ears had heard, and whose hands handled the Word of Life (1 John 1:1) after they were endued with Power from on High, declared Him and made good earlier pledge pronounced before their conversion that they would die with Him, and for Him, yet would they not deny Him (Matt. 26:35).

But thanks be to Yahweh for the both of Grace and Space to become Converted in an Upper Room. For we know the narrative all too well, some of us making our lives to become punctuated... through sin, with denial of Him.

Oh, yes! We like very much to identify with, and relate to, the Master. But the truth is we are much more of like passions as His disciples. And before we put forth the finger and accuse these who, in the moment of testing, all forsook Him and fled – later denying and doubting Him – let us examine and judge ourselves in those occasions when, we, too, have cast both vigilance (watching) and diligence (praying) aside and entered ourselves into temptation, and fallen into sin. For of a Truth, we are not any more pious than they who had otherwise endured with Him through most of His trials.

Yeah, we're not much different from them. Like them, we covet the best positions in the Kingdom but yet, find ourselves scarcely worthy to advance above His footstool.

Nevertheless, thanks be to Yahweh for a tinge of conscience that moved Thomas called Didymus to change his mind from asserting, "Except I shall see... I will not believe" (John 20:25) to thus confessing himself, "My Master and My Eloha" (John 20:28).

Thanks be to Yahweh for a tinge of conscience that moved Simon Peter to go out and weep bitterly upon hearing the cock crow, and turning to see his Master and later jumping into the Sea with his peer's announcement, "It is the Master" (John 21:7).

Yes, thanks be to Yahshua Who didn't hold a grudge against any of them as He, suspended upon a torture stake, looked down to find but one (John) at His feet and Whose providing these others with both Grace and Space, saved and delivered them from the Lake ... of Fire!

The Road to Hell is Paved with Good Intentions

Your good intentions will be proven. But it is certain that He will ask, "Are ye able to drink indeed of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" (Matt. 20:22) and it is certain that we in reply, will make our boast, like they, saying, "We are able."

But these eleven, whom Yahshua before His passion had complimented, saying, Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations, Luke 22:28 did not, because they could not, endure this, the last of His trials on which even He, might be thought to have waffled, praying, Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me ... Luke 22:42.

And so, it's a good idea to count the cost of discipleship from the get-go, because no man is above his Master... it becoming enough, that He be as his Master – not limited to keeping Commandment and working Righteousness, but

above and beyond even – having a cup to drink and having a baptism with which to be baptized (Luke 12:50): suffering in his flesh, as He suffered in His flesh that both He and he might learn obedience but having much more need than his Master, to cease from continuing in sin (Matt. 10:23-24; Heb. 5:8; 1 Pet. 4:1).

It is written of Him that He endured such contradiction against Himself – yes, the contradiction of sinners – striving against their sin, resisting unto blood (Heb. 12:3, 4). But which among us could attest to having accomplished this feat. (Maybe we should pay a little more respect to the fervor and zeal that consumed 8 women who sustained unspeakable indignities to their persons, and yet, remained steadfast and sure in their faith. After all, who's condemned Apollos for his being "fervent in the spirit... knowing only the baptism of John?" (Acts 18:25)

Conclusion: The Test

And so, here's the test: Is, or are, there any of His Commandments which you find grievous?

- What about honoring his Sabbath(s)?
- What about observing His clean food laws?
- What about separating yourself from your past life of continuing in the same sin(s) which had in time past and yet, in time present, so easily beset you?
- What about crucifying past (or present) affections and lusts of the flesh?
- What about wasting the substance of life, running to excess?
- What about not yet bringing every thought, every word, every deed into captivity to obedience to the Commandments?
- What about flirting severally with the works of the flesh?
- What about yielding your members (mind, heart, eyes, ears, tongue, hands and feet) in service to spiritual wickedness in high places and to the rulers of the darkness of this world?

