

STIRRED UP TO SPEAK UP!

Ma'asei/Acts 17:16-34

11th of the 3rd month 2021/2021

Shalom Covenant family,

Qorintiyim Aleph/1 Corinthians 15:58 “**Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Master, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Master.**”

The encouraging call to “be steadfast, immovable and always excelling in the work of the Master” is still applicable to us here today!!!

The more that we grow in the wisdom of our Beloved Redeemer and King, through the diligent hearing, guarding and doing of His Word, the more we see how drunk the nations are – and by that, I mean that we can see people all around us, who are completely oblivious to the Truth.

There are so many differing man-made philosophical viewpoints to life, as well as loads of vain traditions of man that are being held so fast to, so much so that the pure Truth of the Word of Elohim is being cast aside, as the Torah has been displaced for empty reasonings and interpretations of man, that simply seek to tickle ears and lead people astray through falsehood and lies that are being presented as assumed promises. Promises that are presumed to be deserved by the willing hearers of babbling lies, as they think that they have a right to claim the promises that are contained in the Word of Elohim, while neglecting to actually walk according to it!

We who walk in and stay in the Torah of Elohim recognise the great gift that we have been given in **יהושע** Messiah, and we praise **יהוה** our Elohim for having opened our eyes, when we turned to the Master and had the veil taken away.

Now, what we must realise, is that with that comes a great responsibility, as we must continue to walk in the Light as He is in the light, so as to have fellowship with one another, and at the same time, make sure that we are being a light to the nations, proclaiming His Besorah to a darkened world and its wicked systems, that we have graciously been called out of!

As we journey through the Torah each week and we grow in greater knowledge and understanding that the Spirit of Elohim gives us through His Word, we see more and more how depraved the state of the world is in, and just how ‘drunk’ that the masses are, as they continue to be drunk on the maddening adulteries of the whore.

Yisra’el was chosen out of the nations, to be a light to the nations, which they failed to do, as they conformed to the ways of the nations instead of proclaiming the Kingdom ways to them. This caused the dispersion of a chosen Bride, for which **יהושע** Messiah came to call back, by the shedding of His Blood – restoring the apostate Bride back into the Covenants of promise, which being sealed in His Blood, we have been grafted into!

Our Master **יְהוֹשֻׁעַ** Messiah commissioned us to go and make taught ones of the nations, teaching them to guard His commands.

And often, in a world that is heavily darkened and depraved, it becomes increasingly harder to actually make taught ones, and as a result, the zeal to proclaim the Good News as we should can steadily grow cold – especially when there is little or no true response from those we are attempting to reach, as they refuse to repent from vain traditions and empty philosophies, as the True narrow way of walking in the Torah is repeatedly rejected!

Sometimes the persecution that comes, as a result of walking in and proclaiming the TRUTH, often causes many to lose their steadfastness, and their work in the Master – that is: their steadfast obedience – begins to be compromised, losing their boldness and zeal to be a light!

How many of you have, at times, felt like you have lost the desire to speak to people about the Truth and you even begin to think that it is not even worth it, because they simply reject your presentation of the Besorah of Messiah?

How many of you feel that it is a waste of time to talk to some?

One of the dangers that we see from walking in the Truth, is that the more that we walk in the Truth and grow in it, the contrast of those that do not walk in the Truth becomes more and more clear, and this can often cause us to lose our desire to speak to those who stubbornly refuse to let go of traditions and their drunken reasonings!

In a message called, “**STIRRED UP TO SPEAK UP!**”, I would like us to look at the example given to us in Scripture, of when Sha’ul was in Athens!

Please read **Ma’asei/Acts 17:16-34**

As we look at this brief visit to Athens by Sha’ul, we can glean a great deal of encouragement for what we see around us today and how we ought to be responding to what we see!

One thing we can learn from Sha’ul’s life, is that wherever he went, he did not go there for a sightseeing trip, but rather, he went to proclaim the Kingdom of Elohim and he earnestly pressed on in the goal of the belief in Messiah – which is the deliverance of lives!!!

Sha’ul was brought to Athens after having left Berea in a hurry, when many of the Yehudim from Thessalonica had agitated and incited the crowds against him.

Silas and Timotiyos were commanded to join him and while waiting for them in Athens, he got all stirred up inside by what he saw around him, in this very worldly city!

Verse 16 tells us that his spirit was stirred up within him when he saw that the city was utterly idolatrous!

