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A Big Question



By Hannah Tekle

Belly large, she looked at me with fearful eyes. After two pregnancies and two deliveries, she was no stranger to the difficulty of giving birth. Her apprehension was real, founded in experience. Doing my very best to walk the line between empathy and encouragement I reminded her of the main points in the pep talk I love to give, whenever I have the chance, about working with the pain and not resisting it. She smiled a tearful smile: *"The pain is what scares me – I don't know if I have what it takes to do it again."*

The fresh young soldier's army course was shortened unexpectedly, and the soldiers were sent to fill emergency roles. Feeling ill-equipped to do the job for real, her nervousness was understandable. It was one thing to study hard and be devoted to the preparation process, but it was another thing altogether to jump headfirst into the role when the stakes are life and death. I was about to encourage her to trust the system and then realized that "the system" was precisely the thing that had just let everyone down on October 7th. *"We've been studying and practicing, but now is the real deal; how do I know if I have what it takes?"*

Watching through the river reeds, she saw the beautiful princess lift her brother out of the basket. Her heart pounded in her chest and her thoughts raced. "What now?" She had kept a careful eye on the tiny straw boat's journey down the Nile, delighted and awed that God's outstretched Hand had guided it away from peril and to the edge of the protected royal river beach. But now she faced a new danger. She had trespassed on the princess's private property, and had to reveal her crime. She also had to figure out what to say to ensure her brother's safety and connection with the family. Hesitating for just a moment, she thought: *"Do I have what it takes?"*

Barefoot and standing on the hot desert floor, he stared at the burning bush in front of him. God had just asked him to go back to the country he had fled from, to advocate to his brother and king for the lives of his enslaved people. Trained and taught and tutored all his life to be a leader, he nevertheless pleaded: *"But, but, but, I stutter, and I don't know if I have what it takes."*

The first two snapshots above are situations that are happening now in the lives of two people in our community. One has been resolved, sort of. The soldier arrived at her temporary post and reported that it was going well and that she and her fellow soldiers were acclimating and fulfilling the duty they were trained for in real-time. The mom has yet to give birth; please pray for her and her young family.

As for the other two stories – we know how they end. Miriam advocates to the princess and successfully fulfills the role she was called to fill, setting things in motion for Moses to be nursed and nurtured by his very own mother, yet adopted into the palace family to play his destined role as Deliverer. Moses himself becomes one of the classic Bible stories of human hesitation and feeling of internal inadequacy vs. God's call and promise to do what He intends to do through human vessels as they surrender to His plan.

When faced with difficulty and impossible situations, whether on the micro level or the macro level – how do we function? ***How do we answer this Big Question:*** "Do I have what it takes?"

In the chaos and desperation of these days, with wars and political unrest proliferating as never before, we need to know the answer.

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Update from *Haifa*



By **Leon Mazin**

Shalom to you in Messiah Yeshua! May mercy, peace, and love from God our Father be multiplied to you.

Thank you for your prayers, for your donations and for standing with us in these difficult days! We are strengthened by the Lord to walk with Him and fulfill His commission.

Recently our music school held a series of concerts. All were a testimony of God's blessing. There are now more than 140 students in our school.



Many people in the congregation are exhausted by the war and rumors of war, as well as by worries about their loved ones in the IDF. To counter this stress and provide spiritual and emotional restoration, we organized a getaway for the married couples of our congregation. The time together was spent hiking Mount Tabor, listening to excellent teaching, playing games and eating delicious food. Our hearts were lighter and our minds refreshed upon our return.



In preparation for the Passover holiday, the humanitarian side of Shavai Tzion assembled many Passover gift sets to be shared with new immigrants, elderly, Holocaust survivors, for the project "Women in Problematic Situations," and others in need. Altogether we prepared 500 gift sets. Each set costs about \$35.00 (US). We greatly appreciate your prayers and participation in these gifts.



Youth Lead Purim

A few words about Purim. This year the retelling of God's miracle from the book of Esther was arranged and presented by our youth group. They even wrote the songs themselves. About 200 people came to celebrate, and the performance was marvelous.

Please continue to intercede for our youth. They are reaching the age when they will soon be drafted into the IDF. These days we are even more aware of the need to pray protection over each one — spirit, soul and body!

Shirley and Ilya, our daughter and her husband, lead the youth group which has more than 20 members. It's a mini-community with specific needs. That's why the leaders need special wisdom!

Passover and Yom Kippur Sacrifices

The Messiah is a fulfillment of the Passover and Yom Kippur sacrifices. Those sacrifices are described in Leviticus, and they tell us about "unauthorized fire" and the fear of God. This shows us that the Messiah's sacrifice is sufficient for everyone who comes to God the Father in the power of the new covenant sacrifice. And it also shows us how important it is to have the fear of God.

God's eternal calling still rests on Israel through the covenant inheritance of our forefather, Abraham. Yet we know that the formal sacrifices ceased after the destruction of the Second Temple almost 2000 years ago. Therefore, there is no other way to come, purified and justified before God, **except through Yeshua's sacrifice**. Both His Jewish and Gentile followers have this privilege today.

