

OVERCOMING THE TEMPTATION OF APOSTASY!

Tehillim/Psalm 73

Shabbat Shalom family, it is good to praise the Name of our Mighty Elohim – The Master יהוה of hosts!

Yeshayahu/Isaiah 1:5 “Why should you be beaten anymore? You continue in apostasy! All the head is sick, and all the heart faints.”

Here we see that יהוה is appealing to Yehudah by saying ‘Why should you continue to be beaten down – there is not a part of the body that has not been beaten – why do you keep disobeying!!! You continue in apostasy!’

Apostasy means ‘*a renunciation of one’s belief and an abandonment to loyalty*’ – and this is exactly what Yehudah had done, and we get our English word ‘apostasy’ from the Greek word ἀποστασία ‘apostasia’ – Strong’s G646 and is translated as a ‘falling away’ in reference to how many will abandon their faith and belief in the Truth before the man of lawlessness is revealed:

Tas’loniqim Bēt/2 Thessalonians 2:3 “Let no one deceive you in any way, because the falling away is to come first, and the man of lawlessness is to be revealed, the son of destruction,”

In Hebrew however the word used here for apostasy carries a wonderful picture for us showing the direct contrast between who Yisra’el was called to be and what they had become as we see in the Hebrew a wonderful play on words: The word used for *apostasy* in verse 5 is the Hebrew word סָרָה ‘sarah’ – Strong’s H5627 and sounds exactly the same as the name of Abraham’s wife: שָׂרָה ‘Sarah’ – Strong’s H8283 ,yet does not carry the same meaning! The word used for apostasy – ‘sarah’ is spelt with a ס ‘samek’, ר ‘resh’ and ה ‘hey’; while ‘Sarah’, Abraham’s wife, is spelt with a ש ‘Sin’, ר ‘resh’ and ה ‘hey’; and carries the opposite picture to an apostate Bride, as the wife of Abraham’s name means ‘*princess or noble woman*’; and as we know she is used in Scripture as a picture of the obedient wife. Abraham is often referred to in Scripture as the ‘father of our faith’, which would make Sarah, his wife, the ‘mother of our faith’; and the play on words here is incredible as Yehudah were being called to look into the mirror of His Word, which would show them how they were not, by their lifestyle, who they ought to have been, but were rather the opposite and had become a disobedient and rebellious children of whoring who follow a ‘mother’ that was sick from head to toe – not the picture of a princess or noble woman and Bride of יהוה. Yehudah looked like the offspring of an adulterous whore and not the seed of a faithful people who listen to and do not despise the discipline of their father, nor forsake the Torah of their mother – which is the true faithful Bride! And while we see today how so many claim to be the bride – when looking through the mirror of the Word of Truth, they will be found out to be nothing more than an adulterous and dressed up whore!!!

יהוה has a remnant and all through Scripture we see that there is always a remnant – a faithful few! When we hear the words of many who have been led astray say ‘*but they all can’t be wrong*’, may we be sober and realise that ‘*oh yes they can!*’ And in fact the likelihood is that they are indeed very wrong!!! If it were not for the remnant – we would have been made like Sedom and Amarah and the call has gone out before destruction does come upon the world! It is always a remnant few who obeys and are preserved – It was only Noah and 7 others in the ark, and with Sedom and Amarah only Lot and his wife and two daughters who escaped, while his wife did not make it very far for her heart had not left Sedom; and it was only Yehoshua and Kalēb who were left from the generation of adults that came out of Mitsrayim and were able to enter the Promised land – there is always a remnant!

Apostasy or falling away from the truth is a real and present danger that threatens us all each and every day, and tonight in a message called, “**OVERCOMING THE TEMPTATION OF APOSTASY!**” I would like us to go through a very powerful melody, so please turn with me to **Tehillim/Psalm 73** (Read).