To put it bluntly: he was shocked and appalled by what he saw.

Now, while there may have been many who would have gladly sat around and waited for the friends that were on their way – this was not what Sha’ul did!

He was a man that would not keep silent, especially when idolatry was being flaunted all over the place!

This city was a vibrant worldly city, and in the times of the rise to power of the Greeks, this city, being the capital of Attica, was regarded, by the Greeks, as being the ‘chief seat of learning’.

Athens – or rather - Ἀθῆναι *Athēnai* – **Strong’s G116** which is the plural of the word Ἀθήνη *Athēnē* – who was the Greek female deity of wisdom, arts, industries and prudent warfare, who was also identified by the Romans as ‘Minerva’, who they believed to be the one who had founded this city.

The word Ἀθῆναι *Athēnai* carries the meaning, **‘uncertainty’**.

Kind of ironic, don’t you think: the ‘chief seat of learning’ being a place of uncertainty!!!

This is pretty much a kind of a true picture of the world today – where there are so many varying philosophies and conflicting traditions, which are being taught to the masses who display a high level of uncertainty, which drives them to seek that which satisfies their own selfish ambitions and needs, which if they are not met, they will seek another.

In a crippling time of uncertainty, so many people are being taught that the ear tickling poison of lawlessness and corrupt worship is sufficient for their lives.

You do not have to look too far to find books, videos, seminars, podcasts and other various scams that claim to have the answers to a better life – all for a fee of course! And all that these are continually doing, is the breeding of uncertainty among those who are perishing, while we, who have the Light of the Truth, are in their midst – and while the Truth is free, the masses gravitate toward the ‘expensive uncertainties’ that are promoted as the latest trend or answer to their problems!

This is simply a promotion of idolatry!

Sha’ul saw all this idolatry and the fruitless chasing after that which does not satisfy, and he stirred up to speak the Truth, for he could not sit still and see this idolatry being promoted!

The Greek word that is translated as ‘stirred’ is παροξύνω *paroxunō* – **Strong’s G3947** which means, **‘to sharpen, stimulate, provoke, irritate, arouse to anger, to exasperate (that is to excite the anger of, cause irritation or annoyance)’!!!**

The Greek word that is translated as ‘utterly idolatrous’ is κατείδωλος *kateidōlos* which means, **‘full of idols, given wholly over to idolatry’**, which is from two words:

1) κατά *kata* – **Strong’s G2596** which is a preposition meaning, **‘according to, daily, over, against’** and

2) εἶδωλον *eidolon* – **Strong’s G1497** which means, **‘an image (used for worship); by implication – a false mighty one’** which comes from the root εἶδος *eidōs* – **Strong’s G1491** which means, **‘that which is seen, form, figure, shape, appearance, sight’**.

What Sha'ul saw here in Athens, was a total breaking of the 1st and 2nd of the 10 Words/Commandments of Elohim, which clearly commands us to not make any image or likeness of that which is seen and bow down and worship it or serve them.

With this clear command, יהוה makes it very clear that He is a Jealous Elohim who visits the crookedness of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Him, while showing loving-commitment to thousands, to those who love Him and guard His commands.

Sha'ul saw all this idolatry and he got provoked, irritated, and was aroused to anger, as he saw a city that was totally steeped in idolatry!

It is no different for us today: all you have to do is step outside your front door and you do not have to look too far to see idolatrous worship going on all over the place.

The question is whether it stirs your spirit within you or not.

And if so, are you stirred to speak, or have you found that you have grown cold to being urgent in proclaiming the Truth!

Sha'ul was stirred to speak – and so, he reasoned with those in the congregation as well as with those that he found in the marketplace – each and every day.

This reasoning with whoever he would meet, certainly stirred up the philosophers of the day, and we are told that the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers came to converse with him.

Who were the Epicureans and Stoics?

Epicureans:

The Epicureans were followers of Epicurus, a gentile philosopher who lived between 342-271 B.C.E., who was born in Samos (an island in the Aegean Sea).

The primary doctrine of the Epicureans taught that the world came to be, and will be dissolved, by chance, or by the effect of mechanical causes moved by chance.

They taught that everything happens by chance, and one's soul dies with the body and is no more – teaching that there is no future retribution and therefore there is no judgement to come, which made their philosophy, one that taught that man's happiness and joy lies in pleasure and bodily ease, here and now.

The Epicureans were what you would call the “playboys” of the day – as they absolutely indulged themselves in pleasure.

