



Topic: "YHWH's Appointments" Pt 47
Scripture: Isaiah 58:1-14; Matthew 6:16-18
Definition: "Yom Kippur" pt 4
"What is Fasting?"

YHWH'S APPOINTMENTS

In Jewish tradition Yom Kippur is a day of fasting as we discovered last week.

Jerusalem Talmud (Jewish oral law) refers to Yom Kippur as "the great fast" (Tzoma Rabbah) (j. Peah 7:4). In another place as simply "fast" (Tzoma) (j. Baba Batra 9:7).

However the Torah does not give any direct command for us to fast.

In the Torah it does not tell us to fast but rather to "anah" ourselves.

Hebrew word for afflict [humble] (used in Lev 16:29; 23: 27; Num 29:7) is: anah H6907 humbling (or mortifying, afflicting) one's soul.

Hebrew word for fast is: tsum H6684 to abstain from food, fast.

Fasting is nowhere in Scriptures as a command that we do. It is always something we do as a means of humbling ourselves before YHWH to bend His heart of favor toward us. It has a very significant applications which we will look at in next weeks lesson.

Examples of Scripture showing it is our decision to fast:

Esther asks that her people would fast with her. Esther 4:15,16 "And Esther said to take back to Mordecai, Go, gather all the Jews being found in Shushan, and fast for me. And do not eat or drink three days, night or day. My maidens and I will also fast in this way. And so I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law. And if I have perished, I have perished."



David fasting for his son. 2 Samuel 12:16-18a "And David sought the Elohim for the child. And David fasted a fast, and went in and stayed the night, and lay on the earth. And the elders of his house rose up toward him, to raise him up from the earth. But he was not willing; and he ate no bread with them. And it happened on the seventh day, the boy died..."

Ezra fasting for favor and safety. Ezra 8:21 "Then I called a fast there at the river Ahava, so that we might humble ourselves before our Elohim, in order to seek from Him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our goods."



Moses fasts while receiving the 10 Words on the tablets of stone. Deut 9:9-18 40 days without food nor water (note: a human body cannot survive extended periods of time without water unless YHWH works some kind of miracle). But if that isn't enough Moses comes down to find the children of Israel breaking the covenant so he breaks the stone tablets. After a time he ascends up the

mountain again and fasts another 40 days without food and water to receive another copy of the law (Deut 9:18, 25, 26; 10:10)

Elijah fasted while escaping Jezebel. 1 Kings 19:4-8

Ezra while mourning over sin. Ezra 10:5-17

Darius (gentile) fasted for the safety of Daniel. Daniel 6:18-23

Daniel fasted for an answer to prayer. Daniel 10:1-3

Paul fasted after his confrontation with Yahshua. Acts 9:1-9

Elders in Antioch fasted before sending out missionaries. Acts 13:1-3

Messiah Yahshua fasted before His earthly ministry began. Matthew 4:1-2 "Then Yahshua was led up into the wilderness by the Spirit, to be tempted by the Devil. And having fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He hungered."

Even though there is no specific command in the Torah to 'Fast' (tsum) there is more than enough evidence that we should apply it in our spiritual walk.

Messiah Yahshua expected His disciples would. It was not a question of 'if' but 'when.'

Matthew 6:16-18 "And when you fast, do not be as the hypocrites, with sullen face, for they disfigure their faces so that they may appear to men to be fasting. Truly I say to you that they have their reward. But you in fasting, anoint your head and wash your face, so as not to appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father in secret. And your Father seeing in secret will repay you in the open."

But what is Fasting? Isn't fasting simply a means of dealing with an issue or circumstance?

In other words, fasting is not the main reason for doing it. We don't fast simply to fast. We fast as a means of humbling ourselves before YHWH. Usually to seek favor of some sort before YHWH.



Consider this. Lifting weights is a means of exercise but it is not the only way to exercise. Some may use resistant training like rubber bands. Some may use isometrics as a means of exercise and toning. Still others use NLS, a neural linguistic system where you visualize a successful pattern and you model that workout.

These are all means of exercise but why are you doing them? That is the key.

Simply put fasting is simply a means to bring us in alignment with YHWH's will.

Knowing 'why' we fast, now we have to ask ourselves the question, "What is it that YHWH is telling me?" or maybe, "What does YHWH really want in regard to my fasting?"

Oddly enough (sarcasm intended) we find **YHWH's response in Scriptures.**



First: Isaiah tells us in chapter 58:1-14.....

