

## Written Sermons and Exegesis from Exodus 20:18-26

### “Trembling Before Yahweh”

**Read Exodus 19:9-25 and 20:18-21** :: So today we are going to begin our study through the law of Yahweh found in the book of Exodus, particularly here at the end of chapter 20, and then through chapter 21, 22, 23, we'll probably do 24 as an end cap, and then we'll go from there to Exodus 34 where we find the new stones of the Covenant, and the renewal of the Covenant with its obligations.

That's a lot of verses; there's plenty of good material here, and a variety of it, and we are going to take our time and just go verse-by-verse.

I do want to encourage everyone to take the time to go back over the first two lessons in this series where I taught on why our focus should be on the Law of Yahweh given through prophet Moshe. These are lessons you can listen to over and over, so that you build a good foundation in your mind as to why we are taking the time to go through these instructions.

#### Lights, Smoke, and Noise

We'll begin today looking at Exodus 20:18-21. I opened by reading much of chapter 19 as well to get the context, and because what is mentioned in Exodus 20 began to take place in 19, moving into 20 with the giving of Ten Commandments. I'm not going over the Ten Commandments in this series, simply because I taught through them just a few years ago.

In 18 again we read: “All the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain [surrounded by] smoke. When the people saw [it] they trembled and stood at a distance.”

This is a reiteration of what began taking place in Exodus 19, and it happened because Yahweh Himself came down on Mount Sinai. He told Moshe He was coming down, and then twice we are told (in 19:18, 20) that He came down on the top of the mountain. When Yahweh shows up there is thunder, lightning, a thick cloud, smoke, and the sound of a loud trumpet. We read that the whole mountain shook. I thought about trying to duplicate this noise but then I thought, “Matthew, that's silly, you can't duplicate what Yahweh did.”

#### See = Experience

I should point out here that the word saw (in verse 18) is the Hebrew word ra'ah, but it's the same word used at the beginning of the verse where it says “the people witnessed.” This is because the word carries the meaning of experiencing something with your senses. You can ra'ah by seeing, hearing, touching, or even smelling and tasting.

So they experienced what was taking place; they did not *physically see* Yahweh - they witnessed the *effects* of Yahweh coming down on the mountain. You can make a note here at verse 18 to

refer you to Deuteronomy 4:9-19. There we learn at the recounting of the giving of the law, that the people did indeed *hear* the voice of Yahweh but they did not *see* a form. We'll talk more about this in the next lesson, but it's important to recognize that Yahweh showed Himself by voice - with no form - for a reason.

## **Fear Yahweh**

Now the point in all this flare is to show the power and holiness of Yahweh - that He is separated from us. He deals with His people. He includes us in His plans. He mercies us and forgives us of our sins, and He is compassionate, slow to anger, and rich in faithful love. But none of that means He is not a force to be reckoned with. He shows that here. He is to be feared. By feared I mean revered and awed for His greatness and might; a recognition He is the self-existent One, and could wipe us all out if He so desired.

So at the beginning of the Covenant, He gives Israel something to fear. Proverbs 1:7 says, "The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction." In Proverbs we also read that the fear of Yahweh prolongs life, is a fountain of life, and that we should fear Yahweh all the day long. Psalm 19:9 says, "The fear of Yahweh is clean, enduring forever."

Yahweh doesn't come down on the mountain casually and wave at everyone and say, "Hey guys!" He shows up in power; in a way that strikes fear in the hearts of the people. So all this is happening and the people tremble and stand at a distance. They fear Yahweh, and I believe it is appropriate. Listen to what Yahweh tells us through the prophet Isaiah (66:2):

"This is Yahweh's declaration. I will look favorably on this kind of person: one who is humble, submissive in spirit, and who trembles at My word."

We never want to veer too far into fear, as though Yahweh is some kind of ugly monster that scares us, because He's not like that. Too much fear is bad. It must be balanced with love. We serve Yahweh out of both fear and love, but I'm afraid that in our day the balance of many has gotten off kilter because we've veered too far towards the love side. We need to walk back towards the middle, and balance it out with a good dose of the fear of Yahweh. But don't walk past the middle. Don't think fear should outweigh love. Find the middle and stay there as best you can. We serve Yahweh not just out of love and not just out of fear - but out of both.

When I was a kid I knew my dad loved me. He told me pretty much every day, and He'd smile or laugh with me, take care of me, I even vaguely remember him picking me up and hugging me when I was still little enough for that. But... I feared him as well, because he was strict on me in some ways. I knew that doing wrong would get me in trouble. I wasn't allowed to back-talk, pitch a fit, lie, etc. If I did those things I would be disciplined. It wasn't always pleasant, I was learning... but I had both a love for and fear of my dad, in a good way.

Yahweh wants this, and so He interacts with us in *both* ways. He comes down on the mountain with lights, smoke, and noise, *yet* He doesn't hurt anyone. He didn't come down right then to unleash His wrath, because He loved His people He had just delivered from Egypt.

### **Wrath and Love**

Something to take note of here is that, for example, when we want to show how strict Yahweh is we often bring up Numbers 15 where a man was put to death for violating Shabbat. We say, "See, Yahweh means business so straighten up!" We forget though that back earlier here in Exodus, Exodus 16, that a whole bunch of people directly violated Yahweh's command and went out to gather manna on the Sabbath day. What did Yahweh do? He scolded them, but no one was put to death. He told them they needed to understand the Sabbath, and respect the day of rest they'd been given, and then He moved on.

This is important because it shows the balance of Yahweh right here in the Older Testament without going to the Newer Testament. Everyone here knows I love the NT, but I get tired of people thinking we've got to go to the NT to see the patience, mercy, and love of the Creator. No, we see it in Exodus 16, and we also see it in Exodus 19 right in the midst of all the lights, smoke, and noise. Yahweh wants to put fear into the people, but He doesn't do this like a criminal killing a hostage so everyone shuts up and listens. No, He comes down in power, and He speaks with authority, but He does not harm anyone.

### **The Man of Elohim**

Now, let me point something else out here. Notice that while the people tremble and stand at a distance, Moshe does not. Moshe is the one who speaks with Yahweh directly, and in verse 21 we read "And the people remained standing at a distance as Moshe approached the thick darkness where Elohim was."

This doesn't mean that Moshe was not humble. It doesn't mean Moshe did not fear and tremble before Yahweh. He respected Yahweh too, but... he was a special vessel Yahweh had chosen to represent Himself to the people. Exodus 19:9 even says that one of the reasons Yahweh came down on the mountain with such pomp was so the people would hear the voice of Yahweh talking directly to Moshe, and this would cause them to realize Moshe was anointed and appointed, and they would believe Moshe *forever*.

Yahweh has leaders. He appoints them. It doesn't mean they are more saved. It just means they've been chosen and given gifts and abilities to lead. When Yahweh puts a leader in your life, respect them. When you see Yahweh's hand upon someone in a special way, get behind them and flow with that current.

It's sad that in our movement or community leadership is often looked down upon. I see it just about every week on Facebook, somebody says they don't need a teacher because they have the Holy Spirit. Somebody talks about a bad experience they had with a pastor so they start throwing

off on all pastors. Listen, if you run across a bad doctor it doesn't mean all doctors are bad. If you get ripped off by septic tank man it doesn't mean all of us are bad.

When Yeshua ascended up into heaven, he himself gave gifts to men. He gave some to be apostles, others prophets, some evangelists, and others pastors and teachers, and all this was for the perfecting of the saints. We see that in Ephesians 4, and we also see it here in Exodus, in chapter 18 where Jethro (Moshe's father-in-law) instructs Moshe to select from the people able men who fear Elohim, are trustworthy, and who hate bribes. Moshe chose able men from all Israel to lead the people. He set some over thousands, and others over hundreds, fifties, and even tens. There was structure.

