

# Come to Understanding

**They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding,  
and they that murmured shall learn doctrine. — Isaiah 29:24**

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## The Proud Fast

When the people of Israel fasted, they expected Yahweh to hear and answer their prayers. When He didn't answer them, they became upset. After they had done all of that work, fasting and afflicting themselves, why didn't He even notice them?

3a Why have we fasted, *say they*, and you see not? *why* have we afflicted our soul, and you take no knowledge? -Isaiah 58

Yahweh told them that they were fasting for the wrong reasons and in the wrong way. They found pleasure in afflicting themselves, using their supposed righteousness for "strife and debate" to condemn others with the "fist of wickedness." He said, this kind of fast does not get Him to hear their prayers!

3b Behold, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exact all your labors.

4 Behold, you fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: you shall not fast as *you do this* day, to make your voice to be heard on high. -Isaiah 58

This is the kind of fast that was apparently being kept among the Pharisees. Describing what might be called a "proud fast," Yahshua (Jesus) gave a parable of a self-righteous Pharisee and a publican (tax collector), who was a repentant sinner:

9 And he spoke this parable unto some which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. -Luke 18

The unrepentant Pharisee bragged because he believed himself to be without sin. Considering himself to be righteous, he boasted of his fasting and tithing:

11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank you, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. -Luke 18

The publican, on the other hand, felt unworthy to even lift his eyes up toward heaven. Recognizing himself as a sinner, he pleaded to God for mercy:

13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes to heaven, but smote

upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. -Luke 18

Yahshua summarized. The humble and repentant publican, rather than the self-righteous Pharisee, was justified and exalted:

14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted. -Luke 18

In spite of the clarity with which God condemned their self-exalting public fasts, the Pharisees had developed their own standard for righteousness. They accused those who did not meet their standards of being guilty of unrighteousness.

Satan is the "accuser of our brethren." He works tirelessly day and night to accuse God's own people before Him:

10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now has come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Messiah: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. -Revelation 12

Accusers of God's people are actually doing the work of Satan rather than that of God.

The Pharisees, along with the scribes, accused Yahshua's disciples for failing to publicly fast!

33 And they said to him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise *the disciples* of the Pharisees; but yours eat and drink? -Luke 5

In public displays of their own righteousness to others, the disciples of the Pharisees, as well as those of John the Baptist, openly fasted and prayed. Yahshua, on the other hand, said that the "children of the bride chamber" are not required to fast while the "bridegroom" is with them:

34 And he said to them, Can you make the children of the bride chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?

35 But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. -Luke 5

Those who were fasting sought to hear from God. However, Yahshua, as God manifest in the flesh, was already with them. He had fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah as Immanuel, meaning "God is with us."

**So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense,  
and caused them to understand the reading. — Nehemiah 8:8**

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14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. -Isaiah 7

The demonstration by the Pharisees of their righteousness through public fasts was in stark contrast to the instructions which Yahshua had given to His disciples. He told them that it was a private matter, between them and God. He said that they should fast in a way that was not even obvious to others:

16 Moreover when you fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Truly I say unto you, They have their reward.

17 But you, when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face;

18 That you appear not unto men to fast, but to your Father which is in secret: and your Father, which sees in secret, shall reward you openly. -Matthew 6

There are two ways to fast: from the outside in and from the inside out. In the first, we may see it as a righteous work in which we deny the flesh, hoping that God will look favorably upon us and grant our requests. In the second, however, the process begins in our spirit, deeply within our heart.

The kind of fast God wants is that which is led by a humble and repentant heart, such is that of the prophet Daniel when he prayed for Judah. He asked that God fulfill the prophecy to release them from Babylon after seventy years of captivity. He approached God in absolute humility, fasting and mourning in sackcloth and ashes:

2 In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

3 And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: -Daniel 9

Clothed in humility, Daniel confessed and repented, not only for the sins of Judah, but also for those of his own:

4 And I prayed unto Yahweh my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments;

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5 We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from your precepts and from your judgments: -Daniel 9

First Daniel humbly repented of his sins, then he sought God for His forgiveness and mercies,

18 O my God, incline your ear, and hear; open your eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by your name: for we do not present our supplications before you for our righteousness, but for your great mercies.

19 O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, listen and do; defer not, for your own sake, O my God: for your city and your people are called by your name. -Daniel 9

Daniel also showed that, even though we humble ourselves fasting and praying, the answer to our prayers may be delayed. After he had received an awesome vision from God, he humbled himself in a three week fast:

2 In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks.

3 I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled. -Daniel 10

After he had fasted, Daniel saw a vision of the appearance of a man having the same appearance as Yahshua (see Daniel 10:6; Revelation 1:15). The Man said that, although His coming was delayed for twenty one days by the "Prince of Persia" (see Daniel 10:13), He had heard Daniel's prayer on the first day that he had chastened (humbled) himself to pray:

12 Then said he to me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that you did set your heart to understand, and to chasten yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come for your words. -Daniel 10

Our prayers to God are not to be accompanied with legalistic outward shows of piety. Instead, they require humble repentance from our hearts, such as David demonstrated. It is the Holy Spirit of God that convicts us of our sins and brings us to humble repentance. David prayed that God would not take His Holy Spirit from him as he repented of his sins, praying for a clean heart, a right spirit, and for restoration of the joy of his salvation:

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

11 Cast me not away from your presence; and take not your holy spirit from me.

12 Restore unto me the joy of your salvation; and uphold me *with your* free spirit. -Psalms 51

The condition for David's repentance was that he first humble himself with a sacrifice of a broken and contrite (crushed) heart:

16 For you desire not sacrifice; *or* else would I give *it*: you delight not in burnt offering.

17 The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. -Psalms 51

It is not about the fast, it is about the heart. God hears and answers the prayers of those who truly humble their hearts in repentance as they fast and pray before Him.