Now is the time accepted to behold the day of your salvation. It's judgment time, as it is written:

Wherefore let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall. Examine yourselves; prove yourselves; know yourselves, whether you are in the faith. For if you would judge yourself, you should not be judged. Watch, therefore, and pray always that you may be accounted worthy to stand before the Son of Man (1 Cor. 10:12; 2 Cor. 13:5; 1 Cor. 11:31; Luke 21:36).

-Elder John W. Reece

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Syncretism

We read of ancient Israel's failure to keep the covenant with Yahweh and lament their fascination for paganism. Are there lessons we should learn from their Old Testament example?

At times we are questioned about our frequent references to the Old Testament as we teach from the Bible. Some readers or listeners seem reluctant to study or even refer to the Old Testament. In fact, from time to time we are urged to be a "New Testament Assembly," and teach primarily from the New Testament, and more or less ignore the Old Testament. "We look to the Savior and the lessons He and the Disciples taught in the New Testament to learn what we must do to be in the heavenly Kingdom," is a frequent comment. Many are ignorant of the Old Testament lessons. The question arises, "Why do we have 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 in the New?" Does that indicate we should spend much time in the Old?

Many students of the Bible are unaware that the Savior and the Disciples relied upon and taught from the Old Testament because that was all they had. The New Testament had not yet been written. Clearly, salvation is found in the Old Testament for Paul told Timothy:

*And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Messiah Yahshua, 2 Timothy 3:15. (All Scriptures taken from the **Authorized Version**, unless otherwise noted)*

We cannot forget that the Old Testament makes up 2/3 of the Bible, and such a large portion, therefore, we cannot ignore or set aside. There are many lessons and much to learn in reading and studying the histories and roots of our faith found in the Old Testament. In fact, the Apostle Paul says the Old Testament is given us for our learning and spiritual growth, for the New was not yet written when Paul gave these words:

All scripture is given by inspiration of Yahweh, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 2 Timothy 3:16.

Paul goes on to say that we should learn the experiences of ancient Israel so that we do not fall into the same trap and follow their error:

*Now these things are warnings for us, not to desire evil as they did. Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to dance." We must not indulge in immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Yahweh to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents; nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. Now these things happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come, 1 Corinthians 10:6-11, **Revised Standard Version**.*

Why are we being warned not to pursue pagan practices as did ancient Israel? Did Israel really covet the things forbidden by Yahweh? Did He not provide Israel with the way they were to pursue and follow? Certainly, in our modern age we would not follow the error of ancient Israel and bring pagan images into our

assembly buildings and places of worship, would we?

Because of His promise to faithful Abraham, Yahweh chose Israel to be His special people. They were promised if they were obedient to Him, then blessings would flow from Yahweh. The rewards and blessings would make Israel a flagship for all nations to emulate. Israel was to be an example to show the power and majesty of Yahweh to those that obeyed Him.

Not only did Israel fail and fall into sin while yet enroute to the Promised Land, but once they arrived, their stubbornness prevailed. Israel was a dismal failure. Notice Isaiah's words:

Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken Yahweh, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward, Isaiah 1:4.

It is apparent that Israel was unable to be obedient, lacking the willpower to follow Yahweh's Torah. They were given the Levitical priesthood which functioned among them, and were protected and provided for, as they grew in number and power. The Tabernacle was constructed for their weekly gatherings and learning. Yet, their carnal mind sought the various pleasures and ways of the world as they forsook Yahweh. Israel still expected His blessings and the fulfillment of His promises in spite of their insubordination.

Yahweh was quite aware that carnal mankind would habitually be seeking some new thing in their worship. It would get to the point much of the truth given to Moses would soon be forgotten and lost. Yahweh reluctantly allowed Israel to have kings as did the nations around them, even though He warned they would have to pay the price. The price became heavier under the despotic kings who were an evil example and untrustworthy.

In fact, even the kings chosen of Yahweh proved they were but human, and more than half were poor examples of righteous leadership. A good example is their first king, Saul. He stood head and shoulders above the average man. He was humble and meek at first, but became arrogant and self-serving, even unlawfully disobeying Yahweh's word (1 Sam. 15:23), to the point he was rejected as king.