If you are doing a job with 5 men, and there's no leader, you're going to run into problems. There can be delegation, appointment, and everyone can be skilled and do work, but there has to be someone to lead. Everyone can't be in charge. The old saying is "Too many Chiefs and not enough Indians." I told brother TJ the other day that you can't get anything done with a committee. You have to appoint someone to lead, and then trust their gift.

### **Don't be Afraid, yet Fear**

Let's look at verses 19 and 20: "You speak to us, and we will listen,' they said to Moshe, 'but don't let Elohim speak to us, or we will die.' Moshe responded to the people, 'Don't be afraid, for Elohim has come to test you, so that you will fear Him and will not sin.'" So the people are afraid, but Moshe tells them not to be afraid, yet he says Elohim has come so that you will fear him. Once again, a balance. Fear can be healthy, but fear without love is unhealthy.

When Yahweh does this to make the people fear Him, He is inviting them worship and serve Him. He isn't cowering over the people to try and make them feel dumb or stupid. He's wanting to teach them something. Moshe says He's come to test you.

The test here is probably the instruction given back in chapter 19:10-15 about getting ready for Yahweh's arrival, but not coming too close to the base of the mountain. There was a 3-day preparation for the arrival of Yahweh. The people were to sanctify and purify by washing their clothes, and even refrain from intimacy. They were told not to go up on the mountain or touch its base, not even an animal. Yahweh gives them an instruction to test the loyalty they just pledged.

### **Fear Produces Obedience**

Now think about the part after that - He does this (vs. 20) "so that you will fear Him and not sin." All the lights, smoke, and noise was there so that the Israelites would remember the occurrence, fear Yahweh, and be motivated to not transgress His law.

Victor Hamilton, in his commentary on Exodus has something great here to say. He writes this: "The fear of God... is to help deter the people from sinning. Moses is not advocating for sinless perfection. But neither is he excusing sin in believers nor suggesting that a little bit of sin is okay... a lapse (where we

fall into sin) must not become the norm, something with which we can be comfortable, and something we can tolerate and condone.”

Yahweh understands we are frail creatures. He even implemented a system of forgiveness and atonement within His law (reminding us that He knows we will sin), but at the same time He wants us to be focused on Him - His power and might - so much, that we live righteous lives. The more time and focus we devote towards Him the stronger we advance in the spirit. The more you pray the closer you will be to Yahweh. Same with time in His word, and meditating upon His commands. You tune in to the frequency of the Spirit (so to speak). To hear what a channel is broadcasting you've got to tune into that channel. If you aren't "around Yahweh" He will not rub off on you.

You get good at what you practice. You start improving on something that you spend time doing over and over. Have you heard people say "I've fell out of practice" when they haven't done something in a long time? It's been a while since I picked up a basketball and played, even though that was a big part of my life in high school. But, it's not important to me now, so I stopped playing or practicing, and I'm certain I'm not as good as I once was.

When we slack or stop reading and studying Torah, when we stop experiencing Yahweh coming down on the mountain with thunder, lightning, cloud, smoke, fire, a trumpet blast... and we take our focus off Yahweh for other things (sports, politics, entertainment, etc.) our walk of righteousness will suffer. All of that other stuff will rub off on you and you'll start putting out what you've taken in. You can't portray Yahweh to others if you haven't spent any time with Him yourself.

Yahweh has come to you today, in this holy convocation, He has come into your life so that you will fear Him and will not sin. Stop making excuses for sin. I know we all sin. I'm not denying that (from 1 John), but don't use that as a crutch. You should never be comfortable in sin, and the way you'll be an over-comer is by making it a habit to eat from Yahweh's table - in some way - every day of your life. We stand at a distance from Him, we tremble before Him, but at the same time we can be close to Him and experience His love if we just submit to His authority.

## **Closing**

In our next lesson we will begin looking at verses 22-26, where Yahweh begins speaking to Moshe about what to tell the people of Israel. This is part of the "book of the law" that we are not to let depart from our mouth.

### ***"Idols vs. Altars"***

**Read Exodus 20:21-24** :: It's an absolute joy to be back here today teaching the Law of Yahweh, especially to a group of people as wonderful as you all. I consider myself blessed to know each and every one of you. As we go through all these verses, remember that this world is

passing away and the desires thereof, but the person who does the will of Yah will live forever. Never forget that. All of this will be over someday, and only what's done for Yahweh will last.

### **Recap + Israel**

We ended last week with prophet Moshe approaching the thick darkness where Elohim was, and now Yahweh calls out to Moshe. Verse 22 tells us He spoke directly to Moshe, but it was to be relayed to the people. These laws are for Yahweh's Israel people, and by Israel I mean both physical as well as the stranger who joins himself to Israel. Whether you have Israeli blood running through your veins, or do not but have said, "I'm going to follow the Mighty One of the Israelites, because what great nation is there on earth who has such righteous statutes and ordinances as this?" Whichever of those two people you are, these laws are for you.

### **From Heaven?**

At the end of verse 22 Yahweh says, "You have seen that I have spoken to you from heaven." Now we've already seen that in Exodus 19 Yahweh came down on the mountain and spoke to the people, so the word heaven here does not mean the ultimate abode of Yahweh, but is probably better understood and even translated "the sky," meaning at the top of the mountain. The Israelites are at the base of the mountain, but they look up and they *ra'ah*, they experience this voice speaking from the sky.

### **Voice vs. Shape**

It's on the basis of the speaking voice that Yahweh speaks verse 23 here. They heard thunder and saw lightning. They heard the sound of the shofar grow louder. They both saw and smelled the smoke, and they felt the mountain shake. They heard the very voice of Yahweh speak the Ten Words there in Exodus 20:1-17, but... they saw no shape or form of Yahweh. The JPS Torah Commentary on Exodus renders verse 23 as, "You yourselves saw that I spoke to you from the very heavens: With Me, therefore, you shall not make any gods of silver, nor shall you make for yourselves any gods of gold."

Notice that the command to not make gods of silver or gold comes on the basis of them hearing Yahweh's voice but not seeing Yahweh's shape. We need to link up another text with this, in Deuteronomy 4, where this same account is remembered and spoken about. Deuteronomy 4 beginning at verse 10, watch carefully:

(10) The day you stood before Yahweh your Mighty One at Horeb, Yahweh said to me, 'Assemble the people before Me, and I will let them hear My words, so that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth and may instruct their children. (11) You came near and stood at the base of the mountain [sound familiar], a mountain blazing with fire into the heavens and enveloped in a dense, black cloud. (12) Then Yahweh spoke to you from the fire. You kept hearing the sound of the words, but didn't see a form; there was only a voice. (13) He declared His covenant to you. He commanded you to follow the Ten Commandments, which He wrote on two stone tablets.

Now notice what he says in verses 15-18: “(15) Be extremely careful for your own good - because you did not see any form on the day Yahweh spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire - (16) not to act corruptly and make an idol for yourselves in the shape of any figure: a male or female form, (17) or the form of any beast on the earth, any winged creature that flies in the sky, (18) any creature that crawls on the ground, or any fish in the waters under the earth.”

Now, a little further down, verses 33, 35, and 36: “(33) Has a people ever heard the Mighty One’s voice speaking from the fire as you have, and lived? ... (35) You were shown these things so that you would know that Yahweh is the Mighty One; there is no other besides Him. (36) He let you hear His voice from heaven to instruct you. He showed you His great fire on earth, and you heard His words from the fire.”

