

Honesty

Where Does It Start?

By

Zerubbabel ben Emunah

zerubbabel@onetorahforall.org

www.onetorahforall.org

Tehillim [Psalm] 15

1 A Psalm of David.

YHWH, who shall sojourn in Your tabernacle?

Who shall dwell in Your set-apart mountain?

***2 He that walks uprightly, and works righteousness,
And speaks truth in his heart;***

***3 He that slanders not with his tongue,
Nor does evil to his friend,
Nor takes up a reproach against his neighbor;***

***4 In whose eyes a reprobate is despised,
But who honors them that fear YHWH;
He that swears to his own hurt, and changes not;***

***5 He that puts not out his money to interest,
Nor takes a bribe against the innocent;
He that does these things shall never be moved.***

This song of David starts off with a question. The question that it asks is a very important question, a question that we dare not miss! Who shall dwell in YHWH's tabernacle? Who shall dwell in His mountain? Now the answer to this question is such that we all want to say, "We will dwell there." However, what follows this question is a description that describes those who will dwell in His house and in His mountain. Therefore, it follows that we need to understand this song so that we can make choices that will bring this to a reality in our own personal lives.

In the following description of one who will dwell in YHWH's house there is one point that seems to be the foundation of all the other descriptions. It is found at the end of verse two. While we will examine all the different aspects of this whole song, we are going to focus upon this one aspect because of its primary importance. We find these words in the above song at the end of verse two, "And speaks truth in his heart."

And when we begin to carefully consider this aspect in relation to the other qualifications listed, then we begin to see that the other qualifications cannot really happen unless this one is true; so this one seems

to be the foundation of the others. What we will find, is that this is, in fact, true. Being honest with oneself is the greatest challenge that we face as humans, for the essence of sin is self-exaltation. And when one is exalting himself, he is not being honest with himself.

Ivrim [Hebrews] 12:1

Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

This passage speaks of two things that are a hindrance to our spiritual wellbeing. First, there are those things that are encumbrances. This is a very long list and this list would have variations from individual to individual. Then the above passage speaks about the sin which so easily entangles us. So the question that comes to mind is: what is this sin? This sin, whatever it is, is in the singular form. This would indicate to us that there is only one, and that it is common to all mankind. There is only one thing that would fit that description – self! No matter where I go, there I am. And if I let self have its own way, then I am in sin. That has always been true, and it will ever be true for all of mankind!

Scripture teaches us that we are all sinners and in need of His grace and mercy. But, in order to receive His grace and mercy, we need to be able to be honest with ourselves. But that honesty does not stop there. We have a lot of growing and maturing to do in the Spirit. And to progress in a healthy manner and become the people that He desires for us to be, then we have to be able to be honest with who we are right now. And frankly, when we look in a mirror, most often we do not like what we see, for the reality of what we are on the inside is not a very pretty picture. This picture is quite often not what we show to those around us, to those we love.

Let us consider this next passage.

Matithyah [Matthew] 7:15-20

15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves.

16 By their fruits you shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

17 Even so every good tree brings forth good fruit; but the corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit.

18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

19 Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

20 Therefore by their fruits you shall know them."

Yeshua taught us that it is the tree itself that determines what kind of fruit it produces. This is a very important concept for us to understand. We can take this principle to help us truly understand our song. Let us consider verse two in light of Mashiach's teaching.

***2 He that walks uprightly, and works righteousness,
And speaks truth in his heart;***

Please note that the first line of this verse is talking about fruit, while the second line of this verse is speaking about the tree. Let us compare.

Song	Sermon on the Mount
Walking uprightly	Good fruit
Works righteousness	Good fruit
Speaks truth in his heart	Good tree

As we can see, in order for a person to walk uprightly and to do works of righteousness, then that person must be honest with himself. If they are not willing to do that, then the bottom line is that they will not be able to dwell in His house. And the only way to dwell in His house, is to do these things which result in good fruit, which in turn requires a good tree. And in order to have a good tree, one must be able to be honest with himself.

Let us examine some of the many ways in which a person gets caught up in doing what prevents one from being honest with himself. These are in no particular order.

Blaming Others

B'reshit [Genesis] 3:12-13

12 And the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."

13 And YHWH Elohim said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat."

This is a very old problem, as we all know. When a person is caught in his sin, his first reaction often is to blame someone else, usually the closest person around. And usually this happens to be a loved one. But whenever the blame game starts, honesty is nowhere to be found! And certainly self-honesty is not to be found!

I remember one of my first jobs out of high school. It was a job that I really enjoyed and just couldn't wait to get to work the next day. I was the one who always opened the shop and on this particular Monday morning, this was no exception. I busied myself doing cleanup first and getting ready for the events of the day when my boss (who was also the owner) came in. I said, "Good morning", and did not receive the usual reply back. I did not think too much about it, but went on about my work. Pretty soon my boss called me into his office and spoke to me about what had happened on Friday. I was a little puzzled and told him what I knew after asking a few questions to know what he was looking for. He then had me go back to work. Then later he called me back into his office and spoke quite frankly and straight to the point. He told me that he knew that what had happened was not my fault, but that since

I was the low man (his only employee), and his customer was screaming for somebody to get canned, and the person that was responsible was his partner (who was blaming me – he was not being honest with himself), and he was not going to fire him, he was firing me. I was just stunned! Then I left.

The thing is, we often blame others when we should be looking inward. And when we blame others, they get hurt. Sometimes the damage blaming others can do is irreversible. Let us consider another passage.

Matithyah [Matthew] 7:3-5

3 “And why do you look at speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not consider the log that is in your own eye?

4 Or how will you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye;’ and behold, the log is in your own eye?

5 You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye; and then you shall see clearly to take out the speck out of your brother's eye.”