For rebellion [is as] the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness [is as] iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of YAHWEH, he hath also rejected thee from being king, 1 Samuel 15:23.

Doing Yahweh's will is as important now as it was

then. But how does all this affect us today?

Yahshua's Example

Yahweh is working out a plan in which we will gladly learn of the ways of Yahweh before Yahshua returns to set up His kingdom.

Upon coming down from experiencing the vision on the mount of the transfigured Yahshua (Matt. 17), the Disciples were moved by the promise of Israel's being given their place of rulership. They asked about the prophecies of Eliyah's coming prior to the Kingdom's being established. Note the Savior's response:

“Eliyah truly shall first come and restore all things. But I say unto you that Eliyah is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they pleased. Likewise shall also the Son of Man suffer by them.’ Then the disciples understood that He spoke unto them of John the Baptist” (Matt. 17:11-13).

Yahshua revealed that before He could return in His resplendent glory to rule, there would have to come another in the likeness and character or spirit of Eliyah. Yahshua had already proclaimed that John the Baptist had fulfilled the role for that day six chapters earlier:

“For this is [he], of whom it is written, ‘Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee ... And if ye will receive [it], this is Eliyah, which was for to come’” (Matt. 11:10, 14).

Yahshua was stating the Eliyah message must first be given to the world so that Bible truth could be restored, only then could He return. Note that Yahshua spoke of a future coming of Eliyah in Matthew 17:11. John the Baptist was the Eliyah for that day, and his message was to prepare the people to accept Yahshua as the Messiah. This was mostly ignored by the Jews. John the Immerser had already been put to death (Matt. 14:10-12). Three chapters later Yahshua was looking down to our time and telling the world that before He returns, the restoration message must first be preached in the power and strength of Eliyah. The message is to restore Yahweh's truth so a people could make themselves ready for the bridegroom (Rev. 19:7).

The name Eliyah means “My Mighty One is YAH!” In other words, Yahshua proclaimed there were spiritual truths that need to be restored and proclaimed before He could return. One of the most neglected and ignored truths yet to be proclaimed is the Heavenly Father's name, YAHWEH and the Savior's, YAHSHUA. Pagan teachings and concepts

must be put out of one's mind so the pure worship of Yahweh can be practiced as a way of life. This is also prophesied in Acts 3:19-21:

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of Yahweh; And he shall send Yahshua Messiah, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which Elohim hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

Elijah appeared to be a fearless messenger for Yahweh. At times he felt he was the only one following Yahweh. But there were 7,000 more who had not bowed the knee to Baal,

Yet I have left [Me] seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him, 1 Kings 19:18.

Take note of the words of Elijah that have been recorded for us as he proclaimed Bible truth to his compromising, fellow Israelites:

And Elijah came unto all the people and said, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If Yahweh [be] Elohim, follow Him; but if Baal, [then] follow him." And the people answered him not a word, 1 Kings 18:21.

The sense of "halt between two opinions" means Israel waffled back and forth in following Yahweh's way of worship and then took up the pagan ways of Baal. They would straddle the fence in their worship, changing from worshipping Yahweh one time, and then turn to worship some pagan deity.

Syncretism

They actually mixed pagan worship with that of Yahweh. That is, they blended true worship with the pagan worship of Baal. The blending of pagan worship with Yahweh's true worship is known as "syncretism." It is a blending or mixing of heathen worship, calling on pagan names, and following customs done purportedly to worship Him, but which Yahweh has not commanded and actually hates! They worshipped Yahweh in the same manner the pagans worshipped Baal, burning incense and calling on his name, giving the same offerings pagans dedicated to Baal. Yahweh hates syncretism.

We read of some of the sordid activities ancient Israel followed, and shake our heads in disbelief. How could Israel turn to pagan worship when it was Yahweh who gave them manna and quail for 40 years and water in the desert; led them by a pillar

of fire by night, and a cloudy pillar by day? But that did not satisfy them.