What we do not have in the Scriptures translation in the introduction to this Psalm, which says, “**A Psalm of Asaph**”. I think it is important for us to know this introduction as it helps us clearly understand the message being portrayed for us today! The word use for ‘Psalm’ is מִזְמוֹר *mizmor* - Strong’s H4210 meaning, ‘*melody*’ and it comes from the primitive root זָמַר *zamar* – Strong’s H2167 meaning, ‘*to make music (in praise of Elohim), sing praises*’, and Asaph – אֲסָף Strong’s H623 –means ‘*gatherer*’, and he was the son of בִּרְכִיָּה *Berekyah* – Strong’s H1296 which means, ‘*Yah Blesses*’. Asaph was appointed as one of the chief musicians under Dawid. So here we in essence have a ‘*song of the gatherer*’ or a ‘*song of gathering*’ and this melody/song that is sung unto Elohim in praise carries with it a great sobering lesson for us to be on our guard against the very real temptations of apostasy!

I would like us to look at these verses and recognise that the cry of this gatherer most certainly echoes in many of our hearts on a daily basis, as it highlights the reality of what we see before us on a day to day basis, and the necessity for us to make our refuge in the Master יהוה!

Verse 1 – Truly Elohim is good to Yisra’el – this is a valid and true statement, but what Yisra’el? To those whose heart is clean!!!

יִשְׂרָאֵל Yisra’el – Strong’s H3478 means, *‘he who prevails, overcomes with El’* and comes from the primitive root words, אֵל el – Strong’s H410 which means, *‘Mighty, power, shortened form of Elohim – Mighty One’* and the root word verb סָרַח sarah – Strong’s H8280 which is spelt the same as the wife of Abraham and means, *‘to persist, exert oneself, persevere, wrestle, contend’*. So we who are Yisra’el and in essence children of the promise, of the seed of Abraham and Sarah, are the ones who prevail and overcome with El, pressing on and persevere as we delight in his Torah and guard to do all His commands, as opposed to the children of apostasy – the other ‘sarah’ (apostate whore) who cast His Torah behind their backs!!!

Yisra’el with a ‘clean’ heart is the Yisra’el that Elohim is truly good to! יהושע Messiah tells us in:

Mattithyahu/Matthew 5:8 *“Blessed are the clean in heart, because they shall see Elohim.”*

And Dawid tells us that with a clean heart we can draw near to יהוה our Elohim:

Tehillim/Psalm 24:3-4 *“Who does go up into the mountain of יהוה? And who does stand in His set-apart place? 4 He who has innocent hands and a clean heart, who did not bring his life to naught, and did not swear deceptively.”*

Debarim/Deuteronomy clearly tells us that His Torah is to be upon our hearts and in our mouths to DO IT, and when we are also commanded to love Elohim with all our heart, we clearly see how ‘love for Elohim’ is to guard His commands and do them, yet we are also warned that we are to ‘guard’ our hearts, lest they be deceived into turning away to other mighty ones. Yirmeyahu/Jeremiah also warns us that the heart is crooked above all and desperately sick – therefore we can clearly see the reason for Messiah coming in the flesh to renew our hearts in His Blood, for he said that He has only come for the sick! He came so that the desperately sick and crooked hearts could be healed and the Torah could be written upon our hearts, bringing us near to the Covenants of Promise we were once far off from! A clean heart is a heart that guards the Torah of Elohim in order to do it; and many today render a vain lip service while their hearts are far from Elohim, in their stubborn refusal to submit to and obey His Torah and they hate instruction – to these He says that they have no right to take His Covenant in their mouth (**Tehillim/Psalm 50:16-17**)!

Why I am stressing the heart condition here is because it is a serious matter – either our hearts are clean and therefore are able to see and know how truly good Elohim is to Yisra’el or we are not and as so many who are lawless (Torahless) have instead the theologies and traditions of man on their hearts and in the process of holding fast to these are on a fast path of being deceived to destruction!

Verse 2 – the Psalmist, after recognising what a clean heart is, confesses that he had almost slipped and stumbled! Ones feet and steps in Hebrew carry the clear picture and understanding of one’s walk, and the Hebrew word used for *‘feet’* in here is רֶגֶל *‘regel’* Strong’s H7272 – means *‘a foot/feet or to walk’*, and speaks of one’s obedience to walking according to His commands and obeying His call to keep His feasts as commanded, as this same word is used in Wayyiqra/Leviticus 23 and translated as ‘times’ in reference to the 3 times a year all males were to appear before Elohim at Yerushalayim, marking out the clear need to walk according to His word and guard the Appointed Times or Feasts of יהוה! With the psalmist saying that his feet stumbled and his steps nearly slipped, we recognise that he is clearly saying that he was so close to walking in disobedience and being lawless, by not keeping the commands of Elohim – so close to the point of neglecting to see just how good and pleasant Elohim is – but why?