Yeshua clearly taught us that we are to fix ourselves first, and then turn and help our brothers. Have you ever noticed how much easier it is for us to see the problems and shortcomings in others, than it is to see our own faults and shortcomings? In fact, it has been my observation that when certain characteristics really rub someone the wrong way, more often than not, the very reason that these characteristics rub one the wrong way, is because that characteristic is present in the life of the person it is bothering, and he does not like it in himself; so rather than being honest with himself and fixing himself, he just picks on (blames) others for the very thing that he cannot stand in himself.

Blaming Childhood (past)

Another area in which people get caught up in that is closely related to blaming others that prevents a person from truly being honest with himself, is blaming what he is doing on his childhood or his past. This area is not only done by individuals, but it is also done by well-meaning people on behalf of others in an attempt to make excuses for another's behavior. This is wrong and should not be done.

Philippians 3:13-14

13 Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold of it; but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before,

14 I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of Elohim in Mashiach Yeshua.

It is important for us to realize that each and every one of us has things in our past that are not pretty or pleasing to talk about. Some of these things may even be difficult to talk about. Every single one of us goes through things that are difficult. These things are the refining fires of tribulation. YHWH in His great wisdom and sovereignty knows what each one of us needs to refine us. It is not the same for each

one of us. What may be difficult for one may not be for another. And what may be difficult for one may be impossible for another. YHWH knows!

The fact that one has difficulty in speaking about things in his past, may be a very good indication that this is not a completely resolved subject and needs to be revisited in order to settle the matter so that one's past no longer has a hold on him and controls his actions.

Qorintyah Aleph [1st Corinthians] 10:13

There has no temptation overtaken you but such as is common to man; but Elohim is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able to bear; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Please note, that whatever it is that Elohim takes us through, it is not more than we can handle with His help. Also, before we even get to this time of testing, He has already provided the way of escape. We should also remind ourselves that Yeshua is the Way. He is the way of escape, or the way in which we are able to endure these trials, because He took upon Himself the full weight of trials and did not sin! So He knows how to help us in our hour of need, if we will just turn to Him and listen to His Voice and obey Him.

So regardless of what it is that is in one's past, it is not able to hinder him from fully following YHWH, unless he lets it do so, and unless he chooses to make it the determining factor of his life. So, this seems to bring up a question for us to consider. Who is Master of my life? YHWH? Or, my past? It is our choice to make!

Let us be as the apostle Shaul and forget what lies behind (but not forgetting the lessons learned) and let us press on, focusing our eyes upon Yeshua! It is our choice! Let us not be stuck in the past or attempt to walk forward while looking behind us. It is a good way to fall into a ditch and get hurt.

Self-condemnation or Blaming Self

On the other end of the spectrum of blaming others, is when one blames himself for everything or nearly everything. This also is not being honest with himself. This can come from a root of pride and false humility. This can be done in an effort to hide what kind of person one really is on the inside. It is a façade that needs to be seen through by those who can be honest with themselves. Or, perhaps it can come from how a person was raised, his past. Regardless, it is something that each one of us needs to overcome and deal with so that each one of us can have good fruit in our lives and live in the house of YHWH.

Matithyah [Matthew] 7:1-2

1 "Judge not, that you be not judged.

2 For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged; and with what standard of measure, it shall be measured unto you."

This passage is well known and often misquoted. When we look at the original languages, and especially look at the context in which this verse is found, we find that this is probably not the best translation into modern English. Please consider the following translation.

- 1 "Condemn not, that you are not condemned.**
- 2 For with the condemnation that you condemn, you shall be condemned; and with the standard that you use, it shall be used to measure you."**

Let us consider carefully the difference between what it means "to condemn" and "to judge". In fact, we are told in many places in Scripture to judge with righteous judgment.

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 25:1

"If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, and the judges judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked;"

Notice that both the concepts of judgment and condemnation are present in this passage. What is being judged? It is the actions that we are commanded to judge. Furthermore, we are commanded to judge the actions of another according to righteous judgment. This righteous judgment has its foundation in Torah. Without Torah there can and will be no righteous judgment.

So what is condemnation then? Before we answer that question, please consider this passage.

Romans 14:4

Who are you that condemns the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls. Yea, he shall be made to stand; for YHWH has power to make him stand.

The way that this stacks up is like this. Since we are all believers in Yeshua, that makes us brothers, but it also makes us His servants. And since we are His servants, then we do not have the right to condemn others that are His servants (our brothers). In fact, since we personally belong to Him and are His servant, one does not even have the right to condemn oneself.

Righteous judgment consists of looking at the actions of another and being able to rightly judge according to Torah as to whether those actions are good or bad, either according to Torah or against Torah. This we not only have the right to do, but we have the responsibility to do; but not only of others, but of oneself first and foremost.

What we do not have the right to do, is to condemn another or even condemn oneself. Condemnation involves the character of a person. Let us illustrate.

Scripture teaches us that it is wrong to tell a lie. This is an action and when a fellow Israelite tells a lie and we know it, then we are under Scriptural obligation to go to that brother in an effort to restore our brother. We are to bring their Torah breaking actions to their attention. However, what we are not to do is to walk up to them and call them a liar. This statement is not judging their action, but rather an indictment upon their character. The usual response to this type of allegation will be one of self-defense. This type of pronouncement is also a condemnation and does nothing to restore our brother.

We say all this to point out that, not only can Israelites get caught up in this sinful behavior one towards another, but also we can allow our own thoughts to run along the lines of self-condemnation. If we listen to these wrong thoughts which usually deal with one's own personal character rather than dealing with one's wrong actions, then one is not being honest with himself. It is not uncommon for our wrong actions to degenerate into condemnation of self. This is wrong!