The command to not make an idol in the shape of anything is directly tied to the Israelites only hearing the voice of Yahweh, but not seeing the shape or form of Yahweh. Exodus 20:23 in the HCSB puts it well, “You must not make gods of silver to rival Me.” This is a reiteration of the second commandment in the Ten. Yahweh is not against making images and likenesses of things. What He commands against specifically is the making of and/or bowing down and worshiping of images and idols that attempt to depict Him. Because He did not show the Israelites His shape or form, they should not try to depict what the Almighty looks like, nor make some kind of statue to represent Yahweh on the earth.

Sometimes I see pictures in magazines, or children’s books, or religious memes, or even in secular cartoon comics, depicting the Almighty as an old man in picture. That is a direct violation of this command. Even if a company that prints picture Bibles is trying to do something good, it is not good, because Yahweh Almighty is meant - in this way - to be kept at a distance. This is part of fearing Yahweh, and this is the exact point the second commandment is making. “Don’t try and depict Me. Don’t make something to represent Me and bow down to it. You didn’t see my shape on the mountain, you only heard my voice.”

So now we are beginning to get into specific laws. The first specific is: don’t try and depict what Yahweh looks like, because no one saw his shape when He came down on the mountain and spoke the Ten Commandments.

### **People Have Gotten Off Track**

Now, there is a flip side to this here if we keep reading verse 24. Verse 23 tells us what not to make or how not to worship Yahweh, and then verse 24 tells us what to make or how to worship Yahweh, and this is where it’s going to get strange for a lot of people, because we are so far removed from true worship due to the traditions and doctrines of men.

What I’m about to say I do not say to belittle anyone, but it needs to be said. What is taking place in many churches in the world when a man gets up to speak to the people is not preaching. It is because people have turned the exposition of the Word into a pep-talk that sounds cool, or to

their own rant about something they want to talk about, and that is why people can leave a church over-and-over and never be at a higher level of learning.

These verses we are going over today have been in hand-written scrolls for thousands of years, and now printed Bibles for hundreds of years, and they were once believed by followers of the Almighty, but people are never taught these things because the office of pastor/teacher is becoming more and more rare.

I am here to do my part to try and reverse that. I do not want to be guilty of NOT teaching you Yahweh's law. I want you to leave the assembly each week with something practical to chew on. We are not here to just fellowship; that is part of it, but ultimately we are here to learn how to love and serve our Creator. And we do that by following what He says.

As brother Sandy has said, if your wife likes roses - and you know she likes them - and she does not like carnations, you don't bring home carnations to your wife because it's what *you* want. You bring your wife what *she* likes and wants. We don't serve Yahweh based on what we think He will like. We read what He likes and wants, and then we do the best we know how to put that into practice. Then as we learn better we do better, more and more.

### **Contrast/Altars**

So again, verse 23 says you must not make gods of silver or gold to rival Me, but instead (verse 24) "You must make an earthen altar for Me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, your sheep and goats, as well as your cattle. I will come to you and bless you in every place (all the places, KJV) where I cause My Name to be remembered."

Yahweh tells us here, right after the giving of the Ten Commandments, what He wants his followers to make and how He wants to be served. Make an altar of earth (soil, dirt) and sacrifice clean, domesticated animals on it - both burnt offerings (*olah* - a gift of ascension) and fellowship offerings (*shelamim* - gift of peace/alliance/friendship). He then says He will come to you and bless you... in what place? Not in one place, but in EVERY place where He causes His name to be remembered, recorded (KJV), mentioned (JPS).

The Anchor Bible Commentary, by William Propp says here: "This verse articulates the popular and presumably original notion that one may sacrifice spontaneously to Yahweh wherever one chooses, rather than resorting to a temple and priesthood... An alternative interpretation of 'I cause to be pronounced' (compare the exegetical variant 'you pronounce'). If so, wherever a person calls upon Yahweh's name, it is as if Yahweh has commanded him to do so. Forthwith, Yahweh draws near, and the site becomes a sanctuary and source of blessing." The point he is making is that some manuscripts here from the Syriac and Aramaic have Yahweh saying "in every place you pronounce" instead of "in every place I pronounce." I think either reading is fine, because ultimately it is Yahweh who is causing us as worshipers to remember or pronounce His Name in our speech.

## **Gonna' Get in Trouble**

Now, I already know I am gonna' get in trouble by teaching this, because it already caused a firestorm on a Facebook post where I wrote one small sentence about Yahweh loving animal sacrifices, and then just quoted Exodus 20:24. But isn't this what the verse teaches? Yahweh doesn't want us making images of Him, even if we use precious metals like silver and gold. That's how pagans approach their mighty ones. The way Israelites approach our Mighty One is out of a simple, primitive altar of dirt. Worship to Yahweh doesn't have to be extravagant or complicated. We can find Him in the simple. "Go get some dirt" He says, "and make an earthen altar."

This shows that it's okay to worship Yahweh while exiled, or by yourself, or apart from an established government under Yahweh. I look forward to a genuine "one nation under Yahweh" in the future, but right now Yahweh's people are scattered. We are blessed to have this little fellowship, but we are in a wilderness experience, wandering in our land like strangers and pilgrims in a desert. *I just had a couple stare at me the other day walking through a parking lot. I could tell they were thinking, "Where did this guy come from?"*

## **Your Sacred Ground**

Where Yahweh has placed me is sacred ground, because I have dedicated it to Him. I do my best to maintain His rule of law on my little 3 acre plot. The Shema is on my gates and doorpost. The land lays rest on the seventh year. The first-fruits and firstlings born on my property are dedicated to Yahweh. As Shabbat begins I close the gate and everything stops. We hallow His name in song. My place is one of those "in every place where I cause my name to be mentioned." Your place should be dedicated in the same way. It's holy because you serve Yahweh there. All the world around you may be doing their thing, but you can dedicate your place to Yahweh; you make sure Yahweh's rule of law is followed on your place, no matter how small it is.

People have asked me about the command in Deuteronomy 7 about going into the land and smashing the pagan pillars and idols that you find. That was an initial command to the Israelites who were given the land of Canaan by Yahweh due to the inhabitants being such an evil, debauched people. The land they were given, they were to purify. The way you obey that is not by going up the capital and trying to tear down an obelisk. No, you do that by purifying the land Yahweh has given you. When you plant yourself and your family on a piece of land, get rid of everything there that is not of Yahweh, and then start implementing Yahweh's rule of law on your property. Write them on the doorpost of your house, and on your gates.

The gates of an Israelite's house represent entering holy space. Someone drives up and they know a worshiper of Yahweh lives there, because His very Name is on the gate. They walk up to the door and they see the commandments on your doorpost. You have dedicated your entire life to the Creator, and you're not moving. He is causing His Name to be remembered or mentioned where you live.

## **Abram in Canaan**

These altars hearken back to the worship of Yahweh by the Patriarchs in Genesis. In Gen. 12:6-8 we read, “Abram passed through the land to the site of Shechem, at the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. But Yahweh appeared to Abram and said, ‘I will give this land to your offspring.’ So he built an altar there to Yahweh who had appeared to him. From there he moved on to the hill country east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to Yahweh and worshiped (lit. ‘invoked the Name’) him.” Abram was in the land of Canaan, and idol worshiping Canaanites were there, but when Yahweh appeared to Abram (*ra’ah* - Yahweh came to him and spoke to him) Abram realized the place that he stood was hallowed, so he dedicated it to Yahweh. It didn’t matter what was going on around him. He marked the territory with an altar and pronounced the Sacred Name. What was the altar for? To offer sacrifice.