In the next few verses he expresses why, and explains that the reason for his near slipping into apostasy was as a result of what he saw going on around him. Today we can clearly identify with what he saw and can relate at how tough it is at times to not just ‘go with the flow’ so to speak! And as we go through these verse we are given some clear insight on what not to be deceived by!

He was ‘envious’ of the boasters!!! The root word used here for ‘envious’ in Hebrew is קָנָה qanah – Strong’s H7065 meaning, *‘to be jealous or zealous, be envious, ardent’*. It is written in the ‘piel’ tense which indicates the expression of an intensive or intentional action! He was seriously envious of the boasters. It is the same word used to describe Pinehas in **Bemidbar/Numbers 25** who was **ardent/zealous** for יהוה and rose up and took a stand against the whoring of Yisra’el! This word as we can see can have a dual meaning, depending on where your focus is on and on what your eyes are looking at! Our eyes are to be on יהוה and His Torah, which is to be the ‘apple of our eye’ (Tehillim/Psalm 7:2) as we guard his commands so that we live, and in doing so we can be like Pinehas and Ēliyahu who expressed great zeal for יהוה, or if our eyes are turned away from the Truth for a split second and focused on the things of the flesh that do not satisfy, we are in danger of becoming extremely envious of what others have and in doing so find our feet in a slippery place! This ‘conflict of temptation’ that he had was as a result of where his eyes turned to and saw that the wrongdoers have peace, or rather an appearance of peace! They seem to be strong and stand firm and are not in fear of death that awaits them – and this seemed a little unfair to the psalmist who goes on to say that they wear a necklace of pride and are covered with violence! What pride and what violence – well they think that they have arrived so to speak

and walk around with great arrogance, thinking that they have no need to walk in the Torah as it has all been done for them.

Let us face it, as we look at the false worshippers out there, it can often be a daunting site as we see their 'seeming success' in their outreaches and programmes that seem to be causing many to walk in an assumed peace.

As we look at a couple of the things that the psalmist saw, let us weigh it up against the Word and see how wrong the wrongdoers who claim to be walking in truth are.

Firstly do not be intimidated by their boastfulness and declaration that they have the truth, as they use advertising and media to be a platform for their boastful claims and statements of faith!

We are to walk in humility and what is to be on our neck?

Mishlĕ/Proverbs 1:8-9 **"My son, heed the discipline of your father, and do not forsake the Torah of your mother; 9 For they are a fair wreath on your head, and chains about your neck."**

The answer is clear – The Torah is our 'necklace' or yoke that we must be led by!

We are to be led by the Torah as we do our utmost at getting wisdom (which is pictured as the Torah in Scripture), and in the getting of wisdom we are to get understanding, which comes in the doing of the Torah, and keep our feet far from the wide path that leads to destruction:

Mishlĕ/Proverbs 4:14-17 **"Do not enter the path of the wrong, and do not walk in the way of evil-doers. 15 Avoid it, do not pass by it; turn away from it and pass on. 16 For they do not sleep unless they have done evil. And their sleep is taken away unless they make someone fall. 17 For they have eaten the bread of wrongdoing, and they drink the wine of violence."**

The necklace of the boasters is the pride of man's traditions and theologies that people are yoked and led by; and **verse 7** says that their eyes bulge from fatness and their hearts overflow with imaginations – this is the result of satisfying the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life, which is not of Elohim. They have false vision and prophecies that tickle ears and overflow in their imaginations as they feed people on false dreams and hopes that are based on lies and traditions. Eyes that become fat become blinded to the Truth, which causes people to overlook and become blinded to what is really important!