Before crossing over the Jordan River to enter the Promised Land, Moses rehearsed Israel's goals and gave clear instructions for overcoming the heathen that occupied the land. The book of Deuteronomy was the second giving of the law to Israel after 40 years. Their wandering experience helped clarify what was expected of them.

Up to now Israel had only their carnal, sinful flesh and attitude to overcome. Satan was always lurking about the camp. But under the guidance and care of Moses, the sinful temptations of the world and carnal flesh had not yet come upon them. They had experienced 40 years living under the Levitical priesthood, and were about to cross over the Jordan and come face to face with a pagan people at every turn. Now they would be directly tempted by the snares of heathen worship. Moses warned them of their coming trials:

Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their deities, saying, "How did these nations serve their deities? even so will I do likewise." Thou shalt not do so unto Yahweh thy Elohim: for every abomination to Yahweh, which He hates, have they done unto their deities; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their deities. What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it, Deuteronomy 12:30-32.

Before Israel ever crossed the Jordan river, the Adversary had already planted seven depraved nations in the Promised Land. These were the most vile of all people, and Israel was warned to have nothing to do with them but to eradicate them out of the land.

They were not to follow any of their customs in worship or do anything the pagans did in worshipping their deities, for the ways of these nations were an abomination to Yahweh. They were a stumbling block for Israel. There was no cure, and surgery by the sword was the only solution.

Certainly, we can read of Israel's dismal history and learn their lesson that we should not follow sinful concepts and pagan practices of a heathen people. Clearly, these words caution us not to follow the customs or adopt the ways of pagan worshippers. We are to be an enlightened people and do not want to practice pagan rites of worship. Paul said we are not to follow the example of Israel. Certainly, we

do not take up these pagan ways, do we?

Let us take a look at some examples of the northern ten tribes of Israel (known as Ephraim) and learn why Yahweh would eventually uproot them out of the land. Note how they followed the heathen pattern of worship on high hills and set up heathen idols and groves. They blended Yahweh's worship with foreign pagan customs which is syncretism:

For [so] it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against Yahweh their Elohim, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other Elohim, and walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom Yahweh cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made. And the children of Israel did secretly [those] things that [were] not right against Yahweh their Elohim, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city. And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree: and there they burnt incense in all the high places, as [did] the heathen whom Yahweh carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke Yahweh to anger: for they served idols, whereof Yahweh had said unto them, "Ye shall not do this thing," 2 Kings 17:7-12. This prompted the nation's captivity to Assyria.

Israel burned incense on the many high hills to pagan deities. Some of their worship was so base, they carried on their activities in secret and called it worship. Have you taken note that many towns and villages have churches on top of a hill or a town's highest prominence? Some will actually admit they built their building atop a hill, and then topped it off with an even taller steeple. Evidence indicates the steeple is a relic from ancient pagan phallic symbols.

Burning of incense is a type of prayer to Yahweh done in the Temple. So strong was the pagan influence among the Israelites, that many were turning to worship Molech and abandoning Yahweh.

Even King Ahaz, of the line of King David, did that which was NOT right and followed the heathen customs of Israel's kings. He sacrificed upon the high places, on the hills, and under green trees. This is nowhere commanded as worship to Yahweh. They built places of worship in all their cities. King Ahaz is said to have sacrificed his son through the fire to Molech, the grinning giant furnace where babies were thrown and burned alive. In our civilized society, we would never think of throwing a little,

innocent, helpless baby into a fiery furnace:

In the seventeenth year of Pekah the son of Remaliah, Ahaz the son of Jotham king of Judah began to reign. Twenty years old [was] Ahaz when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem, and did not [that which was] right in the sight of Yahweh his Elohim, like David his father. But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom Yahweh cast out from before the children of Israel. And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree, 2 Kings 16:1-4.

We shake our heads in disbelief that anciently, parents would actually place the lives of their progeny in jeopardy of fire in their worship of heathen deities. But we in our cosmopolitan setting are not that far removed from doing the same thing. Our society is sacrificing a generation of babies each year to abortion. The miracle of birth, a new life coming into the world, is not a joyful time for the helpless infant. Pregnancy is looked upon as a curse by many sex-crazed hedonists. The majority of abortion deaths are legal and approved by our society. Are we any better than ancient Israel?