When we come to YHWH and ask for forgiveness in the name of Yeshua and receive that forgiveness, then that Torah breaking that we had been involved in, is now in the past. Therefore, the one who has sought for and received His forgiveness has no right to condemn himself. If YHWH has forgiven a person, who does that person think he is to supersede YHWH's righteous judgment? Do you think that you know better than YHWH? I would hope not! So, do not be involved in condemning yourself! Do not get caught up in this sinful action!

Colossians 2:18

Let no one defraud you of your prize, delighting in self-abasement and the worship of angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, vainly puffed up by the mind of his flesh,

Colossians 2:23

These are words which have, to be sure, wisdom in self-willed piety and self-abasement and unsparing treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.

Make no mistake about it, self-abasement (self-condemnation) is wrong and is against Scripture. If you know of a leader who does this, then please use extreme caution around that person. While we should check everything we hear and read against Scripture, we should check the teachings of those who delight in self-abasement with extra care. Why? A teaching that comes from teachers whose wisdom is self-willed and full of self-abasement is quite appealing to the fallen fleshly nature of man. It is this type of teaching that draws people away from the true path of eternal life.

There is one other aspect of self-condemnation that we need to examine. Please consider this passage.

Ivrim [Hebrews] 12:2

We must focus on Yeshua, the source and goal of our faith. He saw the joy ahead of Him, so He endured death on the cross and ignored the disgrace it brought Him. Then He received the highest position in heaven, the one next to the throne of Elohim.

Self-condemnation seems to be a common byproduct of one who is always taking his spiritual pulse to see where he is in His relationship with YHWH. He who is always examining himself to see where he is, is focusing his attention in the wrong direction. May I submit to you that this is a wrong action on the part of a believer? It is sin!

Qorintyah Bet [2nd Corinthians] 13:5

Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith; prove your own selves. Know you not your own selves, how that Yeshua Mashiach is in you, except you be reprobates?

Many look at this verse and think that we are constantly to be examining ourselves to make sure that we are in the faith. However, that is not what the apostle is admonishing us to do. When this verse is considered in the context in which it is found, it seems that what the apostle is saying, is that they should already know that they are in the faith. And if they don't know this, then they could simply examine themselves, and then they would see that this is, in fact, true. He is not admonishing the believers in Qorintyah (Corinth) to be doing this on a consistent basis; rather this was a one-time admonition.

The reality of our existence is, that if we are constantly looking at ourselves, then we are only blind guides leading the blind. How can one who is constantly looking at himself direct others to look to Yeshua? He cannot! The focus of our lives and our everyday living needs to be focused upon Yeshua. If this is not true, then how can we expect to live a life that is pleasing to Him? We cannot! Can you imagine the servant of a king that was always looking in a mirror at himself? I would think that the king would gently admonish the servant at first, but if he did not change his action then I would think that the king would take more drastic action. In fact, if the king could not change this trait in his servant, then the king would most likely remove him from being his servant. Likewise, YHWH wants us to focus upon Him, not ourselves. Let us be sure that this is what we are doing.

Tehillim [Psalm] 26:2

Examine me, YHWH, and prove me;

Try my heart and my mind.

We need to focus our eyes and life upon Yeshua, who is the Author and Perfecter of our faith. We need to ask Him to examine us. Only when He directs our attention to some specific area in our lives that needs attention should we look at ourselves. All other times we are to be focused upon the Master. He is the One whom we are following. You are not following yourself, are you? If you are not following yourself, then stop looking at yourself! Look to HIM!

Projection

Romans 2:1

Wherefore you are without excuse, man, whosoever you are that condemns; for wherein you condemn another, you pass sentence upon yourself; for you that condemns do practice the same things.

On the other end of blaming oneself is projection. This is slightly different than blaming others. Where blaming others is just simply pointing one's finger at someone else, projection is pointing one's finger at another because he is actually guilty of this same shortcoming. This passage teaches us, that when we take up the mantle of condemning others, we are guilty of the very thing that we are condemning in others. I am sure that we all could cite examples of this that we personally know about. One example that comes to my mind was the well known preacher who was recently exposed for frequenting a male prostitute. This preacher often condemned homosexuality from the pulpit and all the while that he was condemning this, he was involved in it.

When a person condemns another, this is often because he himself is involved in this action and already knows it to be wrong, and therefore cannot stand to see this wrongness in another, let alone himself, because it is like looking in a mirror and a reminder of the wrongness in his own heart. Therefore, he condemns that which he is not willing to change in himself.

Today we call this "projection". While this is easily seen in the sinful side of things, there is another side that we also need to consider. Whatever fills our heart, whether that is good or bad, is what we will tend to project upon others. If one's heart is filled with good, then this is what we will tend to see in others even if this is not true in that person's life. This can have a devastating effect upon the believer because it can make them a target of those who play off of such good characteristics. For the good characteristics of one's heart if one is not careful, can be projected upon someone who does not have a good heart. It should not surprise us then at this admonition from Yeshua.

Matithyah [Matthew] 10:16

"Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; you be therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

Whether a person projects the good or the bad which is in his heart upon those around him, it is not being honest with himself, nor being honest with what he is actually seeing. When we project badness upon others, it is often because we are guilty of this. When we project goodness upon others (when the good is not really there), it is often because we are ignoring those things that we see, those things that cause those little doubts that we don't take an honest look at, telling ourselves that surely that cannot be so. And we end up reasoning reality away and end up ignoring it to our own downfall.