Tehillim 119:69-70 **"The proud have forged a lie against me, with all my heart I observe Your orders. 70 Their heart has become like fat, without feeling; I have delighted in Your Torah."**

In speaking of those who disagreed and turned away from what Sha'ul spoke to them it says in:

Ma'asei/Acts 28:27 **"for the heart of this people has become thickened, and with their ears they heard heavily, and they have closed their eyes, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn back, and I should heal them."**

In a word from יהרהר, that the prophet of Elohim was told to speak to a foolish people without heart or people with a backsliding and rebellious heart, we see that יהרהר says in:

Yirmeyahu/Jeremiah 5:28 **"They have become fat, they are sleek. They also overlook the deeds of the wrong. They did not rightly rule the cause of the fatherless, so that they prosper. And the right of the needy they did not rightly rule."**

In **verse 8** we see how the 'lawless' are corrupt and mock, speak evil of oppression which points to their neglect for the poor and needy and speak as if from a high position, speaking proudly about themselves and their exploits, and it says of those who speak proudly in order to use people for self-gain in:

Yehudĕh/Jude 1:16 **"These are grumblers, complainers, who walk according to their own lusts, and their mouth speaks proudly, admiring faces of others for the sake of gain."**

Verse 9 goes on and says that they speak against the heavens – in other words they are blasphemers. Hazon/Revelation 13 speaks of those who marvel at and worship the beast, and it says of the beast who the masses follow:

Hazon/Revelation 13:6 **"And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against Elohim, to blaspheme His Name, and His Tent, and those dwelling in the heaven."**

Blasphemies against Elohim, His Name and His Tent is a clear picture of the wicked blasphemy against His Torah and His Bride (that is us who are the Tent/dwelling Place of the Most High) and speaking against the Set-Apart Spirit which teaches us to walk according to His Kingdom Rules helping us understand the clear design of His Tent!

Not only do the wicked blaspheme against His Torah, they also spread that blasphemy as doctrine all across the world – their tongue walks through the earth – spreading a false message of lawlessness under the disguise of many fancy titles such as 'The word faith movement' or 'faith-righteousness' or the 'prosperity gospel' to simply name a few that has gripped many all over the globe as they are catching the masses in their net of destruction, and calling people to drink of the cup of whoring, as they give an abundance of mixed/muddied waters (poisoned waters) or better understood as wormwood, which speaks of false teachings; and the masses are consuming this wormwood in great quantities as this cup of whoring is being drained by the lawless. What they do not realise in their drunk state is that draining this cup of mixed water they are sentencing themselves to drinking the cup of the wrath of Elohim

Tehillim/Psalm 75:8 “For a cup is in the hand of יהוה, and the wine shall foam; It is filled with a mixture, and He pours it out. All the wrong of the earth drink, draining it to the dregs.”

In the drunken state of pride they rely on traditions, doctrines and theologies of man, and in the process they are always at ease and increase wealth – just think about it – so many mainstream churches are thriving as their corrupt leaders are living in the lap of luxury, which is the reward they are receiving now for bowing to Satan and his lies, teaching as teachings the commands of men!

When looking at how the man-made systems of religion and worship are growing at a rapid pace and how the lawless seem to have the appearance of doing well, the psalmist expresses that for a moment it felt as though his obedience seemed to be in vain as he saw how the wicked were prospering, and every day he was plagued by the fact that he was earnestly trying to walk in obedience while the masses were excelling in their ways, and he says that his reproof was every morning. In other words, while thinking that the wicked seemed to be doing something right as a result of what he saw and how this made him envious and almost caused his foot to slip, the Word brought reproof each morning showing him that the wrong were wrong, no matter how right they may have looked in the flesh!

How many of you often feel like the call of obedience to walking in the Torah is in vain – especially when the people you know and possibly even used to walk with seem like they are having all the fun and you are just getting disciplined through the Word every day, and come Shabbat get hammered even more when a tough message is delivered? So much so that you are tempted to let your foot slip back into the mainstream of what others are doing?

The psalmist says that while the abominations plague him every day and the temptation of apostasy looked like a valid option based on the physical evidence that was seen, he realised that if he had done this, and spoke and lived like the lawless, that he would have led a generation astray – he recognized how important his testimony in guarding the commands is critical even to the next generation!!!

Verse 16 he expresses his urgency to understand all of this – why were the wicked prospering so much, why were people who were blaspheming Elohim by wilfully disregarding His commands and following an imposter living it up so to speak! He tried to understand it so much that it was hard labour to his eyes! In other words this clearly pictures for me how earnestly the psalmist sought after Elohim and His righteousness by meditating daily on the word – which is hard work to the eyes! How many of you find it hard to sit down and dig into the Word every day? We should be, and while it is hard work we must not neglect it but get disciplined into doing what we ought to be doing!

