

Rebellion -The Sin of Witchcraft

The month of Elul began last Sunday, August 24th at sunset. The 1st of Elul begins a time of repentance in preparation for the High Holy Days, 30 days until Yom Teruah and 40 days till Yom Kippur. Elul is seen as a time to search one's heart and draw close to God in preparation for the coming Day of Judgement when the Sefer HaChaim, the Book of Life is opened, Yom Kippur, The Day of purging. The month of Elul is likened to a king visiting his subjects in the field before returning to his palace.

Elul is an Akkadian word for "harvest". The Jewish names of months came from our captivity and exile in Babylon. Scripture refers to the months by their numerical order except for the first month of the new year, Aviv. Elul is a time to search one's heart to draw closer to Adonai through submission and obedience. Gods isn't seeking perfection, He wants your surrender to Him. To be intimate with Adonai! But how?

I John 2:3-4. The way we can be sure we know him is if we are obeying his commands.
⁴ Anyone who says, "I know him," but isn't obeying his commands is a liar—the truth is not in him.

Human nature in general (including the greater body of Messiah) has a profound aversion, a distinct distaste for simple obedience! There is a stubborn, stiff neck refusal to humbly submit and obey Adonai! Entire religious doctrines and dogmas have been written to overcome biblical obedience! The reality is that it would be less exhausting, less work to just simply submit and obey Gods mitzvahs and commands! Remember, scriptures will not contradict itself. The words of Paul do not contradict the words of Yeshua (Matt 5) Why is this such an issue? Yeshua said in:

Mark 7:7-9. Their worship of me is useless, because they teach man-made rules as if they were doctrines.' ⁸ "You depart from God's command and hold onto human tradition. Indeed," ⁹ he said to them, "you have made a fine art of departing from God's command in order to keep your tradition!

The classic scripture associated with this is:

I Samuel 15:22-23 (NLT). But Samuel replied, "What is more pleasing to the LORD: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission is better than offering the fat of rams. ²³ Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft **(Kesem: Divination, witchcraft, false gods, cultic**

practices), and stubbornness as bad as worshiping idols. So because you have rejected the command of the LORD, he has rejected you as king."

There is a lot of revelation and information packed into these two verses, it's easy to gloss over the relevance of one point for the other. In only two verses we see Adonai's heart and will regarding obedience, the spirit behind rebellion, stubbornness, and witchcraft. It reveals how Adonai regards them, and the very real, extremely dire consequence of disobedience to Adonai.

This passage interestingly points out that obedience is better than sacrifice! Obedience may feel like sacrifice, yet the truth is that for most of us, most of our hardships and issues are the direct result of our ignoring Adonai's word and voice warning us of what not to do. As the Psalmist said:

Psalm 50:22-23. Consider this, you who forget God, or I will tear you to pieces, with no one to save you. ²³ "Whoever offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice honors me; and to him who goes the right way I will show the salvation of God."

Throughout the Tanach, there are only 5 sacrifices. There are 5 types of offerings or sacrifices in the Torah that Israel was commanded to perform unto Adonai: the burnt offering, the grain offering, the peace offering, the sin offering and the trespass offering.

Each sacrifice served a specific purpose and function. The important distinction is that the burnt, grain, and peace offerings were voluntary, fellowship. Meanwhile the sin and trespass sacrifices were mandatory. Each offering had specific elements such as animals, fruit or grain. These offerings were split into portions, two or three usually, with the third portion being kept by the person making the offering.

The burnt offering found in Leviticus 1 is the first of the voluntary offerings, which was done to express thanks, worship, devotion, and commitment to God. But it was also an atonement for all Israel. Israel sacrificed bulls, birds, either pigeons or turtledoves, or rams without blemish. Their meat and bones were burnt completely, and the hide was given to the Levites.

The second voluntary offering is the grain offering found in Leviticus 2 in which the worshiper offers up the fruit of the field in the form of a matzah or baked bread. The grain offering was accompanied by a drink offering of wine. Grain and drink offerings expressed gratitude and thanksgiving, recognizing Adonai's favor, unmerited good will and provision towards the person making the

sacrifice. Priests could partake of a portion of this offering, but they had to eat it within the tabernacle or temple.

The third voluntary offering was the peace offering found in Leviticus 3. It involved the best and unblemished animal from the herd and various grain and bread offerings. This sacrifice expressed thanksgiving, but it also emphasized fellowship, as it was followed by a shared meal. Unlike the previous two offerings, the priest received pieces of the animal that were called the "wave" or "heave" offerings. That is because the animal pieces were lifted or "waved" over the altar during the ceremony. The participants were able to eat some of the offering, in fellowship with Adonai's presence at the Tabernacle or Temple. The vow, thanksgiving and freewill offerings mentioned in the Hebrew scriptures were all peace, fellowship offerings.