Polluting the Temple

Jeremiah says the nation of Judah does not obey Yahweh, and refuses correction. Judah has brought pagan idols and worship into the Temple itself which is called by Yahweh's name, polluting it with heathen abominations. Instead of worshipping the way Yahweh has mandated, Judah brings pagan idols into the very house which was built to Yahweh, the Creator of heaven and earth, and the One who dwelt in the Holy of Holies:

But thou shalt say unto them, "This [is] a nation that obeys not the voice of Yahweh their Elohim, nor receives correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth. Cut off thine hair; [O Jerusalem],



and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for Yahweh hath rejected and forsaken the generation of His wrath. "For the children of Judah have done evil in My sight," saith Yahweh: "they have set their abominations in the house which is called by My name, to pollute it," Jeremiah 7:28-30.

Does anyone bring abominable things into a place of worship which is considered to be set aside solely as a sanctuary for the worship of Yahweh? Certainly, we are not like ancient Israel. Do we bring things which are taken from pagan worship and boldly bring them into a building or place where we worship our Creator? Has anyone seen an evergreen tree in a church building around December 25? What's an evergreen tree doing in a place of worship of the Creator of heaven and earth?

Thus saith Yahweh, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people [are] vain: for [one] cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not, Jeremiah 10:2-4.

While Jeremiah may not have the exact example of green trees which are given a special place in Christian homes each December, there is a decided similarity to pagan worship. Usually there are presents under the tree, and at a given time the family and the children especially will open the gifts under the tree and rejoice and celebrate the day of the winter solstice before the tree. This day is now said to remember the birth of the Chr-st child. But articles appear every year in our newspapers and magazines attesting to the fact that He was not born anywhere near this time of December. News articles state Chr-stmas is right out of paganism, from the worship of the venerable sun!

The date is actually the pagan celebration of the return of the sun following the winter solstice, known as the Saturnalia. Churchianity has baptized this pagan day and made it a sacred time to revel in just as did the pagans of the past. The set times for pagans to worship their deities is added to the church calendar and made a holy time. December 25 has nothing to do with Yahweh's worship.

There is no mistaking the green tree in the churches and homes this time of year is an abomination in Yahweh's eyes. We are no better in our civilized, cosmopolitan society than wayward Israel. Human nature and the carnal mind of man has not changed. Humans have been vying with Yahweh since the

forbidden fruit in the Garden. Paganism has been a problem down through history. Notice the history and background of the degenerate mind of man:

"Emperor Theodosius (C.E 378-398), made Christianity the State Religion of the Roman Empire, and made Church Membership Compulsory. This was the worst Calamity that has ever befallen the Church. This Forced Conversion filled the Churches with Unregenerate People ...

"Worship, at first very simple, was developed into elaborate, stately, imposing ceremonies having all the outward splendor that had belonged to heathen temples...

"Conversion of the Barbarians. The Goths, Vandals and Huns who overthrew the Roman Empire accepted Christianity, but to a large extent their conversion was nominal and this further filled the Church with Pagan practices." (Excerpted from "Paganization of the Church," *Halley's Bible Handbook*, p. 760)

We are given the example of King Manasseh who reared up altars within the Temple, the very place that Yahweh said His name would dwell. The sacred place now polluted with pagan images and altars, worshipping heathen g-ds!

For he (Manasseh) built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them. Also he built altars in the house of Yahweh, whereof Yahweh had said, "In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever." And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of Yahweh. And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of Yahweh, to provoke Him to anger, 2 Chronicles 33:3-6.

Yahweh has clearly made known how He wants to be worshipped. The burning of incense is a type of prayer, and special offerings were to be presented by the priesthood, but these offerings by Manasseh were to Baal! Worship on the high places and on the rooftops was offered to pagan deities. A true believer would not take any custom of pagan worship and adapt it for the worship of Yahweh, would he? Neither would he bring those things of idolatry into Yahweh's sanctuary.