It is good that we see goodness in others, but only if the goodness is actually there. If we are projecting our own goodness or projecting His goodness upon others and it is not there, then this is not being honest, and that will get us into trouble every time. What we need to understand, is that projection, whether one is projecting goodness or sin upon another, is not being honest in one's own heart. And we need to be honest in our own hearts if we are going to walk uprightly before our Creator. We need to be able to call sin for what it is – sin, whether in our own hearts or in the actions of another.

Likewise, as we are to encourage and build up His body, we will not be able to do that properly unless we can call a spade a spade, whether that spade is good or bad. This all begins with the ability to be honest in one's own heart; for we cannot truly grow and mature in our walk in Mashiach Yeshua if we cannot be honest with ourselves. The harder one works at being honest with himself, the more and faster that one can grow in his spiritual walk.

Excuses

We all have used excuses at some time in our lives. It is a seemingly easy way to get out of doing something that we don't want to do; or, it is a ready means to get something that we want; or, it is a means to justify some wrongdoing on our part. The use of excuses for any reason cannot be supported by Scripture.

My children often hear me say to them that when a person needs an excuse anything will do. Carefully consider this parable that Yeshua taught us.

Luqa [Luke] 14:16-24

16 But he said unto him, "A certain man made a great supper; and he bade many;

17 and he sent forth his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, 'Come; for all things are now ready.'

18 And they all with one consent began to make excuses. The first said unto him, 'I have bought a field, and I must needs go out and see it; I pray thee have me excused.'

19 And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused.'

20 And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'

21 And the servant came, and told his master these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor and maimed and blind and lame.'

22 And the servant said, 'Master, what you commanded is done, and yet there is still room.'

23 And the master said unto the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and constrain them to come in, that my house may be filled.'

24 For I say unto you, that none of those men that were bidden shall taste of my supper.'

Notice that Yeshua lists three excuses as examples. When we examine these three excuses, we will see that every excuse that we can come up with will fit into one of these three examples. What we need to do, then, is to define these examples so we can set up some proper and well-defined categories. This will then help us to understand this concept better. It will also help us to clarify our thinking and enable us to convey these truths in a much more concise manner. First, let us list them.

- ✓ I have bought a field and need to go see it
- ✓ I have bought five yoke of oxen and need to go try them out
- ✓ I have just gotten married

These three excuses that Yeshua lists for us as examples seem to correspond quite well with this next passage.

Yochanan Aleph [1st John] 2:16

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Let us now list these three.

- ✓ Lust of the flesh
- ✓ Lust of the eyes
- ✓ Boastful pride of life

These three things that are found in the world stem from the original temptation in the Garden of Eden.

B'reshit [Genesis] 3:6

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.

Now let us list these.

- ✓ Good for food
- ✓ Delight to the eyes
- ✓ Desired to make one wise

For ease of comparison let us chart all these so we can see a little more clearly how each of these line up with each of the others.

Reference	Benefit – to self	Packaging – appeal	Status – strokes to ego
B'reshit 3:16	Good for food	Delight to the eyes	Make one wise
Yochanan Aleph 2:16	Lust of the flesh	Lust of the eyes	Pride of life
Luke 14:18-20	Bought a field	Bought oxen	Just got married

Please study the chart carefully. Let us briefly discuss each one of these classes of excuses. The first class of excuses is dealing with its benefit to oneself. While this is true of all excuses, this is what is primary and stands above all other aspects of excuses that would be placed in this category. While all

three of these categories are common in advertizing today, this first category, the benefit to oneself, is what these advertisers have learned to capitalize upon in an appeal to one's fleshly vanity. They know that the flesh wants to be elevated above all others, and so they focus the advertizing of their respective products upon the individual in a way that promises to (but seldom does) deliver this to the consumer.

When we look specifically at this particular excuse: that this man had just purchased a field, there are several questions that this raises. First, it should be pointed out that this celebration supper that this man was invited to, would have only lasted for several hours. Also, this meal seems to have been in the evening. What could he have seen about this field in the dark? Besides, that field was not going anywhere; it would have been there the next day. This shows to us that this man just simply did not want to go to this supper as he saw no benefit to himself in going. He simply was so wrapped up in himself that he could not and would not see the big picture.

The next man's excuse that he had just purchased five yoke of oxen also brings up several questions as well. Again, it does not seem very reasonable that he was going to take these oxen out into the field at night and try them out. Likewise, they were not going anywhere and these oxen would be there the next day. Purchasing these oxen without trying them out would be like buying a car without test driving it. It just does not seem reasonable or logical. What this seems to indicate to us is that like the first man, this man's excuse was just that, an excuse. This man just did not see any appeal to the lust of his eyes in going to this man's supper. He would rather look at his oxen (that he was going to have for quite some time) than go to a friend's supper. There just simply was no eye appeal in this invitation.

The last man's excuse that he had just gotten married, also indicates to us that this man like the others, simply did not see any value in this invitation to himself, and so came up with this excuse that isn't really valid. His wife was not going anywhere. In fact, if the truth be known, she was probably included in the invitation with her husband. It was not like this was an invitation to join the army, in which according to Torah, he would be exempt for the first year of his marriage. This invitation was just for one evening meal. And he did not see anything in it for which he could later boast about as having been a part of, or rather that he had his hand in, to make himself look good. He could see nothing in this invitation that would stroke his own ego and build him up. So he declined the invitation.

Of course, we see this parable as something that illustrates Yeshua's invitation to us to join Him at the marriage supper. In light of this, let us consider these excuses. Scripture teaches us that we are to deny ourselves, that if our eye offends us (sins) to pluck it out, that we are not to be prideful, and a whole list of other things that result in the death to self. Self does not die easily! And when we carefully examine these excuses for what they truly are, we see that they are simply the self exalting itself over others. If we are going to enter into His Kingdom, then we will have to learn how to be honest with ourselves and not make or accept excuses. Being honest with ourselves will help us to see through the façade of other people's excuses as well.