In Ephesians Paul said: "*those who once were far off became fellow citizens with the saints.*" In Galatians Paul states that in Messiah Gentiles become Abraham's children. This is an important status because God chose Abraham and his descendants to be instruments in the Creator's hands to "repair" the world now shattered by sin.

"For we are the temple of the living God — as God said, I will house myself in them, and I will walk among you. I will be their God, and they will be my people." (2 Corinthians 6:16)

"Therefore, my dear friends, since we have these promises, let us purify ourselves from everything that can defile either body or spirit, and strive to be completely holy, out of reverence for God." (2 Corinthians 7:1)

I wish everyone blessings and health and full joy in Messiah Yeshua as we celebrate His feasts and live each day dedicated to His service.

Return to Zion Congregation

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Whose Slave?



By Guy Cohen

*“Don’t you realize that **you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey?** You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living.”* (Romans 6:16 NLT)

Our people spent 400 years as slaves in Egypt – certainly not by choice! Slavery connotes shame and helplessness, the very opposite of freedom. Yet numerous heroes of the faith in the Old and New Testaments are referred to as servants of the Lord. (In Hebrew, slave and servant is the same word, *eved*.) Israel is called the Servant of the LORD. Most notably, the prophesied Messiah is called the Servant of the LORD.

So what does Paul mean when he says we will be a slave to whatever/whomever we obey? The heart of his question is **what or whom are we worshipping?** The choice is idolatry, serving that which is not real, or serving the true, Living God with all our heart, soul, and strength.

Enslavement to Idols or a Bondslave to Messiah?

Idolatry is not limited to ancient cultures. As we rapidly approach Yeshua’s return, we see the same idols which were worshipped in the past rising up. We see this both locally in Israel and globally in the abortion pandemic of sacrificing the lives of the preborn. We also see it among spiritually starved Israelis who are drawn to New Age and Eastern religions. These can even include homage to physical statues!

What master will we serve?

“Paul, a bondservant of Yeshua HaMashiach,” is the way the apostle referred to himself (Romans 1:1; Galatians 1:10; Titus 1:1). In the Torah, a bondservant was a freed slave who voluntarily chose to serve his master, being identified by a pierced ear *“and he shall serve him forever”* (Exodus 21:6). What a vivid image of our choice to serve Yeshua, after being freed from our slavery to sin.

The Scriptures present an open-eyed look at life and its physical necessities. 1 Corinthians 6 tackles the power of both food and sex **to enslave us**. These basic aspects of life are not labeled as “evil” or “not to be enjoyed.” Our physical body is part of how God made us, and is meant to glorify Him and help us connect with God. Our flesh is not meant to separate us from the Lord.



Replica of 5th Century BCE Athena Parthenos idol at original size - by LeQuire

However, when we are enticed to focus on our flesh, we stray from the spirit of God. As believers in Yeshua, we need to remember the price He paid for us and to join ourselves to the Lord. *“The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever”* (1 John 2:17).

Our prayer is that the eyes of men will turn away from those slaveries which lead to death, and instead be obedient servants/slaves to the Lord of Life.

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Dream Prompt



By Asher Intrater



Recently I had a disturbing dream that repeated itself several times:

In the dream I was walking through one of the *dark underground tunnels of Hamas in Gaza*. At one point I saw a small lighted room with a hostage tied to a chair and gagged. The perspective I had was of an Israeli soldier searching for hostages, as if seeing from a GoPro helmet camera barely showing the tip of the soldier's rifle in the front. Then I realized that this was a trap, that a bomb was set to go off when someone entered the room – to kill both the soldier and the hostage.

As I woke I felt we need to pray strongly so the terrorists can be pushed back and the Israeli soldiers can get to the hostages. The terrorists know that enough intelligence has already been gathered by Israel so that many of their locations have been identified. They will begin to retreat, but they will set booby traps. Let's pray for these traps to be revealed.

The dream could be a warning against disaster or a hope for a “cleaner” victory. Please pray for the IDF special operations to succeed, which could bring the conflict to an end and save many lives on both Israeli and Palestinian sides. Thank you!

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The best and only way forward is to go back to the original design. **God has what it takes, and He designed us to seek Him, walk with Him, and submit to HIS system. That's how we thrive. That's how we will “have what it takes.”**

“For we are His workmanship, created in Messiah Yeshua for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10)

“For to everyone I send you, you will go, and all I command you, you will speak. Do not be afraid of them! For I am with you to deliver you.” (Jeremiah 1:7-8)

Amidst the clouds of war and reserve soldiers returning to active duty in light of the escalation on the front lines, we are carrying out our annual Passover Food Basket Project. By the time we are all sitting down to celebrate and tell the ancient Passover story, even as an unresolved modern exodus-type confrontation rages on, **we will have given out 900 packages of food to needy families all over the Krayot.**

Please pray with us that each bag will be a blessing and a seed to the families they reach, that hearts will be drawn to God the Divine Designer of Life, the One who knows the Plan and “the System” backward and forward.

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