They believed that man was just another animal who would return to dust and therefore, they should live life to the full, so to speak, by eating, drinking, carousing as much as they could as they just be pleasure seeking.

They made it their life's ambition to pursue pleasure in all forms and they called it ‘fine living’ – as they sought truth by means of personal experience and not through reasoning and they were materialists.

This can certainly describe many in the world today!

Stoics:

The Stoics were a group of heathen philosophers, who were founded by Zeno, a philosopher from Cypress, who lived from 336-264 B.C.E.

He taught that men should be free from passion, and that they should submit, without complaint, to unavoidable situations.

The Stoics generally taught that it is virtue alone that renders men happy, and that the ills of life are but fancied evils, and that a wise man will not to be moved with either joy or grief. They were at the opposite end of the scale if you will.

They were all about indifference – with a chief goal not to care – as they had a “whatever” kind of approach, for they didn’t believe anything and were dead to any kind of feelings and emotions – even if a relative or friend died!

They rejected the idolatry of pagan worship and taught that there was one “world elohim” and that this ‘world elohim’ was in everything – in the trees, the river, the flowers etc.

They were pantheists and they tolerated the worship of all foreign deities, no matter what, and believed that sometime after death, the soul was reabsorbed into the cosmic whole.

Pleasure was not good for them and pain was not evil.

Their most important view in life, was to follow one’s reason and be self-sufficient.

It is interesting to note that the first two leaders of the Stoic school committed suicide!!!

The epicureans said, “**enjoy life**” and the stoic said, “**endure life**”; and Sha’ul, being stirred by what he saw, began to speak the truth of the Kingdom of Messiah, which attracted the philosophers of the day to question him and even interrogate him, as he taught of Messiah and the resurrection, which went totally against all of the philosophies that were being taught at Athens at the time.

So, they brought him to the **Areopagus** or “**Ἄρειος Πάγος Areios Pagos – Strong’s G697**” which was a hill in Athens where the locals would spend their time discussing new trends and ideas.

This hill was believed, by the Greeks, to belong to Ares (Mars) and was also known as ‘**Mars hill**’, which was so called, because, as the story went, Mars, having slain Halirrhothius, son of Neptune, for the attempted violation of his daughter Alicippe, was tried for the murder, here on this hill, before twelve judges.

What is interesting to take note of is that today a very popular move called the emerging church has its main place of worship called ‘Mars Hill’, and is clear evidence of how Westernised Christianity at large is displaying the same idolatrous practices that were seen in Athens in Sha’ul’s day, as one of the philosophies of the ‘emerging church’ is to adapt to culture and embrace all, while being firm and steadfast in holding on to vain religious traditions and doctrines of man-made philosophies that run contrary to the Truth!

The Areopagus was the place where judges convened and here Sha’ul was brought before the council of the time to share this ‘fresh new teaching’ that they heard him speak in the congregation and marketplace.

Sha’ul took this opportunity to proclaim the Besorah of Messiah and proclaim His life, death and resurrection from the dead – something that they had not heard before!

Being a city who accepted all forms of worship, they had a slaughter place with an inscription – TO THE UNKNOWN MIGHTY ONE!

This was typical of their philosophy – which was please all, offend none, and to cover all their bases, for any travellers that might come to the ‘chief city of learning’, and they had a slaughter-place to an unknown mighty one, so as to appease all.

Sha’ul uses this moment to tell them of the One True Elohim that they did not know. He was so distressed by all the idol worship that he saw everywhere in Athens, and stands up in this meeting and acknowledged that they were very religious, using his words very carefully!

The Greek word that is translated as ‘very religious’ is δεισιδαιμονέστερος **deisidaimonesteros** – Strong’s G1174 which means, ‘*very fearful of gods, superstitious, religious*’ and comes from the words:

- 1) δείδω **deidō** which means, ‘*to fear*’ and
- 2) δαίμων **daimōn** which means, ‘*demons*’; and
- 3) στερεός **stereos** which means, ‘*firm, hard, solid*’.

In other words, these people in Athens were firm and rigid in their reverence of their evil, demonic deities and so, Sha’ul was implying to them that they were actually worshipping evil spirits or demons and made it clear that they were not worshipping the true Living Elohim, who they clearly did not know!

They were worshipping demons, for behind every idol there lays a demon, and he proceeded to tell them about יהוה.

Sha’ul made it very clear: יהוה is the Creator of all, and He alone is Elohim, for there is one Elohim who causes to be, and He is not served by men’s hands.