The fourth sacrifice, the sin offering found in Leviticus 4 was mandatory, it atoned for unintentional sin. Unintentional sin, also known as inadvertent or accidental sin, refers to actions and behaviors that violate Adonai's commandments without the individual's conscious intent to disobey. These sins are characterized by ignorance of God's word and will and are not deliberately chosen as hostile acts against God, yet they still constitute disobedience. The term suggests a lack of deep understanding of the seriousness of the sin involved, indicating that the person did not know any better. In religious contexts, unintentional sins still require atonement, as they are considered wrong despite the absence of intent. There were five possible elements of the sin offering, depending on the financial situation of the person. A common person could offer a female goat. The poor could offer fine flour. Meanwhile a young bull was offered on behalf of the congregation as a whole.

The fifth sacrifice found in Leviticus 5 was the trespass offering! It was the second mandatory offering, and this sacrifice was specifically a ram. Israel offered trespass sacrifices as atonement for unintentional sins against someone else that required reimbursement and recompense. It was also a cleansing offering from defiling sins or physical illnesses and conditions.

Yet the profound revelation of the following sins (from Leviticus and Deuteronomy) truly reveals Adonai's heart regarding rebellion and disobedience. If a person sacrificed their child to Molekh they were to be stoned to death! A person who is a medium, or sorcerer (witchcraft) was to be stoned to death. Whoever blasphemes the name of Adonai was to be stoned to death. Anyone who entices you to serve other gods was to be stoned to death! Adultery, stoned to

death! A rebellious stubborn son who refuses to obey his parents; stoned to death!

While sacrifices allowed for the forgiveness of a few unintentional sins, submission and obedience strives to prevent sin all together, not only for you but also for those watching and following you. Obedience is better than sacrifice and stoning in the eyes of Adonai, and He clearly honors it more. Saul had a character flaw, he refused to submit and obey! Because he rejected the command of the Lord he was rejected as king! That is the definition of sin, the direct disobedience to the known will of God, either written or spoken.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the story of Samson and Delilah. Samson would eventually humble himself, repent and sacrifice his own life to defeat the Philistines! But wouldn't have been better to simply submit and obey Adonai's words, warnings, and commandments from the beginning. To live a blessed and productive life is pretty much everyone's desire but it can only be obtained through obedience. Samson's rebellion cost him everything. His blessings, his calling, his destiny, his anointing, and his very own life.

Adonai is so staunchly against the sin of rebellion that He compares it to witchcraft! The word "rebellion" in Hebrew is Meri: rebellion, obstinate, disobedience of Torah. There are instances in our lives when we are duped by the enemy and we make a mistake! Yes, it's a sin. Yet God knows we didn't mean too, and our hearts are intent to follow Him but we fell to the trap of deception. Once our mistake is realized, we must immediately repent and turn away from that sin lest we fall into rebellion. We've all fallen short:

Romans 3:23. since all have sinned and come short of earning God's praise.

We've all disobeyed Adonai, the differentiating factor here is whether that disobedience was intentional or unintentional. First, your action or behavior reconciles to His word! Or if He spoke to you and was clear to you, and in either case you willingly choose to disobey, then you are in rebellion. Likewise, if you did not know at the time the wrong was done but He has since given you opportunity to know the truth through correction, confirmation, and conviction, yet in your pride, you have chosen not to submit and repent, but rather cling to that wrong, then you are in rebellion. Think of a parent correcting a child, if they have done wrong you are going to be more lenient and understanding in correcting them for accidental mistakes than if they are willfully disobeying your direct commandments to them, or if they refuse to submit to your correction.

When they do this you say “they are being rebellious children” and it usually provokes the parent to anger and a more harsh course of correction.

James 4:17. So then, anyone who knows the right thing to do and fails to do it is committing a sin.

What Adonai is really saying is that at its root, rebellion is nothing more than willfully choosing to be led by another spirit. It’s choosing to do the will, to do the work of the enemy in direct opposition to Adonai’s will. This point is even further clarified as it goes on to say that stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Stubbornness is the quality of being determined to do what you want and refusing to do anything else! Stubbornness is refusing to change one’s mind or course of action despite pressure to do so; unyielding or resolute. Stubbornness is refusing correction, refusing repentance! What is iniquity, its sin and wickedness? What is idolatry, it’s choosing to serve, obey, and give allegiance to another god? It’s crystal clear! Looking at this from a spiritual standpoint, which is Adonai’s point of view, we see the severity of the sin of rebellion the way He sees it.

The last sentence in this passage in I Samuel 15:23 (NLT) addresses the consequences of rebellion, stubbornness against the word of Adonai and His commands and instructions: “So because you have rejected the command of the LORD, he has rejected you as king.”

Heartbreakingly, Adonai withdrew His presence from Saul. This reveals the dire consequences of rebelling against Adonai, rejecting Adonai and His word! Just like Sampson it cost Saul everything, his blessings, his calling, his anointing, and eventually his very life. Adonai will only use those whom He can trust to hear His voice and obey it!