## **Noah’s Offering**

In Genesis, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are all recorded as building altars to Yahweh in various places they dedicated to Yahweh. Noah’s is one of my favorite accounts. Yahweh tells him to come out of the ark after the flood waters rescinded, and bring out your family and all the animals, and then we read (Gen. 8:20-21) “Then Noah built an altar to Yahweh. He took some of every kind of clean animal and every kind of clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. (21) When Yahweh smelled the pleasing aroma, He said to Himself, ‘I will never again curse the ground because of man, even though man’s inclination is evil from his youth. And I will never again strike down every living thing as I have done.” There was no temple there, there was no government, it was just Noah and his family. They were over their on the mountains of Ararat, which is what we call modern day Turkey, over in the ancient east where all this true religion actually began, and Noah dedicated that ground to Yahweh with an altar, and offered the *olah*, the ascending offering, to Yahweh. He was so thankful Yahweh had brought them safely through the flood waters.

## **Closing, More to Come**

Now, I’ve got so much more to say, and I will continue this next week, but as I close today remember this: this is how Yahweh says He wants to be worshiped. I know people today think it’s crazy, especially in things like PETA and the modern, worldly vegan movement. And I’ll address all of that, and I’ll even talk about how we should not be cruel to animals because they are Yahweh’s creatures too. But at the same time, they - the clean ones at least - were created to be received with thanksgiving. Even in Genesis 1, before the fall into sin, man and women were given dominion over the animal kingdom, to both rule and subdue the animals. We’ll talk more about altars animal sacrifices, eating meat verses vegetarianism, and we’ll just take our time and go through all of it. I’d just like to ask you to read these verses, Exodus 20:22-24 every day and ask Yahweh to help you believe what they say.

## **“The Better Blood of Messiah”**

**Read Exodus 20:22-24** :: So everyone left the service last week, and I went to bed that night meditating on what I had taught. I woke up realizing that it was some pretty heavy stuff. I mean,

it's right from the Bible, from the very voice of Yahweh, but it's so foreign to the traditional, Christian world.

### **Levels of Understanding**

Sometimes I forget that people are at different levels of understanding, and I'm not talking about saved people verses lost people. I'm speaking about that within the community of believers (in Yahweh, the Messiah, the Torah, and even traditional Christians) there exists tiers of knowledge. Think about it like this: on a job you have people who are training, people who've been there 5 years (then 20 years), people who are 30 year veterans, and people who have retired. All work the job (or have worked the job), and all are considered employees and important, but the skill level and understanding varies. *I want to encourage you today to never stop learning and growing. Keep stepping on the next step of the ladder.*

There was a time in my life when I would not have received what I taught last week. But now, I've been in the Torah Community for about 25 years, and I've developed a greater level of understanding, because I stepped out of my comfort zone, over and over again.

I remember once telling Tisha, who was my girlfriend at the time, "I love you, and I believe in Yahweh, but I'll never sacrifice a lamb for Passover." Boy was I ever wrong.

I meant well, and I loved the Creator at that time, but I wasn't ready for that truth just yet. I realize that in here we have all different kinds of people, from all walks of life, with all sorts of backgrounds. I don't want anyone to feel like I'm trying to push something onto them. I'm here to instruct you in the Scriptures, as a teacher, but I'm also here to shepherd you as a pastor, in meekness.

### **A Healthy Church**

You can come to me if you don't understand something, or if you disagree with me about something, and I promise that I will not belittle you. I'm not here to be an authoritarian or domineering. I'm here to guide you in gentleness, and be patient with you as YOU study.

We've got all kinds of different views on things in here, yet we are all here. We don't all see things exactly the same way, but we love each other. There has to be order in an assembly, which means someone has to lead. For whatever reason Yahweh has picked me to lead this little flock at the present time, so there are some decisions I make for the assembly as a whole. That's just the structure of Yahweh, but I do still look to other teachers here for guidance in that process, especially my co-laborers, brothers Jerry Kendall and TJ Martin.

But... what this structure doesn't mean is that I think you have to agree with me because I'm up here. Far too many churches treat the pastor like he can't be questioned or can't be wrong. That's not healthy. I encourage and welcome the open-sharing of ideas and understandings you get from studying Scripture. There are things we must be in agreement on: belief in Yahweh, in His Messiah, Holy Scripture, confession of sin, repentance, a life of obedience... things like that. But

it is okay for us to have different understandings at times because we aren't all on the same step of the ladder. It's okay to give people time to grow, and during that growth process be assured that your relationship with Yahweh and Yeshua is secure while you are learning.

### **A Touchy Subject**

The subject of animal sacrifices is so touchy with Christians, because most of us have been taught (whether directly or subconsciously) that if we slaughter an animal *in a religious sense* we are denying the work of the Messiah - his death on the cross. It's like we are saying, "What Yeshua did for us is not sufficient, so we have to sacrifice this lamb to make up for where he lacks."

**I believe that is a very wrong understanding of everything inside of this subject**, and I think that the reason Christianity doesn't properly understand this issue is due to beginning with the premise that "the law has been abolished in Christ," - therefore, they haven't spent much time (if ANY) studying the Torah, much less the sacrificial system within the Torah.

### **Two Separate Things**

You need to realize that the *blood of animals* and the *blood of Messiah* are two separate things that work in two separate ways. Think of a cup and a fork; two different tools for two different jobs. Both do what they are designed to do, but do not do what the other tool does. (*Getting something to drink vs eating spaghetti.*)

The blood of animals never took away sin on the eternal, heavenly scale. Hebrews 10:4 says "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin." So that is true, but what's missed here is that the author of Hebrews is contextually speaking of *eternal redemption* in the heavenly, not temporal purification in the earthly. You can read Leviticus 16 and see that the blood of animals DOES forgive sin, so we have to believe both Leviticus and Hebrews, and not pit one against the other.

Believe it or not, right here in Hebrews, the author actually explains the harmony for us, in Hebrews 9:11-14.

Now the Messiah has appeared, high priest of the good things that have come...

There's a variant reading here, in that some manuscripts of Hebrews read "high priest of the good things *that are to come.*" You'll get different readings in different Bibles, depending on which manuscripts they are pulling from. I think both readings hold weight, because in one sense the Messiah brought in the realization and fulfillment of good things at his first coming, but we await complete realization and fulfillment of all the good things at his second coming. Let's keep reading:

In the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands (that is, not of this creation).

So the author is referencing the heavenly tabernacle, which is greater and more perfect than the one built by human hands back in the book of Exodus. That tabernacle in Exodus was commanded by Yahweh. He was particular in those instructions, and in Exodus 40 when it was all put in place the glory of Yahweh filled that tabernacle, so much so that Moshe was unable to enter into it due to the thick glory cloud that rested upon it. So that tabernacle was indeed great, it's just that it's not AS great and perfect as the tabernacle in heaven. One is great, the other is greater.

### **A Pattern**

In Exodus 25:9 and 40 Yahweh tells Moshe twice to make the tabernacle after the pattern/design/model Yahweh showed him while he was on the mountain. When prophet Moshe went up the mountain, and entered the cloud, and spent 40 days and 40 nights with Yahweh, he was entering another realm. There Yahweh didn't just tell him what to do, He brought heaven down on the mountain and showed him a pattern, and escorted him around the heavenly tabernacle.

I was never taught about the heavenly tabernacle growing up, but it's there in both Exodus and Hebrews; both books speak of it. The earthly is a copy and shadow of the heavenly, but the archetype or original is the heavenly. The earthly is great, but the heavenly is greater.

### **Good and Better**

An illustration would be that chocolate ice cream is good, but vanilla is better. Some of ya'll won't agree with me on that... and you'd be wrong... LOL - But you get my point. We aren't talking here of bad and good, we are talking about great and greater.

Nothing Yahweh commands is bad, it's all good, but some commands or concepts are greater than others. Even in the law, which is all good, we have this concept of lighter and heavier commandments. The Sabbath, for example is pretty heavy, but it's not as heavy as saving life. If someone's life is in danger on the Sabbath we are allowed to break the Sabbath to save their life. We learn this in the teaching ministry of Yeshua where he performed acts of healing on the Sabbath.