False Piety

Ya'aqov [James] 1:27

The religious observance that Elohim the Father considers pure and faultless is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being contaminated by the world.

False piety manifests itself in two areas in a person's life: 1) in his devotion to Elohim; and 2) how he treats his fellow man. This is seen in his actions and in his inner life. How honest one can be in this area will be seen in how well one keeps the two greatest commandments.

Matithyah [Matthew] 22:37-40

37 And He said unto him,

***"You shall love YHWH your Elohim with all your heart,
 and with all your soul,
 and with all your mind.***

38 This is the great and first commandment.

39 And a second like unto it is this,

Thou shall love your neighbor as yourself.

40 On these two commandments the whole Torah hangs, and the prophets."

False piety is commonly seen manifested in two ways in religious circles today. There are those who teach and believe that one is saved by grace alone, and that they can do nothing to earn their salvation. This often goes so far as to say that one only has to believe, and if any attempt is made to live a righteous life, then one is seen as attempting to earn his salvation and comes under the condemnation of his fellow worshippers until such time that he "repents" of this righteous works, and only believes and does not do any works that could be seen by them as earning salvation. Of course, they have their own manmade list of what is acceptable works to be involved in doing, which reveals the falseness of this type of piety. This is where much of Christianity is today. While it is true that one is saved only by His grace, the result of this should always be a life that reflects His presence in one's everyday living. If one is not actively doing all he can to keep and obey His commandments, is that person really saved?

Then there are those whose emphasis is upon right living to the point of excluding what is in the heart as having any relevance whatsoever. It is not what a person believes that is important, but rather it is what a person does, that defines whether they have eternal life or not. These two positions are at opposite ends of the spectrum and are quite at odds with each other. While it is true that we are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, this can only properly be built upon the foundation of salvation by faith. But if one only lays a proper foundation and does not build a building upon it, what good is the foundation? Likewise, if one attempts to build a building and it is not upon the proper foundation, then the building cannot and will not stand!

However, what those of either position do not seem to be willing to objectively consider, is that while both positions have some truth in them, in each case both positions would be much closer to a solid Scriptural position if they took the truth of both and combined them into one. This can only be done if one is willing to be completely honest with himself.

There are many today that only play at being religious. These people go to church or synagogue whenever possible and do what is right in their own eyes. And as the Hebrew Roots movement continues to grow and many people continue to come out of the church system and find the commandments of YHWH instead of the traditions of men, they begin keeping Shabbat, the Moedim (Festivals), the food laws and many other things that are right and good to do according to the commandments of YHWH. The problem often is that they keep the same mindset that some of these people had in the church system, believing that if they do certain things at the right times, then they are free to do whatever they want the rest of the time. This is not reasonable, nor according to Scripture.

As the pendulum of one's belief swings from one extreme to the other, oftentimes these same people allow it to swing too far, and when that happens they get caught up in accepting things that are not according to Scripture and sometimes end up actually rejecting Messiah. I have seen this repeatedly. But here is the question that I would like those people that are considering such a move prayerfully to consider. Would you be keeping Torah today without Yeshua? Is He not the very reason that you came to be keeping Torah? To be sure, He is! Therefore, He has done His duty as a Mashiach; i.e., He has brought you to Torah. So how is it that you can rightfully toss Him aside when you are where you are in your Torah keeping because of His presence in your life?

If we are truly going to walk according to the path that YHWH has placed before us in a way that is pleasing to Him, then we are going to have to be honest with ourselves first and foremost! The deception of the self that exists in our hearts is going to have to be rooted out so that we can stand before Him blameless. We have to come to that place in our understanding and walk in which we know that what we are doing is for Him and Him alone. Furthermore, we must understand that it is only by His strength that we are able to do what He asks us to do. If we try to do something on our own strength then we are building our own doomed empire rather than building His eternal Kingdom.

Qorintyah Aleph [1st Corinthians]

1 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal.

2 And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

3 And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

You see, our actions, our works, must be upon the foundation of love – His love. Otherwise, whatever we are doing, even if what we are doing is precisely according to Scriptural commandment, that is the letter of the Law but not the Spirit of the Law; if it is not upon the foundation of love for Elohim and love

for our fellow man, then it is all for naught! This is what false piety is, keeping His commandments but not from a heart of love. Or, keeping the traditions of man rather than obeying the commandments of Elohim.

Let us be sure that what we are extending to our fellow followers of YHWH is based in His love rather than based upon the condemnation of keeping a set of rules and commandments. We all fall short in many ways in obeying His commandments, let us not fall short in encouraging one another and lifting one another up before His throne.

Ivrim [Hebrews] 10:23-25

23 let us hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver not; for He is faithful that promised:

24 and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works;

25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as you see the day drawing near.

True piety will be built upon the foundation of honesty. Being honest with ourselves enables us to be honest with our fellow servants. May He find all of us doing this each and every day!

Diversion

Ya'aqov [James] 4:13-15

13 Come now, you that say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain."

14 whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow. What is your life? For you are a vapor, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away.

15 For what you ought to say, "If YHWH wills, we shall both live, and do this or that."

Many people live behind a façade. When this is a person's modus operandi, he is not being honest with himself. And anytime that that façade is threatened in some way, all sorts of diversions are employed to shore up the wall he lives behind. We want to discuss some of those ways that people commonly employ, so that they do not have to face themselves in honesty.

This passage teaches us that we need to focus our lives in such a way, so that we are always very conscience of YHWH's will in our lives. In fact, we should only be seeking to do His will, rather than our own. This should be all-inclusive and cover each and every single area of our daily living.