Jeremiah continues:

And shalt say unto them, "Thus saith Yahweh of hosts; 'Even so will I break this people and

this city, as [one] breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again: and they shall bury [them] in Tophet, till there be no place to bury. Thus will I do unto this place,' saith Yahweh, 'and to the inhabitants thereof, and even make this city as Tophet: and the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses of the kings of Judah, shall be defiled as the place of Tophet, because of all the houses upon whose roofs they have burned incense unto all the host of heaven, and have poured out drink offerings unto other Elohim,' " Jeremiah 19:11-13.

Many Israelites took the examples of their kings and leaders who now worshipped heathen deities. Those in responsible positions carry much influence with the population such as Jezebel:

And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, "Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress [it] first; for ye [are] many; and call on the name of your elohim, but put no fire [under]." And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed [it], and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, "O Baal, hear us." But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made. And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, "Cry aloud: for he [is] a elohim; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked," " 1 Kings 18:25-27.

The Syncretism of Religions

There seems to be a spirit of man to desire whatever new thing is under the sun, even in worship. Seemingly appearing as progress, the search for new concepts, new ideas, differing patterns, and at times, even the bizarre seems strangely appropriate.

If Yahshua were among us today, would He point out that our society's festival on the 25th of December is right out of paganism? After we read how Israel was punished for taking up pagan ways and customs, should we also have second thoughts about taking up customs of the heathen?

While we may criticize the early Israelites for their fascination for pagan worship and their interest in seeking anything new thing as did the strangers in Paul's time (Acts 17:21), people today are interested in the novel, the different, even the radical and are intrigued by it. They are interested in some new thing.

Any new adaptations and changes to celebrate an old custom seems to add new life to the situation. For example, before the turn of the century, Halloween was mostly for the children. But merchants now

admit, more costumes and masks are sold to adults than to children today. Why would a believer in the Bible enjoy wearing a mask to frighten others? Is not Halloween a time of ghosts, goblins, witches, black cats and jack-o-lanterns? Why would this be a time in which one wants to participate?

Why teach children the concept of "trick-or-treat?" It is actually teaching young people to threaten potential victims with harm of some sort unless they are given a gift? Is it proper to teach a child "If you don't give me a treat, I'll pull a trick on you?" This is one way to teach extortion to children through Halloween, definitely a pagan celebration.

"The celebration of 'Christmas' is freely admitted to be from pagan worship," so read the headline of an article appearing in the *Columbia Tribune*, December 20, 2000. The piece went on to quote Anne Rudloff Stanton, a medievalist at the University of Missouri, "Finally, the images of today's Santa is a product of Coca-Cola commercials in the 1930's. And Rudolph, the red-nosed reindeer, was created for an ad campaign for the Montgomery Ward chain."

"Slowly Saint Nicholas evolved into the omniscient observer of children's behavior," said David L. Brown, a Wisconsin theologian. "Good behavior was rewarded with gifts of Christmas and bad behavior with switches."

"The Santa character took on the white beard of the pagan god Odin ... and the ability to enter houses down the chimney comes from an old Norse legend, and the tradition of leaving him cookies and milk came from a medieval German tale ... and Odin's eight-legged flying horse became eight reindeer," according to an article in the *Columbia Tribune*. (Ibid.)

Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their elohim, saying, "How did these nations serve their elohim? even so will I do likewise." Thou shalt not do so unto YAHWEH thy Elohim: for every abomination to YAHWEH, which He hateth, have they done unto their elohim; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their elohim. What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it, Deuteronomy 12:30-32.

If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, "Let us go after other

elohim, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them;” thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for YAHWEH your Elohim proveth you, to know whether ye love YAHWEH your Elohim with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after YAHWEH your Elohim, and fear Him, and keep His commandments, and obey His voice, and ye shall serve Him, and cleave unto Him. And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn [you] away from YAHWEH your Elohim, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which YAHWEH thy Elohim commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee, Deuteronomy 13:1-5.