### **By His Own Blood**

So in Hebrews 9, the greater tabernacle is not made with human hands, and it's not of THIS creation. So we go back to Hebrews 9... Verse 12 says:

He (speaking of the Messiah from verse 11) entered the holy of holies once for all, not by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, having obtained ETERNAL REDEMPTION.

The contrast here is blood of clean, sacrificial animals vs. the blood of Messiah. When Yeshua entered the holy of holies, he wasn't entering the one on earth that the Aaronic High Priest entered into once a year on Day of Atonement. He entered the one in heaven, based upon the shedding of his own blood. There is a way that the blood of Messiah - which refers to his death -

obtains ETERNAL redemption. His blood does not purify our flesh, and really, it's purpose is not to cleanse our sins in the earthly realm. It's more powerful than that.

I want to be careful here, because I'm not saying we aren't forgiven right now based on the work of Messiah. We are, but the right-now forgiveness we have in Messiah is a forgiveness that allows us entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven and to be a partaker in the greater, more perfect tabernacle (*John 3:16 death is second death*). To enter the earthly tabernacle, the blood of an unblemished, clean animal was needed for purification of sin. But that animal blood doesn't work when it comes to inheriting the heavenly. Verse 13 and 14...

### **Lesser to Greater**

For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who are defiled, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, (14) how much more will the blood of the Messiah, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to the Almighty, cleanse our consciences from dead works to serve the living Almighty?

This is a key verse. The argument presented here by the author is one from the lesser to the greater. If THIS is true, then THAT is true.

It's like when Yeshua told the Jewish leaders that if they will loosen their animal on the Sabbath day to take it to the watering hole, then why shouldn't a daughter of Abraham be loosed on the Sabbath day? (Luke 13:15-16) - Both are true, but there's a greater and lesser. A human being's life is greater than an animal. Catch this... that doesn't mean the animal's life isn't important, it just means there is a hierarchy of importance, and that greater importance is only seen if the first thing has importance to begin with. (*"Worth more than whole burnt offerings"* Mk. 12)

The only way the author of Hebrews ties the knot on his argument is **if the animal sacrifices actually accomplished something**. If the animal sacrifices did that, how much more does the blood of Messiah do this? Do you see that? Hebrews 9:13 says that the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling ashes of the heifer (that comes from Numbers 19) actually purify the flesh. That's what Yahweh ordained and set up for ritual purification from sin and an allowance into the earthly tabernacle. Well... the Messiah is a man not an animal, and not just any man, but a perfect man; he's the second man Adam, the new creation, the sinless Son of Yahweh, so **how much more** will his blood purify, not the flesh, but the conscience. Not the external but the internal.

Our sin problem goes much deeper than our flesh. We sin because we have an internal problem and struggle, and the blood of goats and bulls was not designed by Yahweh to help that problem. It never was, even back in Exodus and Leviticus. But Hebrews isn't denying the validity of animal sacrifices. They do something, even the guilt and sin offerings. They just aren't sufficient to forgive our sins on the eternal scale.

## **No Competition**

Why is this important to realize? Well, when we grasp this we realize that when we slaughter a lamb for Passover, or offer up a burnt offering for thanksgiving, or a peace offering for fellowship between believers and the Most High, we aren't trying to compete with what Yeshua did. What Yeshua did for us is greater than what any burnt offering could do. Hebrews 9:23-24 says:

Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be purified with these sacrifices (the animals), but the heavenly things themselves to be purified with better sacrifices than these. (24) For the Messiah did not enter a sanctuary made with hands (only a model of the true one) but into heaven itself, that He might now appear in the presence of God for us.

The Messiah ascended into heaven, he entered the heavenly tabernacle, he presented himself to Yahweh, and Yahweh was pleased with his heroic act of bravery and sacrifice, for willingly laying down his life for us. So it's not first about what we do for Yeshua as his disciples, it's first about what Yeshua did for us as the Savior Yahweh sent who fulfilled everything laid out for him to do.

He sacrificed his life so that we could have life, and while we experience that forgiveness now, what he did for will be most realized in the age to come. We are all still going to die in this life, but we have the promise of resurrection, ultimate forgiveness, and perfection (no more sinning), based upon the perfect life, death, and resurrection of Yeshua.

## **Closing**

Does that help? I sure hope it does, and you can spend more time reading, studying, and meditating on all this. I didn't get all this in one night, it took years of studying and meditation. Yahweh was patient with me in bringing me to a better understanding, and He will be just as patient with you.

I realize I haven't talked anymore about Exodus 20:24, but I will next time I teach. I just thought this sermon was needed to make sure people realize that I am in no way trying to add to what Yeshua did. That's not even possible actually. Yeshua gave his life as a ransom for many, and we could not have been ransomed any other way.

## ***"The Genesis Offerings"***

**Read Exodus 20:22-24** :: Today I'd like to develop a fuller understanding of verse 24 by beginning to look at texts in Scripture that speak of the building of altars and the offering of animal sacrifices upon those altars. We are going to look at approved examples of this, apart from there being a tabernacle/temple at the location, and also apart from their being a Levite priest involved.

When you come into the understanding that Yahweh's law has not been abolished, and that Yeshua really meant what he said in Matthew 5:17-19, you will at one time or another encounter someone who will ask you, "Well, what about the sacrifices? Are you going to offer up animals since you don't believe the law was done away with?"

It's become the pattern in the Torah Community to answer with something like this, "Well, if you *actually knew the Torah*, you would know that I *can't* offer up animal sacrifices without a temple and Levite priesthood." I've heard this spoken in some form or another by many people in our movement for the last 25 years. It's been repeated so much that we have taken for granted that it's true. It gets us off the hook quick, and those giving this objection usually just accept it and move on to the next objection.

I want to suggest to you today that this answer is at best a partial-truth, as well as an oversimplification of the topic. This answer does not take into account everything the Bible teaches us on the subject. When we only use parts of the Bible to establish and build our beliefs we come away with *some* truth, but that means we also come away with some falsehood.

### **The Examples in Genesis**

Whenever I hear discussions on this topic, all of the approved examples of altars and sacrifices in the book of Genesis usually get swept under a rug and forgotten. With one big swoop it's said that, "Well, that was before the temple was built and priesthood was active, so it's not relevant. Ever since the temple and priesthood were established, we need them both to properly offer sacrifices."

What's interesting is that in our community, when it comes to a host of other laws, we are always pointing people BACK TO GENESIS to show them the validity of Torah and its establishment prior to Moshe and Mount Sinai. We take people to Genesis 2 to show them the Sabbath. We go to Genesis 7 to show the clean and unclean designations. Genesis 9 gives us the death penalty for murder, and how we are to abstain from eating/drinking the blood of an animal. We go to Genesis 17 to show circumcision or Genesis 31 to show ritual impurity laws. I could give more examples, but this is sufficient to show that when we want to really prove our point about the law being the way of life for the people of Yahweh, we don't *dismiss* Genesis, we **USE** Genesis.

That is - UNLESS - we are talking about animal sacrifices. Then, we come up with an excuse for why this Genesis practice is not relevant to us today, and personally... I think it's because we don't *really* want to be obedient here, due to the fact that we are already ostracized enough by traditional Christianity for our beliefs and practices, and the slaughtering of animals on an altar will only add to our being made fun of, or being called some crazy-fringe group that believes ridiculous things. Yet, a simple-honest reading of Genesis shows that men of Yahweh built altars and offered up sacrifices on those altars, apart from either a temple or Levite priesthood, and Yahweh was pleased with such sacrifices.