I have actually seen this passage misused and used as a diversionary tactic in order to shirk personal responsibility. It is a shame that there are those who would stoop so low as not to take responsibility for their own actions, but rather use such a passage as this to shift the responsibility (blame) over onto YHWH. This passage is not teaching us to do this at all. What this passage is teaching us is proper focus.

YHWH still expects us and desires for us to be personally responsible for our actions and choices that we make in our daily living.

Matithyah [Matthew] 25:44-45

44 "Then shall they also answer, saying, 'Master, when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?'

45 Then shall He answer them, saying, 'Amein, I say unto you, Inasmuch as you did it not unto one of these least, you did it not unto me.'"

Yeshua, in speaking about the day in which the believers and unbelievers will be separated from one another, teaches us about personal responsibility. If we cannot be honest enough with ourselves here in this life, then that shirking of responsibility will carry over into the olam haba (world to come) at which time it will be too late to take responsibility for our own choices. In fact, what we see in this passage, is that those who have refused to take personal responsibility now, will simply continue to do so on that day. How sad!

Ya'aqov [James] 5:20

Let him know, that he who converts a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins.

In many places and in many ways does Scripture admonish us to watch out for those around us. This especially includes when we see a brother in sin, to go to him and speak to him in the love of Messiah, in order to direct him back to the path of righteousness. One of the greatest challenges that a person faces in doing this, is the reaction of the one so faced with sin. More often than not, the initial reaction will be a defensive one. This defensive reaction can take on one or more of many types of diversions. One common one is an attempt to refocus the conversation onto something or someone else. Sometimes this happens because the one doing so has trouble admitting when he is wrong. And being caught in a sin and that sin being pointed out, is more than such a person is willing to admit. Regardless of the type of diversion one attempts to employ, they all have the same purpose; that being that the one employing the diversion does not have to be honest and thus face the truth of what is in his own heart. Perhaps one of the most common attempts to refocus the attention is upon the message bearer and any possible sin in the message bearer's life. This is one reason why Yeshua taught us to get the log out of our own eye first (Matithyah 7:5), because in so doing, this helps us not to take on a defensive mode ourselves when we are helping our brother. For one sent on such an errand by YHWH to bear this type of message, must first be honest with himself before he can help another be honest with himself.

Another diversion used by those who do not wish to be honest with themselves, is to focus upon small details, those things that do not really matter, those things that are not the true subject. I have seen this happen many times, and those that use such tactics are usually very practiced at doing so, and their defenses are usually pretty sharp. So, for a person to be able to get through all the lines of defense, he is going to have to be aware and focused and not allow anything to turn him to the right or to the left.

When a person derails the subject by controlling the conversation, it is an effort to avoid facing reality. These attempts at misdirection should be a clue to us that not all is right in that person's heart. These self-defensive tactics need to be seen in the light of His Word in which we are told to daily crucify ourselves. If one is defending himself, then he is not dying to self. And if one is not dying to self, then is Yeshua actually the Master of his life? Or, is he his own master?

One other common means employed as a diversion is when someone makes an absolute statement, particularly when that statement is an "I" statement. When a person states that he always does this or that; or, when he states that he never does this or that, these types of statements are generally made because this is not true and they wish it were true. But, they do not want others to know that this is not true in their life, so they make statements to misdirect attention away from reality, making themselves look better than they actually are. Sometimes these types of statements are made from the subconscious level, and these statements are out of his mouth before he even realizes what he has said. But once said, instead of correcting them, he will often stand by what he has said.

When we as His people begin to see these types of diversions and evasive actions for what they are in ourselves, then we will be able to see them much more clearly in others, and thus be able to help others grow and mature in their spiritual walk. It will also help us to steer away from these common pitfalls and spare us many a heartache.

Withdrawal

Ephesians 2:11-12

11 Wherefore remember, that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision, in the flesh, made by hands;

12 that you were at that time separate from Mashiach, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without Elohim in the world.

Another means employed to protect (hide) from oneself is to withdraw, to isolate oneself from others or situations that make us uncomfortable. However, YHWH created us as gregarious creatures.

B'reshit [Genesis] 2:18

And YHWH Elohim said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him."

There are times in which it is good and beneficial for us to enter into our prayer closet and be alone with YHWH. Yeshua taught us this very concept.

Matithyah [Matthew] 6:6

“But you, when you pray, enter into your inner chamber, and having shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret shall recompense you.”

It is recorded that Yeshua Himself often did this very thing. This is a good and right discipline for us to be involved in doing regularly. What we need to discuss in the context of this study on being honest with ourselves, is that action when one withdraws into a shell to avoid situations or people that make them uncomfortable, and the result is that the thing that is making him uncomfortable goes unresolved. The long term effect of this brings illness mentally, emotionally, and ultimately physically, none of which are good for us.

We need to guard against erecting a wall around ourselves and withdrawing into a shell. If this has already taken place in a person’s life, then the effort required to tear down this wall will be great as well as painful. However, this is something that absolutely needs to be done if we are not going to be stunted and deformed in our spiritual being. The removal of such a wall of self-isolation will most likely take time to tear down because it took years to erect it. In some cases it may even take a well-trained professional counselor to help in the removal of such a structure. It obviously would be of the greatest benefit if this professional was also a believer to have the proper frame of reference.

Qorintyah [1st Corinthians] 12:21

And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you;” or again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.”

Every single person that YHWH brings into His family is important and has a specific duty to perform that YHWH Himself has designated.

Qorintyah [1st Corinthians] 12:18

But now has Elohim set the members each one of them in the body, even as it pleased Him.