Easter

Then He brought me to the door of the gate of YAHWEH’S house which [was] toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz. Then said He unto me, “Hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, [and] thou shalt see greater abominations than these.” And He brought me into the inner court of YAHWEH’S house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of YAHWEH, between the porch and the altar, [were] about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of YAHWEH, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east, Ezekiel 8:14-16.



And Judah did evil in the sight of YAHWEH, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done. For they also built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree. And there were also sodomites in the land: [and] they did according to all the abominations of the nations which YAHWEH cast

out before the children of Israel, 1 Kings 14:22-24.

For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; until YAHWEH removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day. And the king of Assyria brought [men] from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed [them] in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof. And [so] it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, [that] they feared not YAHWEH: therefore YAHWEH sent lions among them, which slew [some] of them, 2 Kings 17:22-25.

Conclusion: Cleansing the Temple

... And all the people stood to the covenant. And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of YAHWEH all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven: and he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Bethel. And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven. And he brought out the grove from the house of YAHWEH, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped [it] small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the children of the people. And he brake down the houses of the sodomites, that [were] by the house of YAHWEH, where the women wove hangings for the grove Molech, 2 Kings 23:1-10.

Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted, 1 Corinthians 10:6.

And Moses said, “Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of YAHWEH? but it shall not prosper. Go not up, for YAHWEH is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites [are] there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from YAHWEH, therefore YAHWEH will not be with you. But they presumed to go up unto the hill top: nevertheless the ark of the covenant of YAHWEH, and Moses, departed not out of the camp. Then the Amalekites came down, and the

Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, even unto Hormah, Numbers 14:41-45.

They feared [not] Yahweh, and served their own elohim, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence. Unto this day they do after the former manners: they fear not Yahweh, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, or after the law and commandment which Yahweh commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel;... Howbeit they did not hearken, but they did after their former manner. So these nations feared [not] Yahweh, and served their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day. (2 Kings 17:33-34, 40-41)

That he no longer should live the rest of [his] time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of Elohim. For the time past of [our] life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it strange that ye run not with [them] to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of [you]: who shall give account to Him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead, 1 Peter 4:2-5.

-Elder Don Mansager (deceased)



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q Are dolls and stuffed teddy bears idols? Someone told me this and so I got rid of my collection of teddy bears.

A Scriptures, such as not making an image, bowing down or calling upon false names, all come to mind. However, none of them are considered toys nor are they in a religious sense ever lifted up or worshiped.

A child may roleplay imagining having tea with one, but even they understand it is just playing. Worshipping is something forbidden, playtime is not.

Is collecting such items by an adult considered idol worship? Unless one is worshipping them —



calling on their name, thinking that by doing so, it will conjure up some response — they are simply collectables.

When Rachel had idols (Gen. 31:34), they were actual idols, no doubt including figurines such as Ba'al and possibly a star of Remphan (Acts 7:43) which was carved to make an image of it.

Does that make gold stars a pagan deity? Not unless you worship them, which is different from a child desiring to have one put on their paper they turn into a teacher.

We cannot read, “You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth” by itself. In context, it additionally says, “You shall not worship them or serve them” (Exod. 20:4–5).

Q Proverbs 26:4-5 talks about how to answer a fool. It seems to contradict itself, doesn't it?

A Proverbs 26:4-5 says, *Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will also be like him. Answer a fool as his folly deserves, that he not be wise in his own eyes.*

When considering this seeming contradiction, we have to understand that each situation we run into will be different. There are times in which one would be appropriate, but the other wouldn't. And, alternatively, the other would work, while the one would not, at times.

In all of this, one could certainly ask for wisdom (James 1:5) in dealing with others. Especially, when it's with those who are more difficult to deal with.

More Questions and Answers are available for viewing online @ yaiy.org. Feel free to contact us if you have Biblical questions of your own.

