

The Important of Home Groups – Part Three

One of the aspects of the early believers was their great desire to worship **Adonai**. It was **Yeshua** that had said that the **Father** desired those that would worship Him in the Spirit and that would worship Him in Truth, John 4:23. **Yeshua** had rebuked the religious leaders of His day for the shallow and superficial manner in which they led the people to worship **Adonai**. This shallowness focused on external activities that would give an external portrayal of piety, but on the inside they were unrighteous. In other words, they promoted the doing of things to get man's approval rather than being approved by **Adonai**. Some examples of this were the showy prayers that they conducted on the streets, the extremes that they went to illustrate the suffering that they were doing while fasting, and converting their offerings to the temple into small coins so that it would make a greater sound when it was dropped into the metal offering container. All of these things were contrived efforts that missed the intent of genuine worship. **Adonai** had earlier condemned the mere performance of rituals in this reference found in Isaiah 1:11-17 CJB:

"Why are all those sacrifices offered to me?" asks Adonai. "I'm fed up with burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fattened animals! I get no pleasure from the blood of bulls, lambs and goats! Yes, you come to appear in my presence; but who asked you to do this, to trample through my courtyards? Stop bringing worthless grain offerings! They are like disgusting incense to me! Rosh-Hodesh, Shabbat, calling convocations — I can't stand evil together with your assemblies! Everything in me hates your Rosh-Hodesh and your festivals; they are a burden to me — I'm tired of putting up with them! When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; no matter how much you pray, I won't be listening; because your hands are covered with blood. Wash yourselves clean! Get your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing evil, learn to do good! Seek justice, relieve the oppressed, defend orphans, plead for the widow."

Some believers have taken this reference as a condemnation of these practices for us today. But a closer examination of the references reveals that it was not the practices that **Adonai** had ordained that was the problem, rather it was the condition of the heart of the worshippers. They thought that they could live their lives the way that they wanted to live (not in accordance with the Torah instructions) and then make an offering to make everything OK with **Adonai**. **Adonai** rebuked this attitude just as **Yeshua** would rebuke the hypocritical religious leaders of His day. The problem wasn't with the rituals but rather the problem resided in the hearts of the worshippers. **Adonai** commented on this condition of their hearts in Jeremiah 31:31-34 CJB, emphasis added is mine:

*"Here, the days are coming," says Adonai, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Isra'el and with the house of Y'hudah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers on the day I took them by their hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt; **because they, for their part, violated my covenant**, even though I, for my part, was a husband to them," says Adonai. "For this is the covenant I will make with the house of Isra'el after those days," says Adonai: "I will put my Torah within them and write it on their hearts; I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will any of them teach his fellow community member or his brother, 'Know Adonai'; for all will know me, from the least of them to the greatest; because I will forgive their wickednesses and remember their sins no more."*

Israel violated the covenant by becoming adulterous in their hearts. They sought the things of this world over the obedience to the righteous of **Adonai**. It was in this manner that they ignored the command to take care of the needy in the land; it was in this manner that they oppressed the widow and orphan; and it was in this manner that they forsook the Jubilee provisions so that they could take the land with greedy motives. After they had committed these acts of unrighteousness, they come before **Adonai** with their sacrifices as if they could buy off the wrath of **Adonai**. **Adonai** was not impressed

with this unrighteous mode of thinking and the land was subject to the curses that **Adonai** said would befall them in their disobedience.

The good news was that **Adonai** would one day show the people a mode of worship that would correct this tendency for false worship. This mode of worship was the new covenant that would be written on the hearts of the believers. It would no longer be a matter of people worshipping **Adonai** by their efforts but rather the writing of the Torah on their hearts would be the regeneration of their spirits to serve **Adonai**. The **Spirit** of **Adonai** would be present in the heart of the believer to prompt them unto spiritual worship, thus leading them to worship in **Spirit** and Truth.

What would this new mode of worship be like? To answer that question we would need to go back to the most significant offering of the Tanakh, the offering of Isaac upon the altar. Isaac was the most important part of the life of Abraham for Isaac was the fulfillment of the promise by **Adonai**. So the life of Isaac was the manner by which Abraham was to be a blessing to the nations and to be the foundation of the Chosen People. It was quite a shock to Abraham when **Adonai** commanded Abraham to offer Isaac upon the altar. It would be difficult to imagine the exact emotional state of Abraham at this point but each of us is being called to place the things of this world on the altar in this same manner. For some of us it might be family members, it might be dreams and aspirations, it might be the calling we feel from the LORD, or it might be things that we are attached to. In any case we are called to place anything that might hinder our worship of **Adonai** on the altar so that the sacrificial flames might destroy these hindrances. Once they are gone, we can then truly worship in Spirit and in Truth.