I’ve delivered many messages over the years regarding the presence of God. As a Messianic Congregation, this is one of the areas we specifically strive for, His presence! Torah is Gods instructions, His teaching to us regarding how we are to walk, how we are to live in His presence. As Adonai told Shlomo how to do so in:

II Chronicles 7:17-18. “As for you, if you will live in my presence, as did David your father, doing everything I have ordered you to do, and keeping my laws and rulings; ¹⁸ then I will establish the throne of your rulership, as I covenanted with David your father when I said, 'You will never lack a man to be ruler in Isra'el.'”

The primary purpose of our intimate and obedient living in Adonai's presence is not religious, rituals, or tradition based! It's to submit, obey, live, and thrive in His presence!

Psalms 33:18. (TLV) Behold, the eyes of ADONAI are on those who fear him, waiting for his Love.

His presence isn't head knowledge, its heart knowledge, it's seeking His love! He's searching the earth for those who Fear Him, who will honor, respect, and magnify Him. It's not the methods, it's a matter of the heart, of being wholehearted before Him.

II Chronicles 16:9. For the eyes of ADONAI move here and there throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong on behalf of those who are wholehearted **(Shalem: complete, peaceful, full, in a covenant of Shalom, to live in Shalom, whole)** toward him. You acted foolishly in this regard; for from now on, you will have war."

To be in His presence requires an intimate, covenant relationship with Him, to be in Shalom with Him, to be whole, wholehearted with Him. His will, God's love, plans, and desires, comes to us through Yeshua! His word does not come back null or void. It will come to pass in your personal life through your free will "choice" in receiving Yeshua to serve Adonai or He will remove the blessings and covering over your life which results in extreme pressure to guide you towards the right choice and decision, but either way-Behold, YOU!

Adonai isn't expecting perfection from you, but He expects you to try your best to be obedient, righteous, upright, just and wholehearted with Him. Walking, living in His presence is not based upon legalistic rituals or traditions. One can be obedient to and follow every applicable command and mitzvah and NOT be in covenant Shalom with Adonai! Though He is specific in His word regarding how we approach him it's centered on a matter of the heart vice works.

Isaiah 29:13-14. Then Adonai said: "Because these people approach me with empty words, and the honor they bestow on me is mere lip-service; while in fact they have distanced their hearts from me, and their 'fear of me' is just a mitzvah of human origin ¹⁴ therefore, I will have to keep shocking these people with astounding and amazing things, until the 'wisdom' of their 'wise ones' vanishes, and the 'discernment' of their 'discerning ones' is hidden away."

The people had become hypocritical, worshipping the rituals, the rites, with empty words while distancing themselves from Adonai. The act of worship itself can become an idol! This is why walking in His presence can be such a struggle. It's easy to get off track, to get distracted onto a rabbit trail vice staying focused

upon Him. Yeshua confirmed His Fathers feelings regarding rebellion disobedience:

Matthew 7:21-23. "Not everyone who says to me, `Lord, Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, only those who do what my Father in heaven wants. ²² On that Day, many will say to me, `Lord, Lord! Didn't we prophesy in your name? Didn't we expel demons in your name? Didn't we perform many miracles in your name?' ²³ Then I will tell them to their faces, `I never knew you! Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness!'

Who would say to Yeshua `Lord, Lord', and prophesy, expel demons, and perform miracles unless they believed they were serving Him. Of those who serve Him the only ones who will enter the Kingdom of Heaven are: "those who do what my Father in heaven wants".

We, every child of Adonai, Jew and Gentile, Christian and Messianic must listen and obey Adonai's word and voice! We must humble ourselves before Him in true repentance when we fall short! Always seeking His presence and instruction while being open to and receive His corrections. This is the ONLY way we are able to walk in total submission and obedience to His will! If not, one will find themselves serving some other spirit in stubborn pride that refuses to repent. Rebellion and stubbornness will also cause us to loose everything just like Sampson and Saul.

Proverbs 16:18. Pride goes before destruction, and arrogance before failure.

Adonai does not tolerate rebellion, the willful disobedience to His know will and voice. Are choices determine whose voice we will follow, Adonais or another voice that is not His.

Romans 6:16. Don't you know that if you present yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, then, of the one whom you are obeying, you are slaves - whether of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to being made righteous?

A rebellious, stubborn, unsub missive heart will destroy one whom He has called, denying him entrance into the Kingdom of God. God will not allow anyone into His Kingdom whom He cannot rule! God's children are called to be set apart, following His laws and commandments. Adonai's people were called to honor and worship Him alone, seeking divine guidance through prayer and obedience to His word. Rebellion and stubbornness have dire ramifications for those nominal believers who believe that it is no longer necessary to obey Adonai's commandments, many of whom do not keep even those from Yeshua Himself!

While Adonai desires that we worship Him, and wants us to be sincere in doing it, He wants us even more to take His commands seriously and make obeying them an integral part of our daily lives.