- It is to do no pleasures of our own but the things that please YHWH.
- It is to help those who are less fortunate than us.
- It is to give food to the hungry.
- It is to clothe the naked (the needs of humanity).
- It is to shelter those who have no shelter.

These are the things YHWH wants and expects Before we can even think of fasting. It is what He requires of us.

Second: Yahshua re-emphasizes in Matthew 6:16-18.....

- Fasting is something that is done between you and the Father.
- No one is to know that you are fasting.

But what about communal fasting like we see with Esther and Ezra?

This type of fast is for the whole congregation to come in unity to bend the heart of YHWH. There are times in which we need to do this. However, for the most part it is when the congregation as a whole have not been obedient to YHWH instructions and need to be humble as a body.

We see a great example of this in the book of Jonah how Nineveh humbled themselves (note: a gentile city! Obedient to YHWH's word) fasted, adorned sack cloth and sat in ashes (a visual sign of humility and awareness of their low estate before the Mighty Elohim). They did not know if YHWH would spare them but they acted in faith that He might show mercy. And YHWH did.



Jonah 3:5-10 "And the men of Nineveh believed in Elohim, and they called a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. And the word touched even to the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he took his robe from him and covered himself with sackcloth and sat on the ashes. And he cried and said in Nineveh by the decree of the king and of his great ones, saying, Do not let man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything; do not let them feed nor let them drink water. But

let man and beast be covered with sackcloth. And let them call with strength to Elohim. And let them each one turn from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who knows? He may turn, and the Elohim may have pity and turn away from the glow of His anger, that we do not perish. And the Elohim saw their works, that they turned from their evil way. And the Elohim changed His mind over the evil that He had spoken to do to them, and He did not do it.”

Should we fast?

Messiah expected us to. Mark 2:18-20 Yahshua was asked why His disciples did not fast as John’s disciples or the Pharisees. Yahshua replies that while He was with them they need not fast, but when he leaves they will.

He’s gone to the Father in preparation to return to His bride. Are you fasting?



Three reasons we may not fast...

1. Ignorance.
2. Fear.
3. Rebellion

Despite the biblical examples throughout Scripture, many Believers are slow to fast.

Yahshua’s words imply that fasting will be a regular practice in His followers’ lives.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in his book *The Cost of Discipleship*, said, “Jesus takes it for granted that His disciples will observe the pious custom of fasting. Strict exercise of self-control is an essential feature of the Christian life. Such customs have only one purpose — to make the disciples more ready and cheerful to accomplish those things which God would have done.”

Yahshua said...Matthew 6:16, “When you fast”...not if you fast. Messiah expected His disciples to fast.

Here are 7 possible reasons to fast:

- 1. To prepare for ministry.** Yahshua spent forty days and nights in the wilderness fasting and praying before He began YHWH’s work on this earth. He needed time alone to prepare for what His Father had called Him to do (Matthew 4:1-17; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-14).
- 2. To seek YHWH’s wisdom.** Paul and Barnabas prayed and fasted for the elders of the congregations before committing them to the Lord for His service (Acts 14:23).
- 3. To show grief.** Nehemiah mourned, fasted, and prayed when he learned Jerusalem’s walls had been broken down, leaving the Israelites vulnerable and disgraced (Nehemiah 1:1-4).

4. To seek deliverance or protection. Ezra declared a corporate fast and prayed for a safe journey for the Israelites as they made the 900 mile journey to Jerusalem from Babylon (Ezra 8:21-23).



5. To repent. After Jonah pronounced judgment against the city of Nineveh, the king covered himself with sackcloth and sat in the dust. He then ordered the people to fast and pray. Jonah 3:10 says, “When Elohim saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, He relented and did not bring on them the destruction He had threatened.”

6. To gain victory. After losing forty thousand men in battle in two days, the Israelites cried out to YHWH for help. Judges 20:26 says all the people went up to Bethel and “sat weeping before YHWH.” They also “fasted that day until evening.” The next day YHWH gave them victory over the Benjamites.

7. To worship God. Luke 2 tells the story of an 84 year-old prophetess named Anna. Verse 37 says, “She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.” Anna was devoted to YHWH, and fasting was one expression of her love for Him.

Many times we don’t fast because we’ve lost our spiritual appetite.

Father please give us a fresh new appetite for You and your Word. Give us desire to know You more. Grant us wisdom into Your instructions so we can be a people that glorify your Name. Praise, Honor and all Glory are Yours. Amen



Next Lesson “How to Anah Ourselves”