Yeshua understood this process of sacrifice for He forsook the glories of Heaven to become as one of us, Philippians 2:6-8. His sacrifice was so complete that it included placing Himself on the execution stake for our benefit. **Yeshua**, in relating the nature of this sacrifice to us, said that anyone that would not hate (be willing to place the love for family below love for **Yeshua**) their family members would not be worthy of the Kingdom, Luke 14:26. The reason that **Yeshua** said this was that our families can be

some of the greatest obstacles to our faith. We need to be willing to place everything that could hinder us in our journey to spiritual maturity on the altar. **Yeshua** did offer us a word of encouragement regarding our sacrifices, Mark 10:29, 30 CJB:

Yeshua said, "Yes! I tell you that there is no one who has left house, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, who will not receive a hundred times over, now, in the `olam hazeh, homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and lands — with persecutions! — and in the `olam haba, eternal life.

The Apostle Paul spoke of it in another manner when he described the nature of our personal sacrifice in Romans 12:1 CJB:

I exhort you, therefore, brothers, in view of God's mercies, to offer yourselves as a sacrifice, living and set apart for God. This will please him; it is the logical "Temple worship" for you. In other words, do not let yourselves be conformed to the standards of the `olam hazeh. Instead, keep letting yourselves be transformed by the renewing of your minds; so that you will know what God wants and will agree that what he wants is good, satisfying and able to succeed.

Paul is telling us that the animal sacrifices are no longer the acceptable mode of sacrifice that is pleasing to **Adonai** for those sacrifices are external sacrifices. The personal inner sacrifices that are required when one is not conformed to this world are what please **Adonai**. Every time that we place His will above satisfying our own desires, we are showing worship to **Adonai**; every time that we cast down a contrary thought in our mind that would exalt itself over the will of **Adonai**, we are showing worship to **Adonai**; and every time that we sacrifice of our time, affection, or property for meeting the need of another person, we are showing worship to **Adonai**. It is not through mere external ritualistic traditions that we show worship to **Adonai** but it is

through the placing of **Adonai** as the priority of our life that we now worship Him in Spirit and in Truth.

It is important to understand that worship is more than coming before Him in a corporate setting, although these settings are very important and can be very powerful expressions of worship. But there are other more specific ways that we can show worship to **Adonai** in our everyday lives. We can worship **Adonai** by performing acts of kindness and mercy that will manifest the love of the **Father** to the world. We can worship **Adonai** by praying unceasingly. This type of prayer constitutes having a constant dialogue with **Adonai** over everything that is happening in your life. In other words, don't make **Adonai** an afterthought but rather make Him the forethought of every situation that you encounter.

The more recognized manner of worshipping **Adonai** is through music and song. And while music is a very special and powerful way to express worship to **Adonai** it is not by any means the only artistic manner in which to worship **Adonai**. **Adonai** has created us with talents and gifts, and when we use those talents and gifts to offer worship and praise to Him, He is pleased to receive these gifts back to Him. We should be open to any artistic expression that offers recognition of **Adonai** as the sovereign of our lives. Paul mentions the more musical expressions in the following references, emphasis added is mine:

*Therefore, **pay careful attention to how you conduct your life** — live wisely, not unwisely. Use your time well, for these are evil days. So don't be foolish, but try to understand what the will of the Lord is. Don't get drunk with wine, because it makes you lose control. Instead, **keep on being filled with the Spirit** — sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to each other; sing to the Lord and make music in your heart to him; **always give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah.** Ephesians 5:15-20 CJB.*

*Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with feelings of compassion and with kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; if anyone has a complaint against someone else, forgive him. Indeed, just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must forgive. **Above all these, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together perfectly; and let the shalom which comes from the Messiah be your heart's decision-maker, for this is why you were called to be part of a single Body. And be thankful — let the Word of the Messiah, in all its richness, live in you, as you teach and counsel each other in all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude to God in your hearts. **That is, everything you do or say, do in the name of the Lord Yeshua, giving thanks through him to God the Father.***** Colossians 3:12-17 CJB.

Praising **Adonai** as it is depicted in the above listed references as being thankful for who **Adonai** is and for what He has done. When the people of Israel crossed the Red Sea and the armies of Pharaoh were destroyed, they immediately broke out in praise. When King David was bringing the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem so that the presence of the **Adonai** could reside there, the people led by King David praised **Adonai** in song and dance for the gesture of His presence. Praise therefore is a sacrifice that we offer to **Adonai** as thanksgivings for what He has done or will do. The author of Hebrews offers this explanation regarding praise, Hebrews 13:15, 16 CJB:

Through him, therefore, let us offer God a sacrifice of praise continually. For this is the natural product of lips that acknowledge his name. But don't forget doing good and sharing with others, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

With this reference, we come full circle regarding worship and praise. We worship **Adonai** from our hearts and that worship is expressed through our deeds, thoughts, and words. We then actively praise **Adonai** for the things that he has done. Worship is an agent of the heart, while praise is the physical use of our body to show

praise, whether it be through song or dance. Together these 'sacrifices' show honor to **our Father** and they acknowledge the sovereignty of **Adonai**.

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