## The Altar

In Genesis alone there are about 13 uses of the word altar. Our English word altar stems from the Latin language, from the words *altare*, meaning “something high or a mound,” and there’s probably also a link to the Latin word *adolare*, having to do with “burning and honor.” The Hebrew word for altar is *mizbeach* (miz-bay-ach), meaning a raised mound, and it’s related to the Hebrew word *zabach*, having to do with the slaughter of a clean, domestic animal for sacrifice. So what we have with the word altar is an elevated place (Ex. 20:24 says it can be made of earth/dirt) on which appropriate animals are offered in sacrifice to Yahweh.

We haven’t gotten to Exodus 20:25-26 yet, but I’d like to read it here to just give a little more context. Verse 25: “If you make a stone altar for Me, you must not build it out of cut stones. If you use your chisel on it, you will defile it.” So an altar could be made out of uncut stones (just natural stones stacked), and then verse 26: “You must not go up to My altar on steps, so that your nakedness is not exposed on it.” So although altars were elevated places, they weren’t extremely high. Yahweh didn’t want them so high that you had to walk up steps to get to the top, and that had to do with keeping one’s nakedness covered (modesty). So an elevated altar would be up off the ground, but not too high to reach with you standing beside it.

## First Mentions

The first mention of an **altar** in Genesis is twice in Genesis 8:20 where right after Noah and his family exited the ark, he built an altar to Yahweh and offered clean animals in the form of burnt offerings. It says there that Yahweh smelled the pleasing aroma and made a promise not to ever destroy the whole earth by flood again.

But... that’s not the first mention of someone offering an animal sacrifice. The first explicit mention of animal sacrifice goes back to Genesis 4:4 where it’s said that Abel offered also the firstling of his flock with the fat portions thereof, and Yahweh had regard for Abel and his offering. Theories have been presented as to why Cain’s offering was rejected. One old theory says that Cain brought deficient produce rather than the first-fruit and best. The Septuagint has Yahweh telling Cain in Genesis 4:7, “If you offer correctly but do not divide correctly, have you not sinned?” That does sound like Cain made the offering, but didn’t rightly divide his first and best from the rest of his produce.

The main point here is that animal sacrifice goes back *at least* to the time just after the exit from the Garden of Eden. Abel somehow knew to offer not only the firstling of his flock but also the fat portions thereof. This would be the fat around that inner organs (as well as the fatty tail, liver, and kidneys) that we are commanded not to eat (recorded later in Leviticus 3:9-11), but the firstling offering itself is an edible sacrifice. That detail is recorded later in Deuteronomy 15:19-20; the firstling offering is a peace offering or fellowship sacrifice.

How did Abel know? It had to have been taught to him, either directly by Yahweh or by his father Adam, who would have been taught by Yahweh and then handed it down to Abel. We know it was approved, because Yahweh had regard for Abel’s offering, which means he turned to

it (*sha'ah*) or gazed upon it in delight. So here in Genesis 4, as well as with Noah in Genesis 9, we see men offering sacrifice. We might say that the land they had dedicated to the service of Yahweh was their temple, but there was no actual tabernacle or temple there at either sacrifice. There were also no Levites there, because Levi (the son of Jacob) hadn't even been born.

### **Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob**

If we move from there to Genesis 12 we have Abram building two altars in different locations, and calling upon Yahweh's name, then in Genesis 13:18 he builds another altar. Then, in Genesis 22, Abraham (his name is changed by now) builds an altar upon Mount Moriah on which to sacrifice his son Isaac. I'm not going to get into the subject of Yahweh asking Abraham to sacrifice his son (that's for a whole other teaching), but suffice it to say that Yahweh stops Abraham from sacrificing Isaac, and then provides a ram for Abraham to offer as a burnt offering. This is Genesis 22:13-14. Abraham named that place Yahweh Yireh meaning Yahweh Will See (to it) or Provide. Still no temple or Levites.

In Genesis 26:25, Isaac builds an altar in Beersheba, calling upon Yahweh's name, and in Genesis 33:20 Jacob builds an altar in the Canaanite city of Shechem, naming the place El-Elohe-Yisrael. Then in Genesis 35, Jacob builds another altar in Bethel.

This is a brief overview of altars and offerings in the book of Genesis. There is no temple, and there is no Levite Priesthood. The man Melchizedek as a Priest of the Most High is mentioned in Genesis 14, but interestingly enough there is no altar or sacrifice mentioned there, only that Abram paid Melchizedek a tithe from the spoils of war he had taken when he rescued his nephew, the kidnapped Lot. There is bread and wine mentioned in conjunction with Melchizedek, so that could be a reference to a grain offering, as well as a drink offering. But no animal or altar is mentioned.

I do want to add here that there is a mention of a drink offering in Genesis 35:14 after Yahweh appears to Jacob and changes his name to Israel, giving him a promise. Jacob-Israel sets up this stone marker and he pours a drink offering on it, as well as anoints the stone with oil. Drink offerings in Scripture were given of wine, poured out as an expensive gift to the Creator, much like the firstling best of the flock or herd.

So why don't we lean on Genesis when it comes to altars and sacrifices? Why do we dismiss what is taught in this book of beginnings? It appears that the Patriarchs understood what Exodus 20:24 teaches - an altar of earth on which burnt offerings and peace offerings are offered - at the places (plural) Yahweh causes his name to be pronounced or memorialized, where he comes and blesses one of His followers.

### **Our Current Circumstance**

It seems to me that the state in which we find our selves now is more akin to Genesis than to Leviticus, Numbers, or a theocracy. During the wilderness wanderings the Israelite community had a movable tabernacle and a Levite or Aaronic priesthood. After settling in the land they had

something more stationary, and although there were problems and sins among the tribes, they did establish a theocracy and active Priesthood.

We don't find ourselves in that state today. We have our small congregations scattered across the earth, but we are more similar to families of worshipers, like Noah's family or Abraham's family. Why then would it be wrong to worship Yahweh the way Noah or Abraham did? Was it once pleasing, something Yahweh turned His face towards in approval, but now it's a reproach? Did Yahweh completely change His mind? Does He now disdain something that He once called a sweet-smelling savor?

See, what we run into here is: if we do not accept and practice what Genesis teaches us in the area of altars and sacrifices, then we really don't have any business trying to show traditional Christians the Sabbath, tithes, clean and unclean animals, and no eating of blood from the book of Genesis.

### **Tithes Too**

Let me harp on the tithes for a second here too. According to various texts in Deuteronomy, the tithes and monetary offerings were also to be brought to the place where Yahweh chooses to place His name. That's in Deuteronomy 12 and 14. So what is said about the animal sacrifices is also said about the tithes. Does that stop people from tithing or giving an offering, or do people understand that in the current circumstance in which we live we give tithes or offerings in the most appropriate way possible? In other words, we do the best we can or have the ability to do.

Preachers won't balk at the tithes and offerings, but boy will they balk at the altars and animal sacrifices. I've heard so many people bring up Genesis 14, where Abram paid a tithe to Melchizedek, after they were told that tithes were under the law. They say, "Wait a second, tithes are in Genesis before the law." Well... what about animal sacrifices?

A lack of consistency is the sign of a failed argument. You can't say that it's okay to give a tithe or make a monetary contribution today, to an elder or to a congregation, and then turn around and say it's not okay to build an altar and offer a burnt offering or peace offering upon it. You've got to either accept both or reject both. Really, the only option is to accept both, because if you reject both you end up rejecting Holy Scripture and that brings on even bigger problems.

### **Ancient/Old Paths (Jeremiah 6:16)**

We've got to get back to worshiping Yahweh in the way He desires to be worshiped. A big part of that is realizing that livestock and produce are real wealth, and to give of the best of those things over to Yahweh is showing Yahweh that we genuinely appreciate His blessings and activity in our lives.

