



ShalomAZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption

“Sleeper Cell: The Undercover Enemy”

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Passages (TLV): Eph 4:17-24; Jer. 17:9; Acts 19:18-20; Rom. 8:5-14; Is. 61:1-4; 1 Sam. 16:7; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; Matt 23:25-26; Ex. 20:2-3

Scripture reminds us that one of the greatest spiritual dangers we face is not always the enemy we see around us, but the one that operates quietly within us. The prophet Jeremiah warns us with sobering clarity: *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and incurable—who can know it?”* (Jer. 17:9 TLV). The Hebrew word used for “deceitful” carries the idea of something twisted or uneven—ground that appears solid but can cause you to stumble without warning. Our own hearts can sometimes function that way. They can justify our motives, defend our reactions, and convince us that we are right, even when something deeper inside us is misaligned with the heart of God.

Because of this, followers of Messiah must continually invite the Holy Spirit to search the hidden places of our hearts. The flesh—our old nature—does not always appear obviously sinful. Sometimes it disguises itself as wisdom, righteousness, or even spiritual passion. Yet beneath the surface it is still driven by the same ancient impulse: the desire for self to rule instead of God. The journey of discipleship is therefore not only about learning truth but about allowing the Spirit to expose and transform what lies beneath the surface so that the life of Yeshua truly governs our hearts.

1. RECOGNIZE THE SLEEPER CELL — THE ENEMY WITHIN

The first step in spiritual maturity is learning to recognize that the greatest threat to our walk with God is not always outside of us. Scripture reminds us that before we came to Messiah, we all lived according to the cravings of the flesh. Paul writes, *“We too all lived among them in the cravings of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and the mind.”* (Eph. 2:3 TLV). That old nature does not simply disappear without a struggle. Though it has been crucified with Messiah, it still seeks to rise up and influence the way we think, react, and live.

Paul therefore urges believers, *“Walk no longer as the pagans do, stumbling around in the futility of their thinking.”* (Eph. 4:17 TLV). The issue he addresses is not outward appearance but inward condition. The world’s way of living grows out of a heart that is darkened in understanding and hardened toward God. If we are not careful, those same patterns can quietly begin to influence us as well. Recognizing the presence of this inner struggle is not a sign of spiritual weakness—it is the beginning of spiritual wisdom. When we acknowledge the battle within, we become more attentive to the Spirit’s voice guiding us toward truth and transformation.

Challenge: Ask the Lord to help you remain alert to the subtle ways the old nature may still try to influence your thoughts, attitudes, and decisions.

2. THE SLEEPER CELL OPERATES THROUGH ME-FIRST-NESS

At its core, the struggle with the flesh is not simply about outward behavior—it is about the posture of the heart. The flesh seeks to place self at the center. It wants control, recognition, and the final say. Sometimes this shows up in obvious ways, but more often it appears in quieter forms: the need to win an argument, the desire to defend ourselves at all costs, or the instinct to protect our reputation rather than pursue humility.

Yet Scripture calls us to a different spirit. Paul instructs Timothy, *“The Lord’s slave must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all... giving guidance with humility.”* (2 Tim. 2:24–25 TLV). The heart of Yeshua is not driven by self-promotion but by surrender to the will of the Father. When we allow the

Holy Spirit to examine our motives, He begins to reveal the subtle ways self-centeredness can creep into even our good actions. This can be uncomfortable, but it is also deeply freeing, because God's correction is always aimed at restoring us to the life He designed for us.

Challenge: Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any areas where pride, defensiveness, or the need to control outcomes may still be shaping your responses.

3. THE SLEEPER CELL MUST BE PUT TO DEATH

Recognizing the presence of the old nature is only the beginning. Scripture calls believers to actively participate in putting that nature to death. Paul writes, *"With respect to your former lifestyle, you are to lay aside the old self corrupted by its deceitful desires... and put on the new self—created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."* (Eph. 4:22–24 TLV). This transformation is not achieved through our own strength but through surrender to the work of the *Ruach HaKodesh* – the Holy Spirit.

Romans echoes this truth: *"For if by the Ruach (Spirit) you put to death the deeds of the body, you shall live."* (Rom. 8:13 TLV). God invites us into a process of growth where we daily choose to deny the impulses of the old self and walk in the life of the Spirit. This is rarely instantaneous. Like seeds growing into trees, transformation unfolds over time as we consistently yield our hearts to the Spirit's work. As we do, the character of Yeshua begins to take deeper root within us.

Challenge: Commit today to surrendering one specific area of struggle to the Holy Spirit and asking Him to lead you in genuine transformation.

CONCLUSION

The danger of a sleeper cell is that it blends in so naturally that people forget it is there. In the same way, the flesh can quietly operate beneath the surface of our lives if we are not attentive to the Spirit's voice. It may appear as wisdom, justice, or spiritual passion, yet underneath it is still driven by the old desire for self to rule. But when the Holy Spirit brings those hidden patterns into the light, their power begins to break.

God's purpose in revealing these things is never condemnation—it is restoration. When He exposes something within us, it is because He is fighting for us, not against us. The invitation of discipleship is to lay aside the old self, allow our minds to be renewed, and walk in the new life created in us through Messiah. As we continually bring our hearts before the Lord, the hidden places of our lives become places where His transforming grace can work most deeply.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why is it often easier to see spiritual problems in others than to recognize them in ourselves?
2. What does Jeremiah 17:9 teach us about the human heart?
3. In what ways can self-centeredness disguise itself as righteousness or spirituality?
4. How does the Holy Spirit help believers identify and overcome the "sleeper cell" of the flesh?
5. What practical steps can help us daily "put on the new self" described in Ephesians 4?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Avinu Malkeinu, Our Father, Our King, You know our hearts better than we know them ourselves. Your Word tells us that the heart can deceive us, yet Your Spirit leads us into truth. We ask You today to search us and reveal anything hidden within us that opposes Your rule in our lives. By Your Holy Spirit, give us the courage to lay aside the old self and to walk in the new life You have created in us through Messiah Yeshua. Renew our minds, soften our hearts, and shape us into people who reflect Your righteousness and holiness. May our lives increasingly display the character of Yeshua so that Your glory may be seen in us.

B'Shem Yeshua, In Yeshua's Name, Amen