In order for each one of us to take our proper place in His body and walk in the fullness of that calling, we need to make ourselves available not only to Him, but also to one another. This means that there really is no place for an individual to isolate himself from the body. To do so is to cut oneself off from life.

Indulgence

Ephesians 2:3

Among whom we also all once lived in the lust of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

Another area that people engage in that hinders them from being honest with themselves, is self-indulgence. This can manifest itself in several ways. One of those ways is addictions. A person can develop an addiction to almost anything, even things that are legitimate in a measured amount. Addictions many times are a symptom of one hiding and/or building a wall of isolation around himself. Instead of facing some uncomfortable reality, one so engaged distracts his own mind with something else, which can and most likely will, develop into an addiction left unchecked and unhindered.

If one lives his life in such a way that he is always giving his body or mind (self) what he desires, then the result will be no spiritual power in that person's life. And if there is no spiritual power in a person's life, then how could such a one as that live as an effective overcomer? In fact, instead of being an overcomer, that one will be overcome by sin and live a life of defeat.

One of the things that we should watch for are "triggers". These are things that happen around us or things said to us, that are in some way similar to, and remind us about, something that happened to us in the past. When we experience one of these triggers, most often it is at the subconscious level and we may not even be aware that it is a trigger. When we react in a pattern to similar situations then it is likely that there is a trigger present. With prayer and honest searching these triggers can be identified. Once identified we can then retrain ourselves into acting in a much more appropriate manner, one that is much more honest with the situation and with the people that we are interacting with, let alone more honest with oneself.

Many times if these triggers are left unhindered to play out to its natural conclusion, the end result will culminate in some type of compulsive behavior. When a person gets caught in the cycle of compulsive behavior, then he as a person is not really in control of himself, but rather that compulsive behavior drives the person to do things that the person would not do under normal circumstances in which proper rational thinking was present. Many times, addictions and compulsive behavior is allowed to continue in a person's life because it tends to soothe the savage beast within, when what really needs to happen, is for this savage beast (sinful self) to be crucified and not allowed to be in control.

Ya'aqov [James] 4:16-17

16 But now you glory in your boastings; all such glorying is evil.

17 To him therefore that knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin.

The western society that we live in, is a society that is hedonistic (seekers of pleasure). This seems to be the primary focus of much of what goes on in our society. When a person engages in a pleasure-seeking lifestyle, he is seeking the things of this world, which is enmity with Elohim. If we are going to be honest with ourselves and live according to the lifestyle set forth in Scripture, then we need to be able to identify all those things in our lives that are not pleasing to YHWH and are holding us back in our spiritual progress.

Communication

Ya'aqov [James] 4:1

From where are quarrels and fights among you? Is it not the source of your pleasures that wage war in your members?

The first question in the above passage is the searching question. The second question is actually a rhetorical question that answers the first question. The believers that Ya'aqov was writing to (the twelve tribes in the Diaspora – 1:1) apparently had some difficulty in this area in which the communication between some of the believers had degenerated into quarrels and outright fighting. This still happens in assemblies of believers today. Likewise, it is still the same cause: selfish pleasures that are not being fulfilled, yet pursued.

In this section, we are going to discuss several things that are a hindrance to communication. The first area that is a great hindrance to communication is anger.

Galatians 5:19-21

19 Now the works of the flesh are clearly revealed, which are: immorality, uncleanness, licentiousness,

20 idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, fightings, jealousies, outbursts of anger, rivalries, divisions, heresies,

21 envying, drunkenness, wild parties, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who commit such things will not inherit the Kingdom of Elohim.

While our focus is presently upon outbursts of anger, it is quite helpful to note how many of those listed above are actually dealing with communication in some way. Not only are outbursts of anger a great hindrance to communication, but it can actually keep one from inheriting eternal life if left unrepented of and proper changes made to change this type of behavior. Many times anger is really just the symptom of some other strong emotion that a person wants to hide. For example, many in our society have the mindset that to show fear is to show weakness. This is really not true at all. In fact, to admit that one is fearful is not only being honest, but it is an indication of inner strength. What happens in many people when they feel fear, is that they will exhibit anger in an effort to hide it. Many times this will not even be done at the conscious level.

Also, when someone says something to us that hits a tender spot our reaction is often one of anger with a raised voice or angry tone. This type of reaction is not being honest with the self because it is a defensive reaction. When a person engages in this type of reaction, it is designed to put the other party on the defensive. This has a tendency to put the other person off balance, and it derails the confrontation. If the other person is completely caught off guard and does not recover quickly so as not to respond in like manner (in anger), then the confrontation will never bear good fruit and will end up being fruitless.

Another way in which communication is hindered is when one person feigns to be offended and acts in accordance as one who is offended. When we are communicating with others, it is important for us to have thick skin along with tender hearts. This way we do not take offense so easily, and can listen for the message more than the way that the message is delivered, understanding that we are all imperfect humans and what one person thinks may be an offensive tone, another may not think so. So we need to give grace in this area and not be quite so sensitive and abrasive in our replies. Instead of taking things in a personal way that may not even be intended in that way, we should listen for the content of what is being spoken to us. This will help facilitate communication, rather than shutting it down.

Galatians 5:15

But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you be not consumed one of another.

Even when someone lashes out at us with their tongue does not mean that we need to, or have to, lash out back at them. We need to learn what these passages teach us.

Mishle [Proverbs] 15:1

A soft answer turns away wrath;

But a grievous word stirs up anger.

It is recorded that Yeshua did this on many occasions. If we would but take the time to learn from His example and reply as He replied, then we would get along so much better with our fellow believers. It is sad that so often believers treat unbelievers so much better than their fellow Kingdom citizens. These things should not be so!

Kepha Aleph [1st Peter] 2:23

When He (Yeshua) was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judges righteously.

Truly, this is something for each and every one of us to strive for, to speak with dignity and respect to all those we speak to, regardless of how they are speaking to us. May YHWH give us the strength and wisdom to be in control of our own tongues so that we bring Him glory and honor at all times.

Ivrim [Hebrews] 3:13

But encourage one another day by day, so long as it is called today; lest anyone of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

This passage teaches us that we are to speak in a way that lifts up, rather than tears down. We have all been around those people that are constantly tearing down others in an effort to lift themselves up. This is never acceptable and should not be engaged in by believers, nor should believers listen to this type of destructive backbiting. When we are present when this type of behavior begins, we should attempt to stop it politely without condemning those involved in this behavior. If it continues, then we

should simply walk away and not listen to it. It is not healthy for us to do this, nor is it healthy to listen to this self-destructive talk that also tears others down (lashon hara).

1st Timothy 2:8

I desire therefore that the men pray in every place, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and disputing.

One of the saddest things in the believing community is when lashon hara takes place under the guise of a prayer request. Please note that we are to pray for the brethren and we are to do this without wrath and without arguments. We can let others know that there is a prayer need without degrading others. When a prayer request goes out that harms the name and/or reputation, then sin has been committed. I have heard of small groups who meet to study Scripture, and the first part of the study time is spent gossiping, slandering, and other such things that should not be done by believers. This is shameful and each one of us needs to be honest enough, that if we have been guilty of this, we need to stop it and make this right in whatever way His Spirit leads us to do!

Reality

Mishle [Proverbs] 12:17

***He that utters truth shows forth righteousness;
But a false witness, deceit.***

We have discussed many ways that hinder us from being honest within our own hearts. As this passage shows us the importance of uttering the truth to show forth His righteousness, this is especially pertinent that we do this in our own hearts. We would not want to be found to be a false witness uttering deceit into our own hearts. This is a sure way to exclude ourselves from the olam haba (the world to come). I do not think that any one of us would intentionally mislead oneself. However, because of the human fallen nature that we function in, the default behavior that we naturally do is self-destructive. In order for us not to be involved in self-destructive behavior, takes a conscious choice followed up by a consistent conscious effort on our part to do what is right and good in His eyes. We have to choose to be honest with ourselves, and we have to make a concerted effort to do this. Let's face it; being honest with oneself is the hardest thing that humans undertake to do!

It is all too easy to live in a fantasy world of our own making; substituting a fantasy for reality. Living in such a world is not healthy and it is not being honest. Even though reality may not be a real pretty world, we need to face it square on. For if we do not face it square on, then how can we have the strength and courage to change what needs to be changed? We cannot! However, when we do the hard work of being honest with ourselves then we can begin to see what we need to change in ourselves first, and then what we need to change in the world in which we live.

Yeshayah [Isaiah] 1:18

“Come now, and let us reason together,” says YHWH; “though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

YHWH asks for us to come aside with Him so that He can reason with us. His word is reasonable! YHWH is reasonable! He asks that we be reasonable. I don't think that is asking too much of us, do you? The problem is, that way too often our reasoning is faulty. In order for our reasoning to be on a solid foundation it must absolutely be based upon hardcore self-honesty! When a person uses reasoning to justify his actions, then that reasoning is faulty reasoning, and is actually self-destructive in nature. YHWH tells us in this passage, that even though our sins are as red as crimson, if we will be honest about our true heart condition, then He will help us to properly think and dwell on things that are pleasing to Him!

Whatever type of self-destructive behavior a person is engaged in doing, facing it and being honest about it is the first step in changing the destructive behavior into behavior that is healthy and leads one to life.

Philippians 2:5

Have this mind in you, which was also in Mashiach Yeshua.

The mindset of Mashiach was one of service. He came to serve and to save those who were lost. Likewise, we should not exalt ourselves, but rather have this same mindset of serving our fellow believers. This mindset will go a long way in helping us to be honest with ourselves.

Galatians 4:19

My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Mashiach be formed in you.

Having the same mindset formed in us that was in Mashiach is likened unto a woman being in labor to give birth. Forming Mashiach in us is hard work! The one thing that we need to understand is that this will not happen by accident. We cannot just float along in this life and expect this to happen. No! Rather, we need to make right choices, and then have right actions follow those right choices. It is only in this way that we can work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12).

Yermeyah [Jeremiah] 31:33

“But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” says YHWH; “I will put my Torah in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their Elohim, and they shall be my people.”

It seems that YHWH is now in the process of doing the very thing He prophesies about in the above passage. He is writing His Torah upon the hearts of His people. He knows who belongs to Him and who does not. If others are going to see His Torah written upon our hearts, then we need to become transparent. We do not want others to see us; we want and need for them to see Him.

When a transparency is used with an overhead projector, no one actually sees the clear plastic transparency that the message is written upon. Rather they only see the message that is projected, and rightfully so. For if the viewers begin to see the transparency for whatever reason, this then interferes with the clarity of the message. And those that need to see the message that is carried upon the transparency, may get a message that has flaws in it.

Likewise, we as His people are to carry His message. In fact, in the passage above He tells us that He is in the process of writing His message upon our hearts. In order for others to see this message properly without flaws in the message, we need to be as transparent as possible so as not to interfere with the message that YHWH is writing upon our hearts. We do not want others to see us; we need for others to see Him and only Him in us.

Let us all work together encouraging one another, knowing that we are all part of the same body, as we see the day of His visitation approaching. Let us strive to have a clean and pure heart before Him, being honest with all men and especially ourselves, knowing that one day we will all give an account of what we have cultivated in our hearts.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Philippians 4:8

Amein & Amein!