I'll talk more about this in a soon-future lesson, but clean, domestic animals were created to be received as food with thanksgiving by them who believe and know the truth. These animals are

sanctified by the word of Elohim and prayer. That doesn't mean we treat these animals cruelly. Some of them may never be slaughtered for meat or for sacrifice.

I have chickens out in my back yard for the purpose of eggs. I didn't buy them to slaughter. It would be okay if I bought them for that purpose, but while they're not being used for meat I take care of them. I let them free graze, and I feed them black-oil sunflower seeds (which they love). Same with any goats or sheep or cows one may have. We take care of these domestic animals while they are with us. Even a cow that is raised for slaughter shouldn't be abused prior to slaughter. But when slaughter day comes, we must realize that Yahweh created that cow to be used for meat. It's okay. And if we offer a firstling bullock for a peace offering, or a male goat for a burnt offering, Yahweh is pleased with that gift we are bringing him.

I've had people bring me a gift of appreciation before. Some people have brought me a bottle of wine, and I've even had some people bring me beef sausage as a gift. When we bring that food gift to each other, it's a sign of appreciation and friendship, and it's no different when we bring Yahweh the same. It's a sign of thanksgiving. It's something of worth to us and we are giving it up for Yahweh, just to show Him that we are thankful for His provisions.

It's not always easy. When my blueberry bushes outside start making around May to June, and them big, plump blueberries form... I sometimes wonder: if I pick all the first and best ones off the bushes to give away to an elder or share at a feast... will I have any left for myself? But guess what? Yahweh always provides. When we give away what He tells us to, He always blesses us with plenty. Proverbs 3:9-10 says, "Honor Yahweh with your possessions, and with the first produce of your entire harvest; then your barns will be completely filled, and your vats will overflow with new wine."

Now... in the next lesson we will progress in our study to looking at approved examples of altars and animal sacrifices after the establishment of Israel in the promised land as well as the continued Levite priesthood. There are examples of righteous men building altars in local areas (apart from the temple) and making offerings without the aid of a priest. I think Genesis is sufficient to show this, but I don't want to leave any stone unturned. I look forward to continuing this study journey with you.

### ***"Manoah, David, and Naaman"***

**Read Exodus 20:22-24** :: Last week we spent time going through the approved examples of altars and animal sacrifices in Genesis. This week I'm going to move into approved examples *after* Israel settled in the promised land and had an established place of worship (in a specific city, with the tabernacle) as well as an established priesthood (Levite).

This is significant, because the objection generally given is that Genesis allows it because it was prior to the establishment of a temple or priesthood. After the temple and priesthood are

established (they say), there is a command to no longer offer sacrifices on an altar outside of the one place Yahweh designates, and apart from an official Levite priest.

I think that even if the argument carries some weight, we still currently find ourselves in more of a Genesis circumstance rather than an established theocracy; so I think the approved examples in Genesis are sufficient. But today's lesson will move on to show the approval of this same practice in the time period of Judges, 2 Samuel, and 2 Kings. The approved examples we will look at are: Manoah, David, and Naaman.

## **Manoah**

We'll begin with Manoah. Who is Manoah? Do you mean Noah brother Matthew? Lol... no, I'm speaking of the man in Judges 13 who lived in a town named Zorah (about 8 miles west of Jerusalem; Easton's Bible Dictionary), from the family or tribe of Dan. He's not talked about much, but what will help everyone is to speak here the name of Samson - everybody knows Samson (the strong guy). Manoah was the father of Samson.

## **Back-Story**

Judges 2 teaches us that as long as Joshua was alive the Israelites as a whole served Yahweh. Even after his death, as long as the elders who had personally known Joshua were alive, service to Yahweh as a whole continued. After that generation died out, the next generation forgot Yahweh. Forgot doesn't mean they had no idea who Yahweh was, but rather that the fear of Him and love for Him dwindled away due to the people's desire to live like the pagans around them.

The pattern in Judges is: the children of Israel would fall away into false worship, Yahweh would raise up a leader to save them from their sins, the people would change, but once the leader died the people would relapse. This shows us how important it is to have a righteous leader or leaders in a community. Righteous leaders set an example for a community and keep wickedness at bay.

Judges 13 (*Manoah*) begins at a time period of transgression for the nation as a whole, but always remember, that doesn't mean there weren't individual righteous people still inside the nation. It's the same when the nation is righteous as a whole, there are still wicked people even if a minority in those good times.

## **Manoah's Offering**

During one of these bad times Manoah's wife was barren, but an angel of Yahweh appeared to her and told her she would have a son, and he'd be a Nazarite from his birth. That's the child we know as Samson. The angel told her that their child would begin to save the Israelites from the hand of the Philistines. She went and told Manoah about her encounter, and in Judges 13:8-10 we read this:

Manoah prayed to Yahweh and said, "Please Adonai, let the man of Elohim you sent come again to us and teach us what we should do for the boy who will be born." Elohim listened to Manoah, and the Angel of Yahweh came again to the woman. She was

sitting in the field, and her husband Manoah was not with her. The woman ran quickly to her husband and told him, “The man who came to me today has just come back.”

Manoah follows his wife back to this “man of Elohim,” and asks about what had been told to his wife. After this “man of Elohim” (the Angel sent by Yahweh) tells Manoah basically the same thing he’d already told Manoah’s wife, Manoah says:

(Vs. 15) “Please stay here... and we will prepare a young goat for You.” (Then in vs. 16) the Angel says to him, “If I stay I won’t eat your food. But if you want to prepare a burnt offering, offer it to Yahweh.’ For Manoah did not know he was the Angel of Yahweh.”  
(*Not getting into who is the Angel.*)

So verses 19-23 reads: Manoah took a young goat and a grain offering and offered them on a rock (Ex. 20:25; unhewn stone) to Yahweh, and He did a wonderful thing while Manoah and his wife were watching. (20) When the flame went up from the altar to the sky, the Angel of Yahweh went up in its flame. when Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell facedown on the ground. (21) The Angel of Yahweh did not appear again to Manoah and his wife. Then Manoah realized that it was the Angel of Yahweh. (22) “We’re going to die,” he said to his wife, “because we have seen elohim!” (23) But his wife said to him, “If Yahweh had intended to kill us, He wouldn’t have accepted the burnt offering and the grain offering from us, and He would not have show us all these things or spoken to us now like this.”

The main point here is we have a *Danite* offering up a burnt offering and grain offering on a rock, in the town of Zorah. There is no temple there. There is no Levite priest there. There is only a husband and wife, and an Angel. One may say, “Well the angel told him to do it,” but the narrative doesn’t read as though the offering would have been something out of the ordinary. The Angel just tells him, “If you want to offer an offering, go ahead and offer it to Yahweh.” Manoah doesn’t balk. There’s no indication in the text that this was otherwise forbidden, and Yahweh accepts the offering.

Granted, this was during a time when Israel was handed over to the Philistines, and maybe thus didn’t have a central location of worship or even a completely active Levite priesthood. But... isn’t that a point? Aren’t we in a similar circumstance today? If Manoah could do this during a time period of semi-captivity, why couldn’t I?

### **David’s Offering**

My next case-example is from 2 Samuel 24 (parallel in 1 Chronicles 21) with King David. Some may think, “*Well... King David could offer sacrifice away from the central worship location and without a Levite... because he was the king.*” But, David being a king wouldn’t allow him to just casually do something that was forbidden. According to Deuteronomy 17, a king was required to hand-write out a copy of the Torah, and read in it everyday. He was to set an example of law-keeping for the kingdom.

