

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



“The Fruit of a Listening Heart”

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): James/Jacob 1:19-21; Prov. 13:3; Prov. 15:1; Prov. 29:20; Deut. 32:35; Rom. 12:17-21; Eph. 4:25-27; Matt. 5:5; Matt. 12:36

Jacob has just told us that we have been brought forth by the word of truth, becoming a kind of firstfruits among all that God has created. That means the work God has begun in us is a preview of His desire for all creation. Yeshua is the firstfruits, and now, in Him, we are being made new. We have been born from above, created anew by the word of truth, and called to become a visible sign of what God intends His world to be.

But that does not mean we have fully arrived. Scripture continually shows us this reality of the “now and not yet.” Israel was rescued out of Egypt, but they were still walking through the wilderness toward the fullness of the promise. In the same way, we have been rescued from slavery to sin, but we are still being formed on the way to the fullness of what God has promised. Jacob’s instructions are not random proverbs gathered together. They show us what the implanted word of truth is supposed to produce in us. The fruit of a listening heart is a life increasingly shaped by the Word that made us new.

1. A LISTENING HEART IS FORMED BY THE WORD OF TRUTH

Jacob begins with an imperative: “Know this.” In other words, “Pay attention. Be aware of what I am about to say.” Then he speaks tenderly to the community as “my dear brothers and sisters,” and says, “*Know this, my dear brothers and sisters: let every person be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger*” (Jacob 1:19). This is more than good advice for relationships. In context, Jacob is calling us to be quick to hear the word of truth by which we were born anew.

To listen biblically is not merely to hear sound. The Hebrew idea of *shema* carries the sense of hearing and responding, listening and obeying. That does not come naturally to many of us. We often stop listening halfway through because we assume we already know where something is going. Like a batter who takes his eye off the ball too soon, we can miss what is actually being spoken. Jacob tells us to slow down and watch it all the way in. Be quick to listen, especially to the word of truth. Be slow to answer back, slow to explain it away, and slow to twist it into something easier to accept.

2. A LISTENING HEART REFUSES TO LET WRATH LEAD

Jacob continues, “*For human anger doesn’t produce the righteousness of God*” (Jacob 1:20). Human wrath may sometimes appear to accomplish justice in human eyes, but it does not bring about the righteousness or justice of God. It does not reflect His character, and it does not accomplish what He regards as truly right. We are called to be slow to wrath because God Himself is slow to wrath.

This does not mean we ignore injustice or pretend evil does not matter. Jacob will deal very directly with injustice within the body of believers. But he warns us not to believe that our anger can produce God's righteousness. When we see injustice, something may boil within us, and we may feel justified in venting that anger or taking matters into our own hands. Yet Scripture consistently teaches that vengeance belongs to Adonai: *"Vengeance is Mine, and payback"* (Deut. 32:35). Paul echoes this when he writes, *"Never take your own revenge, loved ones, but give room for God's wrath... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good"* (Rom. 12:19, 21). A listening heart does not deny that wrong has been done. It simply refuses to let wrath become its guide.

3. A LISTENING HEART RECEIVES WHAT GOD HAS PLANTED

Jacob then says, *"So put away all moral filth and excess of evil and receive with humility the implanted word, which is able to save your souls"* (Jacob 1:21). The language of "put away" is like taking off a garment. Jacob is telling believers to take off the filthy clothes of malice, wrath, and moral impurity. These are not garments that belong to those who have been made new. We may still find ourselves reaching for them, but they no longer fit our identity in Messiah.

Then Jacob tells us to receive with humility the implanted word. This is striking because he is speaking to believers who have already been born through the word of truth. So how do we receive what has already been planted in us? We continue to take hold of it. We listen to it, believe it, submit to it, and let it bear fruit in us. The world does not usually admire meekness, gentleness, and humility. It often sees them as weakness. But Yeshua said, *"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth"* (Matt. 5:5). The implanted word has the power to rescue our lives, not as we merely hear it, but as we humbly receive it and allow it to shape what comes out of us.

CONCLUSION

This is one of the hardest places where the word of truth confronts us. It is easy to agree that we should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger until we are insulted, misunderstood, falsely accused, or treated unjustly. It is easy to say that vengeance belongs to the Lord until we feel the desire to defend ourselves, punish someone, or make them feel what they made us feel. But Jacob calls us back to the word that made us new.

We are firstfruits of what God intends to do in all creation. That means our lives are meant to display a different way. When Yeshua was falsely accused, struck, mocked, and rejected, He did not answer with wrath. He entrusted Himself to the Father. So we come before the Lord and ask: Do I trust You with justice? Do I trust You when I cannot see what You are doing? Do I trust You enough to lay aside my anger and receive Your word with humility? The fruit of a listening heart is not weakness. It is the strength of a life surrendered to the Word of Truth.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What does it mean that believers are a kind of “firstfruits” of what God desires to do in all creation?
2. Why is being “quick to listen” more than simply hearing words?
3. When have you seen human anger appear to produce justice, but actually create more harm or deeper injustice?
4. In modern life, especially on social media or in conflict, why is it so difficult to be slow to speak?
5. What is one area of your life where you need to lay aside anger, malice, or the need for revenge and trust the Lord to handle justice?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Avinu Malkenu, Our Father, Our King, thank You for bringing us forth by the word of truth and making us a kind of firstfruits of Your new creation. Teach us to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to wrath. Forgive us for the times we have trusted our anger more than Your righteousness, and for the times we have tried to bring about justice through our own wrath.

Lord, search our hearts and show us what we need to lay aside. Help us take off the filthy garments of malice, bitterness, vengeance, and pride. With humility and gentleness, help us receive the implanted word that has the power to rescue our lives. Make us more like Yeshua, who entrusted Himself fully to You. May Your word bear good fruit in us, for Your glory and for the healing of the world around us.

B'Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen.