

The Book Of James (Part 13) – Swift to Hear; Slow to Speak

April 11, 2026

The following text is a message from Corner Fringe Ministries that was presented by Daniel Joseph. The original presentation can be viewed at <https://www.cornerfringe.com/media/4wd4xh2/part-13>

*Portions of this document have been edited from the video message to better present a comprehensive, written document. Special attention was given to preserve the original context, but this document is not verbatim. Scripture verses are in the red text with other quotes in blue. Therefore, it is recommended that this document be printed in color. The Hebrew words are generally accompanied by the transliteration into the English alphabet. In most cases, the Hebrew is to be read from right to left.

Divine Character and the Discipline of the Tongue

This transcript from **Corner Fringe Ministries** features a message by **Pastor Daniel Joseph** regarding **James 1:17-19**, emphasizing that unlike the shifting shadows of celestial bodies, **God's character and power remain immutable**. Daniel argues that because God never changes, His biblical miracles and mercy are **present realities** available to **modern believers** rather than mere historical accounts. A significant portion of the message examines the **concept of spiritual rebirth**, contrasting the destructive "birth" of sin with the transformative "new creation" found through **faith in Yeshua**. Additionally, he provides practical warnings regarding the **destructive power of the tongue**, using historical and biblical examples like **Abraham Lincoln** and the **sons of Jacob** to illustrate the necessity of restraint. Ultimately, Daniel calls for believers to be **swift to hear, slow to speak and slow to wrath**, urging them to filter their emotions through the Holy Spirit to build rather than destroy.

[Daniel Joseph]

Well, Shabbat Shalom, everyone. This is week 13, and if you remember, last week, we were looking at James 1:17—**Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights...** The first order of business today is to finish this verse. We didn't quite get there. And so, we're going to take care of this, and then we're going to move into verse 18, and if things go well, we'll get through 19 today. And so, yes, with that said, there's some excitement.

All right, moving on, this is what James says in James 1:17, **...with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.** (Emphasis added). James is drawing upon language that's very specific; it's celestial. He's now turning our attention to the heavens, the sun, the moon, and the stars, all of which have to do with variations and shadows of turning.

It even draws you back to 2 Kings 20; you read about that incredible story. There are certainly all these incredible moments lined up in Scripture. This is one of the most notable: when Hezekiah is sick, he's going to get a sign that he's going to have deliverance, and he's going to be healed. And the LORD speaks through Yeshayahu, the prophet Isaiah, and he tells him, "Here's the sign: Do you want me to turn the shadow of the dial of Ahaz, the shadow ahead 10 degrees, or do you want me to turn it back 10 degrees?" And of course, Hezekiah is like, "Well, you know, it's nothing for it to go forward 10 degrees,

because that's the circuit of the sun; it would naturally go forward. That shadow of turning would take place 10 degrees." No, he says, "Send it backward 10 degrees." The LORD literally did that. Unless you understand what was literally being communicated in the passage, how unbelievable that was—unprecedented. Never had anything in the world like that been done. In Joshua's day, the sun stood still. Not in Hezekiah's day; it went backwards, so just try to wrap your head around that.

But the point here for James is that we can look to the sun, and you see it rise in the east and set in the west. It has a course; it's changing. The moon, all throughout the month, changes. It waxes first, the waxing gibbous, and you have the waning gibbous, and it's changing all throughout the month. You see different portions of it highlighted and darkened. Even the constellations, throughout the year, change their position. And what James is driving home here is that it is not like our God; even all those things are the product of God. God is not like that. There is no variation. There is no shadow of turning.

This is what the prophet says, or actually the LORD Himself says in Malachi 3:6, **"For I am Yahweh, the LORD, I do not change..."** Now, I'm going to tell you, if you really want to have a good Bible study, really want to have a radical, life-altering moment in your world, grab hold of this principle. It'll change your life. This is one of the principles that I will tell you your entire experience hinges upon, whether or not you believe that. It'll change how you approach the Word.

Okay, so you go back, go back to the Torah and even into the prophets, and what you see is God displaying this unimaginable power, like what I just said, turning the sundial of Ahaz back 10 degrees; the sun had to retreat from its course, its natural course that it always had. Who's ever heard of such a thing? Who's ever heard of an entire nation, roughly 2 million people, going across the sea that had been supernaturally dried up and then coming and destroying its enemies? You see the display of power, of God's judgment.

We read about the character of God in Exodus 34:6, *Yahweh, Yahweh el rachum vechannun erech appayim* (יְהוָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים רַחוּם וְחַנּוּן אֶרֶץ אַפַּיִם). He is **"The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth."** The entire Torah, read the whole Torah—all I'm given is one example after another of the graciousness, the beauty, and the mercy of God. You see this right in the garden. Coming out of the garden, what does God do? He clothes Adam and Eve; this is an act of mercy. He covers their shame. And it just continues, the whole narrative.

We get all of these things about God. We get His power, this unmatched, unparalleled display of power. We get the beauty of His love. You get into the judges', and over and over and over again, Israel screws up, but then they come back, and they repent, and guess what? God is there. He is there to forgive them.

That's a game-changer because when you recognize that this principle in Malachi 3:6 is true, now I'm not going back to the Bible to read about a God that was. I am reading about a God that is. That changes my realm. It changes everything. Now I'm reading not a simple historical text; I am reading a text that is to be applied to me, something that I have available because God hasn't changed.

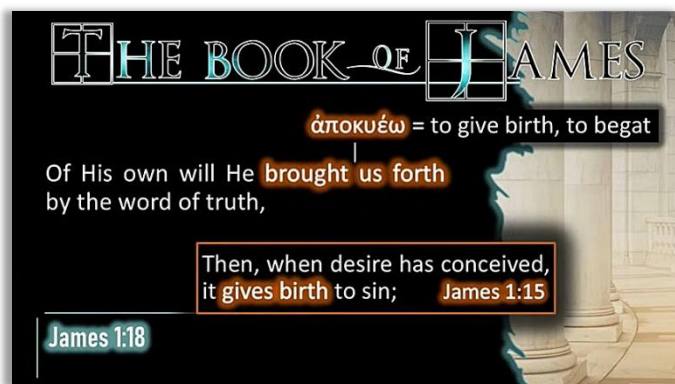
This gets more interesting when you read what the writer of Hebrews says in Hebrews 13:8: **Jesus Christ, Messiah Yeshua, is the same yesterday, today, and forever.** A God-only statement. But what does that do for you? Well, here's what it does for me. When I go into the Gospels, and I read about the ministry of Yeshua, and I read about people who came to Him from every direction, and it literally says He healed them all, there was nothing too hard for Him when they came. There was no "I'm sorry, your disease is

too severe.” It didn't even matter that it was too late. Jairus's daughter was dead, and what does Yeshua say in Mark 5:36? **“Do not be afraid; only believe.”**

Was it too late for Lazarus? It didn't matter. Lazarus had been dead for four days. Yeshua speaks the word, and Lazarus is resurrected. The LORD that I read about is the LORD that, when the centurion had a moment with Yeshua, said in Matthew 8:8, **“Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed.”**

If Yeshua is the same yesterday, today, and forever, He hasn't lost His power. He hasn't lost His ability, like a washed-up high school quarterback 25 years later living in the glory days, thinking of all the greatness that he did in a game or something. You put him out in the field at 50 years old; the man's going to leave on a stretcher *[laughter]*. He may not be coming home, period.

This is what I love about the reality of God, about the reality of Yeshua the Messiah. Every single thing I read about—His love and His compassion, how He came to save the lost, how He poured out love, how He spoke all this wisdom, how with the word, the winds and the waves stop—He hasn't lost His power. Has He lost his character? Has He lost His ability to love? Man, this is a radical game-changer with how we interact with the Word of God. Now I'm reading it, not as it was—oh, as it is. This changes my prayer life, how I go before the LORD, because I know He is able. I know there is nothing too hard for the LORD—a game-changer.



Moving ahead to James 1:18—**Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth...** (emphasis added). I want to highlight this: **He brought us forth.** That term in Greek is *apokueó* (ἀποκυέω), and this term is very important because it refers to giving birth. There's a message that James is very serious about what he's conveying here; it's intentional.

The term is only found twice in the entire New Testament, both times in the Epistle of James and only three verses apart. In fact, the first time we were introduced to this term was back in verse 15, where we read, **Then, when desire has conceived, oh, *apokueó*, it gives birth to sin;...** (Emphasis added). Now, look at this; take this in. We know what the Greek word means; it means to give birth, but how does James use it? He doesn't use it in a hyperliteral fashion; he is using it in a spiritual context.

In the first context, he uses it in the negative, referring to when fleshly desire is conceived, it gives birth to sin. It gives birth, ultimately, to death. Fleshly desire gives birth to death. But then James builds on this, and he takes it to the polar opposite, using the same term in regard to what God does. Fleshly desire does horrible things, but what God does is He gives us birth into life. And the very message that he's conveying is that it's an echo chamber to that discussion that Yeshua had with Nicodemus when He said to Nicodemus, and this is powerful (John 3:3), **“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”**

Now I want you to take that in for a moment because this is critical. When Yeshua starts dropping ultimatums in front of us, you don't just turn the page. You step back and go, “Okay, so He's telling me

that unless I'm born again, I cannot be saved?" Well, now my whole world needs to be consumed with, "What does that mean?" What does it mean to be born again?

Well, I want to peel this back because this is what James brought to the table. To get started, I want to take you to John 1:12-13—¹² **But as many as received Him, Yeshua, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:** Now, what follows? ¹³ **who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God** (emphasis added). This is talking about a radical new birth.

This is what the Apostle Paul talks about to the Corinthians when he says in 2 Corinthians 5:17, **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.** You are not the same. If you are literally given life from the dead, there is a total renewal. Your heart is completely transformed, and this happens because you receive Yeshua as both LORD and Savior.

You receive Him as Savior, knowing that you're a sinner and you need to be saved, and His life paid that price. —John 1:29b—**"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"** —Romans 10:13— **For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."** And you confess Him as LORD, as your master and teacher. His teachings become gospel truth to you. His teachings become your instruction manual, and this is the reality.

Now, Peter goes on and says in 1 Peter 1:3, **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again;** there's a new birth, **to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.** (Emphasis added). That's the gospel. That's the beauty. This is how we become born-again Christians.

There are a lot of people professing to be Christians. In fact, there are going to be a lot of people professing to be Christians at the judgment in Matthew 7:21-23. But guess what? They're going to find out they're not born again. They are not born again.

Listen to this: Peter goes on in 1 Peter 1:23—**having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever** (emphasis added). And John builds on this. He says in 1 John 3:9, **Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.** (Emphasis added).

You want to ask yourself, "What does it mean to be born again?" Because if I'm not born again, I'm not getting in. What it means is we discovered you must call upon the name of Yeshua. It's His death, burial, and resurrection; that is the salvific story that we must receive. But also understand that being a new creation and changing your heart, you now develop a hatred for the things you once loved. You hate the things of the world, and you no longer continue to live in sin.

I'm going to tell you, if you are in bondage right now to sin, do not tell yourself you're a born-again Christian. According to the biblical definition, you are falling short of that. A born-again believer doesn't get comfortable with sin. And this is not saying, in fact, in 1 John, he's very careful; this is not saying that you won't stumble or you won't have a moment in sin, but in that moment, you detest it. You immediately repent and turn from your ways. You don't get comfortable with it. You don't live in it. And this is exactly what John is conveying. This is what a born-again believer looks like.

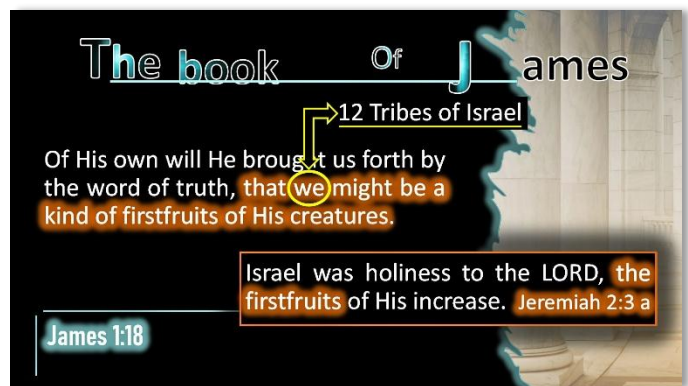
And this is why in Matthew Chapter 7, there are going to be so many Christians thinking they're getting in because they profess to be Christians and they profess Christ, but they're living in sin. They rejected Him as LORD, the master and teacher. They didn't receive His instruction.

And so, as we look at what James has to say here in James 1:18— **Of His own will He brought us forth** — There is a birthing **by the word of truth...** (Emphasis added). That is the gospel. And we know this when we look at Paul's words in Ephesians 1:13. He says, **In Him, Yeshua, you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation ...** (Emphasis added).

Those words in John 8:58 are Yeshua speaking: unless you believe that *Egō eimi* (ἐγώ εἰμι), **"I AM,"** you're going to die in your sin. Unless you believe John 4:42, I am **"the Savior of the world,"** or unless you believe John 1:29, I am **"the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world;"** you're going to die. That's **the word of truth.**

Then he adds this in James 1:18, **...that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures** (emphasis added). I want to highlight this: that **"we."** Who is James referring to? We have to go back. Who's the letter addressed to? It's addressed to the 12 tribes of Israel, and so, when he says that **"we,"** he's saying we, Israel, are a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

Now this isn't just James's opinion, but this is Scripture. When we go back to Jeremiah, we read the following in Jeremiah 2:3— **"Israel was holiness to the LORD, the firstfruits of His increase..."** (Emphasis added). And if you understand the concept of firstfruits, yes, firstfruits are the holy portion to the LORD, but you understand that the rest of the harvest could not be received until the firstfruits had been received.



You think about the gospel. Even when Yeshua came, what did He say? —Matthew 15:24— **"I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."** And think of Romans 1:16. Paul says, **For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.** The Greeks are that portion of humanity that is the harvest. The firstfruits had to be given first. And so, Yeshua brings that gospel to them, and you see the reality of what James is drawing out here.

Moving on to James 1:19—**So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak...** It's interesting; these very same words are found in the book of Sirach, which has a tremendous presence in the New Testament. In Sirach 5:11, we read, **Be quick to hear...** In fact, it's identical when he says **"swift to hear"** or **"quick to hear";** it's the identical Greek word, **"tachus"** (ταχύς). **Be quick to hear but deliberate in answering.** There's a very high probability that this is what James is thinking about. He's drawing from this, from Sirach.

But the reason I put it up here is to fully embrace the reality of what's being conveyed. To be swift to hear and slow to speak means you need to be deliberate. You need to step back before speaking, and you need to think about what is going to come out of your mouth. Now, God help all of us because there's not a person in this room who has done this perfectly; there's just not, and why is it, pray tell? I

looked at James's instructions, and I'm like, "Oh, mercy." What comes naturally to us is the exact opposite: we are swift to speak. That part is easy—we are less interested in listening. We want to be swift to speak. Why? Because we're emotional. We feel passionate about many things, and we want to get that out.

And there is a warning here. And this is James again doing what he does best. Another life-and-death lesson for all of us, and it truly is. This is truly a life-and-death lesson. We need to be swift to hear. What are we supposed to hear? Ultimately, I'm going to tell you this, and Yeshua says this to the churches of Revelation, **"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says..."** And so, as you're in any situation, you need to step back. I need to be swift to hear from the Spirit, and I need to be deliberate, intentional, and careful about my response.

We have to be, because there are two paths we take every time we open our mouths. Either we build the kingdom of God, or we build the kingdom of Satan. And I want you to think about that because life and death are in the power of the tongue. We are either building or destroying.

And it brings you back to Jabez's prayer; it does for me. One of the only things he asked the LORD for was that he might not cause anyone pain. I'm going to tell you one of the most significant aspects of Jabez asking for that lies right here in what James brings to the table. It's our tongues.

So, we have to get into a place where our sole resource of drawing our words out is not just simply emotion. We have to filter what we feel so deeply about through God's Word. We have to hear the Spirit. What does the Spirit say? And what I'm about to say is it in line with the LORD? Am I building?

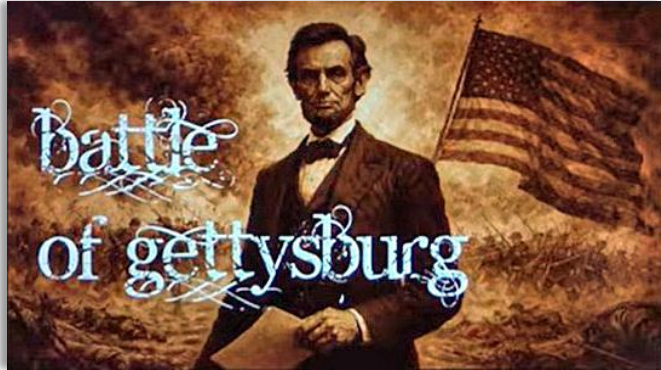
Proverbs 15:28 says this: **The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil** (emphasis added). It comes out like nobody's business. And I think of all of these object lessons that we've learned over the years, even in Sunday school, and the teacher coming out and giving the kids tubes of toothpaste and saying, "Get the toothpaste out as fast as you can!" Toothpaste flying all over, kids rolling and laughing. And then the teacher comes back and says, "Now put it all back in the tube." And the lesson here is it's really easy to squeeze all the toothpaste out in seconds. Good luck trying to put it back in. And so it is with our words. That's the problem; they come out easily. It's not so easy to take them back.

And even, I mean, I call it the "feather pillow illustration," where a rabbi wants to make a very important point as to the destructive power of *lashon hara* (לִשְׁוֹן הָרָע)—evil speech. To do so, he instructs a man, "I want you to take your pillow"—when you think about this, it's the pillow that gives me comfort so I can sleep at night. "Take your pillow, go outside—the wind's blowing 50 miles an hour—cut it open, release the feathers, and the wind carries them off to the ends of the earth." And then he tells him the next day, "Now go get all the feathers." And the man's like, "I'll never be able to do that." And the rabbi makes the point: so it is with *lashon hara*. So it is with foolish words that come out of your mouth. Once they leave, you'll never get them back. And so, with our words, we can either build or destroy. We need to be swift to hear and slow to speak.

Proverbs 18:2—**A fool has no delight in understanding, but in expressing his own heart.** That's the agenda for a fool. It's only to tell you what I think; that's the expression of a fool. —Proverbs 29:11—**A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back.** Now think about that. A fool lets you have it. A wise man holds them back. Why? Because a righteous man studies how to answer. He's calculating.

What I'm going to say is it going to edify? Is it going to build? Is this going to do a good thing, or am I going to destroy it?

You know, a great example of this in history was Abraham Lincoln, specifically in the Battle of Gettysburg, 1863. The three-day battle is considered to be the most decisive battle in the Civil War. This was a critical victory for the Union, the North. Absolutely critical. General Meade had rejected the advances. There was an invasion by Robert E. Lee from the South and the Confederate Army coming into



the North. General Meade took the Union troops, and that army totally beat them. They didn't destroy them. Meade allowed General Lee to walk off into the sunset and retreat back to Virginia with the remaining troops.

And the Confederates got hit hard. There were huge losses in this battle. And while the Union took the battle, they were victorious; Lincoln was beside himself. He was not happy. He was very frustrated about the situation. And so, 11 days later—July 3rd—they win the battle of

Gettysburg; 11 days later, on the 14th, Lincoln decides to pen a letter. Today, it's dubbed the hot letter because Lincoln is lit. He is frustrated.

I mean, you have to remember the unreal pressure that was upon him. And the casualties at this point at Gettysburg are estimated to be around 250,000, maybe even more. Think about how many people died. Lincoln wants this war over. It's unbelievable and horrible. It's the bloodiest war in the country's history, so the pressure is intense. Abraham Lincoln is emotional; he is frustrated, and he is angry.

**Executive Mansion,
Washington, July 14, 1863**

And so, I'm not going to show you the whole letter, but I want to give you the tone, some of the tone, so that you can see what he had to say to Major General Meade:

“Again, my dear general, I do not believe you appreciate the magnitude of the misfortune involved in Lee's escape—He was within your easy grasp, and to have closed upon him would, in connection with our other late successes, have ended the war—As it is, the war will be prolonged indefinitely.”

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The amazing thing about this is that Lincoln's intuition and instinct were dead on. Everything Lincoln writes in this letter is strategically right, a moral high ground in every aspect. The sad thing is, had Meade taken Robert E. Lee out, the South would not have survived. It would have ended the war. After Gettysburg, the war would go on for almost two more years, and do you know that that's where the majority of the casualties would be? Another 400-some thousand would lose their lives. Lincoln knew this. You understand why he's angry? Why is he fit to be tied? He knew the cost already, but he knew that if this continued, it was going to be horrific, and he was right. Even history has proved Lincoln right.

So, he writes this letter to Meade, and here's what's fascinating—he never sent it. This is considered to this day to be one of the greatest displays of wisdom and restraint in his presidency. Had Lincoln sent this letter to Meade, the high probability is that it would have hit the Union Army hard. Once Meade received this, after what was perceived as a victory, he was chastised and reprimanded, and he walked away in anger, feeling no one was thankful for what he had just done and the sacrifices that were made at this battle—I mean, we could go on and on.

Even historians today look at things that could have gone very, very differently had Lincoln sent the letter. Even though Lincoln is right about everything he writes, he was right. He had the high moral ground. He had this strategically; militarily speaking, he was right. He was right in every account, and yet Lincoln didn't send it. Why? Because (Proverbs 29:11) **a fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back.**

Abraham Lincoln was calculating. Is this the best thing for the Union Army now for me to unload on this guy's royal screw-up? I mean, think of it. You wonder why he was president at the time. And the amount of restraint that he showed, despite being right, was only because he thought about the big picture. Yes, he was able to verbally process and sit, but he never sent it. How many emails have you sent that you should have sat on and maybe never sent? A righteous man thinks it through; he holds back. Such a powerful example.

Proverbs 29:20—**Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.** Now, there's no way you could possibly appreciate this very inconvenient truth unless you actually understand biblically what it means to be a fool, so I just want to give you the biblical definition here, really quick, through Solomon. We read this in Proverbs 1:7—**... fools despise wisdom and instruction.** —Proverbs 1:22—**... fools hate knowledge.**

Fools hate the Bible. Wisdom? This is called wisdom. Instruction? These are the instructions of the LORD. That's what Torah means; it means instruction. This is the knowledge of the LORD. Fools hate it. —Proverbs 10:23—**To do evil is like sport to a fool....** They love it. They are happy when they're immersed in evil. And the clincher here is Proverbs 13:19—**... it is an abomination to fools to depart from evil.** They will not repent.

So, I ask you, when the writer here, Solomon, says, **“There's more hope for a fool than for him,”** how much hope is there for a fool? None. There is no hope for a fool because he's an unrepentant sinner. There is no hope, and Solomon is putting this in context. This man has even less of a chance of getting into the Kingdom of Heaven—a man who is hasty in his words.

Oh God, help all of us. We will be judged by every word spoken. If this doesn't put the fear of God into you, I don't know what will. These are one of those moments you don't want to believe are true. It sounds extreme. Because verbal vomit comes so easily, and everyone does it. Think about the costs that are involved.

Going back to James 1:19-20—¹⁹ **So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak.** Now, James is going to throw a third bit of instruction here into the list, and then he's going to expound on it. He also adds, be **slow to wrath;** ²⁰ **for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.** (Emphasis added).

Your fleshly anger will never build the kingdom of God. You will build the kingdom of Satan, and you will destroy what is good, every time. Going back to Solomon in Ecclesiastes 7:9, he says, **Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools.** (Emphasis added).

You know, there's this concept in Leviticus 19:18, "*Lo tikkom velo tittor et benei ammecha*" (לֹא תִקְוֹם וְלֹא תִתֹּר אֶת בְּנֵי אִמֶּיךָ). **You shall not take vengeance nor bear any grudge...** This is talking about retaining bitterness and retaining anger in your heart. But you are to love your neighbor. The instructions are powerful because if you don't follow them, once you retain anger, all you're doing is sowing death in your own body. It's death.

Now, as we look at this, it's easy to start combing through the Scriptures, and we can start pointing the finger at all sorts of men that we read about. The men of the likes of Cain. Well, it's easy to point our fingers. He's a wicked man, filled with anger, and what did that lead to? Murder. You remember 1 John 3:15 saying that **Whoever hates his brother in his heart is a murderer...** We can point our fingers and look at Esau; yeah, he's a corrupt, evil human being, totally given over to bitterness and anger. He had murder in his heart. He was plotting to kill Jacob.

We can look at those stories, but when things really get real is when you see this happening to sons of Israel, and I mean literal sons of Israel, by whom the tribes are named. I'm referring to Genesis Chapter 34. There's a story; this is my go-to story when I think about anger. This is my go-to.

The situation is as Jacob comes and rolls into Shechem. He buys a parcel of land from the children of Hamor; these are Hivites. And he sets up camp. This is where he is. And over the course of time, one of these Hivites named Shechem, who is the son of Hamor, violates Jacob and Leah's daughter, Dinah. And Shechem is in love with Dinah; this Hivite loves her, so he went to his father and said, "I want you to go and get this woman for me to be a wife."

We pick this up in Genesis 34:6-7—⁶ **Then Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him.** ⁷ **And the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved—** here's the key—**and very angry, because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, a thing which ought not to be done** (emphasis added). And yes, what we can establish right here is "disgraceful." It should not be done in Israel. It should not be done in the world. That part we are very, very clear on.

And as the story goes, the sons of Israel hear what has happened, and they all come together. Hamor is there, and Hamor suggests, "Listen, give Dinah as a wife to my son," but not just that; "Let's all intermarry. Let the Hivites and Israel come together. We'll give our daughters to you. You give your daughters to us, and let's just be one big, happy family." The sons of Israel say, "We can't do that. We're not allowed to do that. You're uncircumcised. If all your males are circumcised, then we'll become one people."

Well, they go back. They say, "This is good. We'll do this. We want to intermarry with them; let's do this." But the sons of Israel were deceiving them. This was part of their plan. They wanted to incapacitate all the males.

And so, as we read, look at this in Genesis 34:25-26—²⁵ **Now it came to pass on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers—**and these are full brothers, because remember, this is the daughter of Leah, and Simeon and Levi are the sons of Leah—

each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and, look at this, killed all the males. Not simply Shechem—they killed all the males. ²⁶ And they killed Hamor, who is obviously Shechem's father, and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went out. (Emphasis added).

And they didn't just do that, but they plundered the entire community and the camp. They took everything in it, from the cattle to even the women and the children. They took it all. In Levi's and Simeon's minds, they are 100% justified in this act. Now we know an egregious, horrific act took place; no one's debating that. And so, they believe this punishment is appropriate.

The interesting thing about this whole situation is that their father, Jacob, does not feel the same way. In fact, he feels so strongly about it that before he dies—this is such a cool moment in the Torah, especially toward the end of Jacob's life—he calls the twelve tribes of Israel, calls his twelve sons to him, and is going to prophesy over every single one of them. And he does so individually with each one of these tribes; he prophesies over them.

Here's what's interesting. With one exception, when it comes to Simeon and Levi, he does not bless them individually or prophesy over them individually. He couples them together. Incredibly notable. And this is what we read in Genesis 49:5—**“Simeon and Levi are brothers; instruments of cruelty are in their dwelling place.”** (Emphasis added). This is not a good opening statement to a prophecy. You read the other prophecies over the other children, over the other tribes, and, oh, these are good things. You're like, when is that going to happen?

Simeon's and Levi's prophecy opens up in a terrifying manner. And actually, the Septuagint rendition is—LXX—**They accomplished injustice from their choice.** In other words, they are intentional about injustice, about not being just. But he goes on in this and says in Genesis 49:6-7, **“Let not my soul enter their council; let not my honor be united to their assembly; for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they hamstrung an ox.”** ⁷ **Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; and their wrath, for it is cruel!”** (Emphasis added).

The Septuagint renders it this way:—LXX—**Accursed is their rage, because it is remorseless...** When the sons of Levi were done, they confirmed to Jacob that they were just in what they had done. Jacob didn't see what he was hoping to see—that they would be filled with remorse. “We shouldn't have done this. We acted in it; we shouldn't have done this.” No, they didn't back down a bit. It's absolutely terrifying—**... and their revengeful temper, because it has been hardened.** (Emphasis added). It's talking about a hard heart.

And so, Jacob says this in Genesis 49:7—**“... I will divide them”**—and this is the LORD, this is the Holy Spirit; prophecy doesn't come by the will of man, we know this—**“I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel.”**

How bizarre is that? Do you know the only two tribes that did not get their independent allotment of land were Simeon and Levi? Simeon and Levi are the only two tribes. Simeon gets their inheritance within the border of another tribe, the tribe of Judah. And Levi is scattered all over the place. Exactly what was prophesied came to pass when Israel came to take the land.

And it's even more interesting when you look at Simeon's numbers going into the land. He is the least of all the tribes. Furthermore, when Moses comes and calls the twelve tribes and blesses them

independently, each one getting their own blessing, Simeon never gets blessed. I mean, it's a radical mystery. And the thought is it was carried over from this prophecy; he doesn't get a blessing. The tribe of Simeon is not mentioned; it's astounding.

A simple point I'm making here: fleshly anger, revenge—it isn't worth it. It is not honorable before the LORD. Psalm 37:8 says, **Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret—it only causes harm.** (Emphasis added). That's the only thing that it's going to do. Cease from anger. Leviticus 19:18, “*Lo tikkom velo tittor.*” Period. **You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge ...** I mean, this is the heartbeat of the gospel; it is to move in forgiveness.

Proverbs 19:11—**The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, *erech appayim* (אָרֶךְ אַפַּיִם).** Slow to anger; that's the character of God. That's the exact character that God Himself expresses of who He is: slow to anger, **and his glory is to overlook a transgression.** Which is exactly what Proverbs 10:12 says: **Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins.** That's all hatred accomplishes. It's drama; it stirs up strife, and it imposes pain.

And with that said, we're going to close.

[Closing prayer]

Abba Father, we just give You praise and glory. And when we read Your words in Scripture, there are times that it just becomes all too real and all too convicting to realize how comfortable we are in our flesh. And yet when we read the Scriptures that we read today, we know how serious an offense it is to not be righteous, to guard our words, and to guard our emotions, knowing Jeremiah 17:9 is true: **The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?**

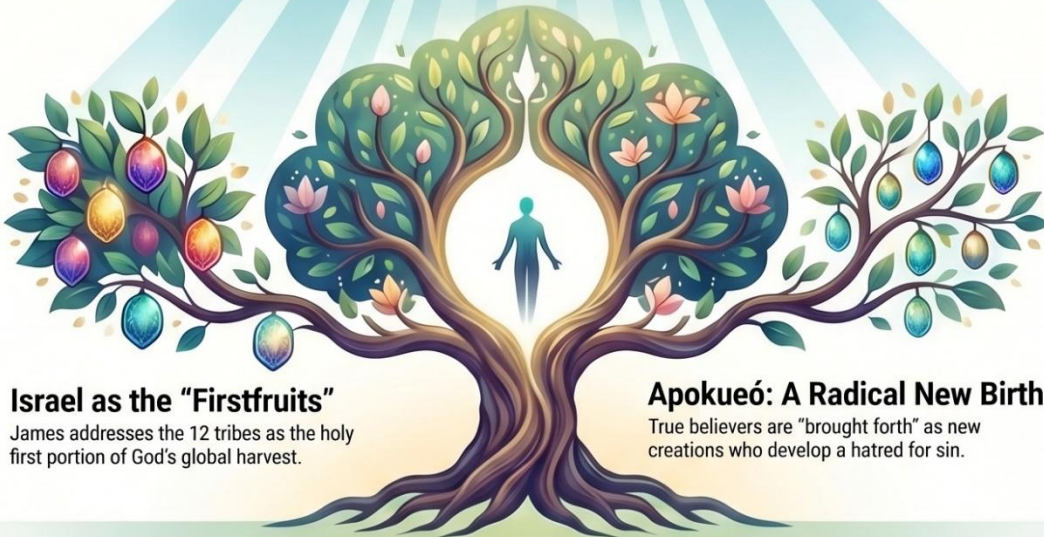
LORD, I pray You train us to take every emotion and every thought and to take it captive to Your obedience so we do not let emotions govern us to foster hurt, pain, or division or speak words that we can't take back. This is one of the hardest things I think to master in the faith. And so, LORD, I know this: independently, apart from You, there's no way this is going to happen. But because of the mercy, the grace, and the faithfulness of Your Spirit, we can have that power, that insight, to step back and to consider the mind of the LORD.

And so, LORD, we need more of You and less of us, more of Your Word and less of our emotions. We need to be builders of the kingdom and not destroyers. And so, LORD, we ask for forgiveness. I think of Isaiah the prophet, who stood before You and said (Isaiah 6:5), **“Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips.”** LORD, we ask for that coal from the altar to take away our iniquity. There's not one person here who hasn't failed in this area. And so, LORD, we humble ourselves, and we ask for Your wisdom, for Your mercy, for forgiveness, and we ask for strength to speak what is right according to Your heart. And we just pray this in Yeshua's mighty name. Amen.

The Wisdom of James:
Rebirth, Restraint, and
the Unchanging God

The Father of Lights is Unchanging

Unlike shifting shadows or celestial cycles, God's character and power remain **the same yesterday, today, and forever.**



Israel as the "Firstfruits"

James addresses the 12 tribes as the holy first portion of God's global harvest.

Apokueó: A Radical New Birth

True believers are "brought forth" as new creations who develop a hatred for sin.

The Discipline of the Tongue and Temper

Swift to Hear **Slow to Speak** **Slow to Wrath**

The Three-Fold Command
Believers must be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath.

Lincoln's "Hot Letter" of Restraint
President Lincoln wrote but never sent a frustrated letter, demonstrating wisdom over emotional venting.

The "Feather Pillow" Warning
Like feathers in the wind, words once spoken can never be fully retrieved or undone.

Human Impulse vs. Spiritual Wisdom

Human Impulse	Spiritual Wisdom
Swift to speak/vent feelings	Swift to hear/studies how to answer
Fleshly wrath	The righteousness of God
"A fool's sport" (doing evil)	"A kind of firstfruits" (holiness)