He is not ‘far off’, for in Him we live and move and are, and no moulded image can ever be substituted for the True Living Elohim!

With this clear message, Sha’ul called for a right response, in making it clear how יהוה has commanded a repentance to all!

Verse 30 is a very powerful statement, in that Sha’ul makes it clear how, in the past, Elohim had overlooked times of ignorance, but now that His Truth had been revealed through the life, death and resurrection of Messiah, there was no longer an excuse for ignorance – and so, we recognise the clear reality that His Word has gone out and has commanded a repentance from idolatry, with a call to return to worshipping Him and Him alone!

The Greek word translated as ‘ignorance’ is ἄγνοια **agnoia** – Strong’s G52 which means, ‘*ignorance, uninformed, lack of knowledge*’.

This word is used in the LXX (Septuagint – Greek text of the Tanak – O.T.) in terms of the sins of ignorance or by mistake, and in Hebrew the word that is translated as ‘by mistake’ is שְׁגָגָה shegagah – Strong’s H7684 which means, ‘*sin of error, inadvertent sin*’ and comes from the root word שָׁגַג shagag – Strong’s H7683 meaning, ‘*to go astray, to err, commit sin ignorantly*’.

The sin offering was for the being who sinned ‘by mistake’ and what is being made clear here, in Sha’ul’s words, is that by Messiah having been offered up once for all, there no longer remains an offering for sin!

There is now no more excuse to not repent and walk in the Truth!
Thus, the clear command to repent; as the warning is that if one does not repent and turn to the Master, then there awaits only a severe judgement and punishment for the disobedient and rebellious!

The Greek word that is translated as ‘repent’ is μετανοέω metanoēō – Strong’s G3340 which means, ‘*to change one’s mind or purpose, to repent, relent*’ and involves a complete change in one’s attitude and thought.

The Hebrew word that is typically translated as ‘repent’ comes from the root word שׁוּב shub – Strong’s H7725 which means, ‘*to turn back, return, repent, restore*’.

When true repentance and a turning back to יְהוָה occurs, then obedience is a natural response, to a changed attitude and mind, with the willingness to hear, guard and do what is instructed from the Torah of Elohim.

A pure and true sign of true repentance, is seen in the hearing and doing of His Torah!
Those who say they repent, yet forsake their need to hear and do His Torah, have not truly turned back to יְהוָה!

The Torah is the ‘**how to**’ of living for and loving יְהוָה, as well as loving others as ourselves.

True repentance is turning back to Elohim our Master and listening to His voice, giving our all unto Him!

Repentance calls for a complete paradigm shift of thinking, and this is exactly what Sha’ul was calling for back then, and is still the call that is being resounded today.

To come out of the man-made religious systems of worship, a complete mind-shift has to take place, as a complete change of purpose has to take place! One cannot do as they used to or as they were accustomed to doing, through an erroneous upbringing.

This kind of change is often too hard for most to make, as they cannot let go of the vain teachings and reasonings that seemingly gave them an identity, and this is why there is a huge resistance by so many, who refuse to come out of the Church and walk in the Torah – for they are actually unwilling to change the way they think!

Many will desperately hold fast to a vain westernised philosophical Greek mind-set, as they refuse to change their thought patterns and purpose, by being rigid and firm in their allegiance to the traditions of man, that have been taught as truth, yet clearly contradicts the Truth of the Word of Elohim, as they quickly forsake the commands of Elohim.

Sha'ul was not intimidated by the idolatry that he saw, but was rather urgent in his approach of proclaiming a clear message of deliverance from that which leads to death; and there was a mixed reaction!

Most mocked him, while others wanted to hear this message again – possibly not for the purpose of repenting, but simply have more knowledge regarding the True Way!

It is no different today, for most will probably mock you when confronting their idolatry and calling for repentance to the Truth, while others just want to take up your time listening to what you have to say, just so they can increase their knowledge, thinking it will make them better off for just knowing the Truth, without actually submitting to it and walking in it.

Sha'ul then left the Areopagus and there were some who had believed and joined him, and two names are mentioned here, which I think carries a great lesson for us, in understanding their names.

The first name is Διονύσιος **Dionusios – Strong's G1354** and he was a member of the Areopagus council, and his name means, '*devoted to Bacchus*'.

'Bacchus' was the Greek deity of wine and revelry, who was also known by the Greeks as **Dionysus**.