He was as the Word tells us – getting wisdom and with all his getting he would get more wisdom, and while all the getting would seem to be very hard labour, he tells us in **Verse 17** that the breakthrough came when???

It was labour to his eyes until – until he went into the set-apart place of El – then he perceived the end of the wicked!!! This is a very powerful picture for us to recognise – and it is something I have mentioned many times, and that is: UNDERSTANDING COMES IN THE DOING OF HIS COMMANDS!!!

Getting all the knowledge and Truth of the Word without application and the doing of the Word will just be hard work, yet when one begins to do what is commanded then understanding comes and the ability to see and perceive becomes a reality!!! Unlike the wicked who as the words of Yeshayahu speak true of, in that they hear but do not understand and see but do not perceive, we who ‘guard to do’ the commands hear and understand as we ‘do’, and as we ‘do’ the Torah lights our path and we see and perceive or see and know. The word used in **Yeshayahu/Isaiah 6:9** for ‘perceive/know’ is יָדָע ‘yada’ – Strong’s H3045 and means ‘*to acknowledge, clearly understand, to perceive, distinguish and discern*’ and implies the ability to respond to and recognise the Master’s voice and follow His commands.

Yohanan/John 10:27 “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”

He then goes on and clearly lay out the fate of the lawless – they may look like they are prospering now under the false prosperity gospel and false word faith doctrines, yet their end is destruction if they do not repent and return to יהוה.

We need to recognise, just as this psalmist did, that our need to walk in the Torah and remain committed to being faithful without compromise is of utmost importance in bringing us understanding, clarity of sight and the ability to know יהוה; while those who do not will hear the words no one wants to hear when he tells the lawless to depart from Him for He does not know them!!!

The Psalmist gives praise to Elohim and recognises that the flesh is of no value, so to run after the flesh is futile and worthless, but what he declares we too must declare, and that is as he tells us in verse 26 – Elohim is the Rock of my heart – The Living Torah is the Rock of my heart, and while all those who are far from Him will perish and be cut off, we make our refuge in the Master יהוה and declare His works!!!

This Psalm/melody of gathering is a gathering call that needs to be heard today, as many are on the verge of slipping under the delusion of the lawless. Doubt is a transition to apostasy and to slip from walking in His commands, even in the slightest, the real threat of neglecting to fellowship with the True body will become increasingly hard not to keep

away from. Pondering and envying the prosperity of the carefree life of the wrong is dangerous ground, as this care free prosperity gospel is a poisonous message that promotes a care free approach that claims and promotes a “‘Jesus’ has done it all for them” mind-set that causes them to cast the Torah of Elohim behind their backs and walk in their own paths!

The temptation of apostasy is greater than most of us would care to admit and we are to guard against the threat of our feet from slipping away into any form of compromise – and we do this by fixing our eyes on the Truth, giving no room for the flesh to distract our sight and we also must recognise as we consider the melody of the gatherer that we must not neglect the gathering/assembling of the set-apart ones:

Ib’rim/Hebrews 10:23-25 “Let us hold fast the confession of our expectation without yielding, for He who promised is trustworthy. 24 And let us be concerned for one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging, and so much more as you see the Day coming near.”

Overcoming the temptation of apostasy is the call for the True Yisra’ël – those who shall overcome with Elohim:

Romiyim/Romans 8:37 “But in all this we are more than overcomers through Him who loved us.”

Don’t be overcome by the temporary and corruptible success of the wrong, but be overcomers through walking in His Torah shining the True Light of our active and working faith walking in righteousness, as we follow our King – even if we are only few in number; for we who are more than overcomers walking as Messiah walked and control ourselves in every way will receive an incorruptible crown.

Has your foot nearly slipped lately as you allowed your eyes to look at the worldly? Have you compromised the set-apart walk of the righteous? Has your obedience felt like it is in vain as you face struggle after struggle? Hear the words of this melody of the gatherer and **Hear, guard and do** what our Master has instructed us to and fix your eyes on Him, for He will make your paths straight and not let your foot slip!

Tough days are ahead – that we know – let us daily overcome the temptation of apostasy as we stay in Messiah our King, and Rock of our heart in whom we make our refuge each and every day, aměn!