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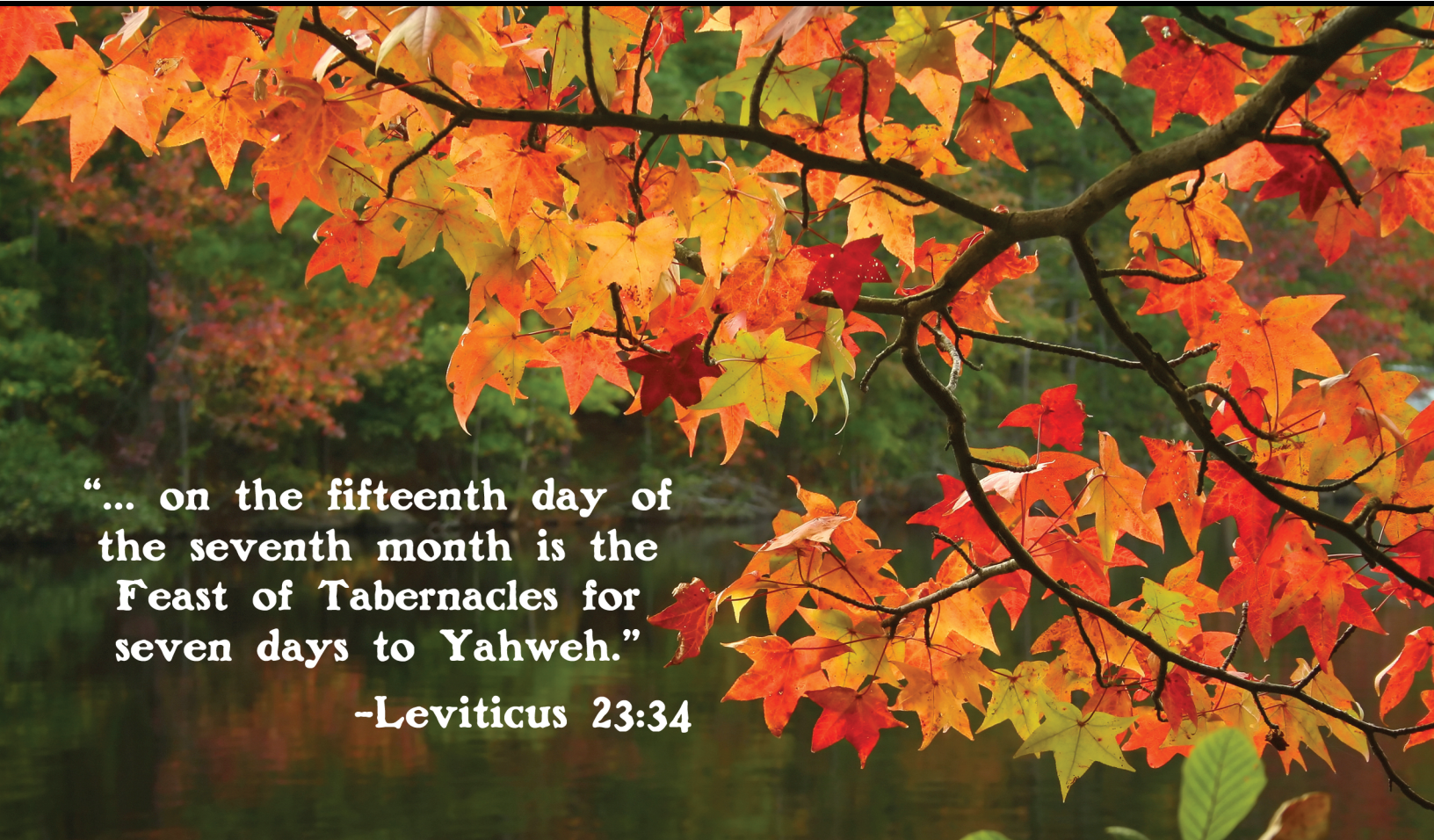
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**“... on the fifteenth day of
the seventh month is the
Feast of Tabernacles for
seven days to Yahweh.”**

-Leviticus 23:34