This is a very powerful witness for me, in that we are shown that even a man whose name declared devotion to a false wine, had repented and turned to the Master – The True Vine. We must realise, that while we often may doubt if it is worth speaking to people who are so dedicated to the system of Christianity and the inherited vain traditions, we are unable to predetermine who will or who will not respond.

The name of the woman who joined them, was Δάμαρις **Damaris – Strong's G1152** which means, '*heifer*' which is a young cow, and when we think upon a 'heifer', we are reminded of the red heifer sacrifice that was used for the cleansing of sin, as the ashes of the heifer were kept for the water of cleansing.

And what I find interesting, with the recording of these two specific names, is how the proclaiming of the Besorah of Messiah is vital, and we, as the salt and light, are to be doing exactly what Sha'ul was doing in Athens – and everywhere he went for that matter – and that is, we are to be calling people to repentance, regardless of how we think they may or may not respond!

Romiyim/Romans 10:13-15 “For “everyone who calls on the Name of יהוה shall be saved.” 14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without one proclaiming? 15 And how shall they proclaim if they are not sent? As it has been written, “How pleasant are the feet of those who bring the Good News of peace, who bring the Good News of the good!”

Galatiyim/Galatians 6:9 “And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not grow weary.”

My hope, through this short message, is that all who read this shall be encouraged to not be silent, but that as you are stirred by all the terrible idolatry that is going on, be **STIRRED TO SPEAK UP!** The harvest is ripe and the workers are few.

We must not be afraid of the mocking and slander and persecution that will come our way, but rather, we are to be urgent in proclaiming.

Sha’ul was reasoning with the people every day, with the Yehudim in the congregation as well as those that he met in the marketplace!

This is a wonderful picture for me, of how we are able to see that no matter where we find ourselves, we are to be reasoning with others, bringing forth the bright light of the Good News of Messiah.

The Greek word that is translated as ‘reasoning’ in **verse 17** is **διαλέγομαι dialegomai** – **Strong’s G1256** which means, ‘*to discuss, to address, to reason, to preach, to converse, to contend*’ and comes from the two words:

- 1) **διά dia** – **Strong’s G1223** which is a primary preposition that carries the meaning of, ‘*through, on account of, because of*’ and
- 2) **λέγω legō** – **Strong’s G3004** which means, ‘*to say, address, speak, call, command, exhort, advise*’.

Therefore, to ‘reason’ out with others is to address what is being spoken or advised or commanded and this carries great insight for us today, as we see the need for us to be reasoning with many, because of what has erroneously been commanded by man-made theologies!

We cannot sit still, but rather, we are to be stirred to speak up and contend the false words of lawlessness, as we confront those that we interact with on a daily basis and reason out the belief, making a clear declaration of who the One True Saviour and Elohim is!

We are to be ready to reason with ‘worshippers’ who are worshipping in falsehood as well as with ‘worldly’ who seemingly have ‘no’ religious views!

Perhaps you have slacked off in your zeal to speak the Truth and share your changed thoughts and attitudes.

Perhaps it is because of the lack of the expected response that you have been getting, as people have not responded as you would have hoped that they would, but have rather ridiculed and attacked your belief!

I appeal to you today, that with the increase of the idolatry that we see all around us, both in the corrupted worship as well as the dirty philosophies, to be **STIRRED UP TO SPEAK UP.**

Yisra'el, as mentioned, was chosen as a nation to be a light in the crossroads, for many to see the Light of the Truth and know that יהוה is Elohim, yet they failed to do this, as they fell into compromise and sin, by walking according to the customs and traditions that they were supposed to rebuke and destroy.

Let us not repeat these same mistakes! We are Yisra'el, having been grafted in to the Covenants of Promise by the Blood of The Lamb, and we have a responsibility!

So, when you see the drunkenness of peoples reasonings, getting worse and worse – be **STIRRED UP TO SPEAK UP** – for we have been given wisdom from our Elohim, who gives generously to those who ask.

It is time for the true called, set-apart and preserved ones in Messiah to be earnestly contending for the belief, putting do death all forms of empty reasonings that deny the true power of our Master, in order that we may be found to have a steadfast belief, when our Master comes!

We have been given a wisdom that is from above and not of this world, and it is time to be, as Sha'ul was, and be:

STIRRED UP TO SPEAK UP!

יהוה bless you and guard you; יהוה make His face shine upon you and show favour to you; יהוה lift up His face upon you and give you Shalom!!!