## Census Back-Drop

The back-drop here is David's sin in numbering the warriors in Israel. Some have wondered why David's census is condemned. It has to do with David's distrust in the power of Yahweh and David's reliance on the arm of flesh. David was taking pride in the vast number of his army, and finding comfort in his military strength rather than trusting that the battle is Yahweh's (2 Chr. 20:15), and Yahweh can save by many or by few (1 Sam. 14:6). So at the beginning of the chapter we find that Yahweh's anger burned against Israel (due to David's distrust in Yahweh and trust in man), and that anger stirred up David to number the troops.

*SIDE-NOTE:* Many have been puzzled by the 2 Samuel 24:1 and 1 Chronicles 21:1 parallel texts where we are told that (1) Yahweh stirred up David to number Israel, and (2) Satan stood up against Israel and incited David to number the troops. I saw a video the other day where one guy said that this "contradiction" caused him to lose faith in the Bible and in the Almighty.

There are a few good harmonies here; one popular one is that Yahweh is the primary and Satan is the secondary; Yahweh used or allowed Satan to do the incitement (think of the story of Job). A better harmony (I think) is that the Hebrew word "saw-tawn" can refer to human adversaries or even opposition or wrath. The very Angel of Yahweh is called a satan in Numbers 22:22, 32, and in 1 and 2 Samuel, the Philistines refer to David as a satan (1 Sam. 29:1-4), and David calls the sons of Zeruah satans/adversaries (2 Sam. 19:22). The NET bible says in a footnote on 2 Samuel 24:1 "The adversary in 1 Chr 21:1 is likely a human enemy, probably a nearby nation whose hostility against Israel pressured David into numbering the people so he could assess his military strength."

I personally think a good harmony is that the wrath of Yahweh is referred to as an adversary (satan) against David here (Ellicott's commentary takes this view; "It thus appears that the adversary of our text, the influence hostile to Israel, was the wrath of God."); Yahweh released his hand of mercy from David, and that was Yahweh's wrath inciting David to do what his flesh wanted to do. David wasn't trusting the power of Yahweh, but instead looking to the arm of flesh for military strength.

## David Repents

Afterwards David realizes what he's done and says "I've sinned greatly," but Yahweh punishes by sending a plague upon Israel and 70,000 military men died. That's a big plague, and Yahweh accomplished this through his Angel. The Angel of Yahweh was about to destroy the city of Jerusalem too, but Yahweh had mercy and told the Angel, "Enough, withdraw your hand now!"

When the Angel stopped, he was standing at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. David sees the Angel standing there, and pleads for the people. Let's read here in 2 Samuel 24:18-25

Gad came to David that day and said to him, "Go up and set up an altar to Yahweh on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite." (*Note: Araunah the Jebusite's threshing floor wasn't where the Tabernacle or Priesthood was located and active right?*) (19) David went up

in obedience to Gad's command, just as Yahweh had commanded. (20) Araunah looked down and saw the king and his servants coming toward him, so he went out and bowed to the king with his face to the ground. (21) Araunah said, "Why has my lord the king come to his servant?" David replied, "To buy the threshing floor from you in order to build and altar to Yahweh, so the plague on the people may be halted." (22) Araunah said to David, "My lord the king may take whatever he wants and offer it. Here are the oxen for a burnt offering and the threshing sledges and ox yokes for wood. (23) My king, Araunah gives everything here to the king." Then he said to the king, "May Yahweh your Elohim accept you." (24) The king answered Araunah, "No, I insist on buying it from you for a price, for I will not offer to Yahweh my Elohim burnt offerings that cost me nothing." David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for 50 ounces of silver. (25) He built an altar to Yahweh there and offered burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then Yahweh answered prayer on behalf of the land, and the plague on Israel ended.

So we see that King David, a Judahite, offered acceptable sacrifices to Yahweh apart from the tabernacle and Levite priesthood, at the threshing floor of a Jebusite. It was accepted by Yahweh as a prayer of repentance. *(Some say he was commanded; commanded against Torah?)*

What's interesting is the the parallel account of this in 1 Chronicles 21 reads: (29) At that time the tabernacle of Yahweh, which Moshe made in the desert, and the altar of burnt offering were at the high place in Gideon, (30) but David could not go before it to inquire of Elohim, because he was terrified of the sword of the Lord's angel. (22:1) Then David said, "This is the house of Yahweh Elohim, and this is the altar of burnt offering for Israel."

David was invoking Exodus 20:24. Yahweh was causing His name to be remembered on the threshing floor of this Jebusite; It was turned from an ordinary place to a holy place.

### **Naaman's Dirt**

The last example today is found in 2 Kings 5. In this chapter there is a commander in the Aramean army named Naaman (he's a non-Israelite). Yeshua even mentions Naaman, calling him "the Syrian" in Luke 4:27. Naaman was a brave warrior, but he had this incurable skin disease (KJV "he was a leper").

There was a young Israelite captive, a girl who lived with Naaman and his wife, and served the wife in the home, and she had been telling Naaman to go to the prophet of Yahweh in Samaria, because Naaman was seeking a cure for his skin disease. Naaman goes, and takes 750 pounds of silver, 150 pounds of gold, and 10 changes of clothes with him, but Naaman first goes to the king of Israel, and the king tears his clothes and thinks Naaman is crazy.

Well, there's this prophet named Elisha who hears about the encounter and sends a message to the king, telling him to have Naaman come and see him. Remember, kings are powerful (and can be spiritual men), but the closest person to Yahweh in the nation is always the ordained prophet or prophetess. So Naaman goes, and stands outside the door of Elisha's house, but Elisha doesn't

come out - he sends a messenger to answer, and the messenger tells Naaman, “Go wash 7 times in the Jordan river, and you’ll be healed.” Huh?

Naaman gets upset because he wants the prophet to come outside, call on the Sacred Name, wave his hand over the leprosy, and receive his spotlight miracle. So Naaman starts to leave in a huff, but his servants stop him and say, “Master, if the prophet told you to do a great thing wouldn’t you have done it? He’s told you to do something easy... why not do it?” Naaman walks down to the Jordan, dips himself 7 times, and BAM, he’s healed.

So Naaman goes back to Elisha’s house, and knocks on the door (*I bet that was some knock!*). He says this (2 Kings 5:15): “I know there is no Mighty One in the whole world except in Israel. Therefore please accept a gift from your servant.” But... Elisha refuses the money even after Naaman urges him to take it.

Now... what comes next is peculiar if we don’t know the Scriptures that have come before 2 Kings. I don’t think it will be too strange to all of you, because we’ve been learning about the altar of earth and the sacrifices offered on it from Exodus 20:24.

After Elisha refuses to take the money from Naaman, Naaman says (2 Kings 5:17), “If [you won’t take the gift], please let two mule-loads of dirt be given to your servant, for your servant will no longer offer a burnt offering or a sacrifice to any other mighty one but Yahweh.”

The text is explicit in telling us that Naaman wanted to offer a burnt offering (animal sacrifice) to Yahweh, but why does he want the dirt? Some commentators try too hard here and miss the obvious; he asks for a pile of dirt, enough of it that it has to be pulled by two mules, because he wants to build an altar of earth. He sees the land on which he is standing as sacred, due to the prophet and due to his healing, and he wants to take some of that land back with him to his home town and dedicate a place in Aram to worship Yahweh.

E.W. Bullinger commentary here says: “Earth = soil. Naaman may have heard of Exodus 20:24.”

Jamieson-Faucett-Brown commentary says in part: “Two mules’ burden of earth - with which to make an altar (Ex. 20:24) to the God of Israel.” (*Ellicott and Benson get this right as well*)

The JPS Torah Commentary on Exodus 20:24, page 116 (in part) says: “Altar of Earth, One made by heaping up a mound of earth in an open field. It was just such an altar that the Syrian commander probably had in mind, as told in 2 Kings 5:17, when he requested two mule loads of the earth of the land of Israel to take back home with him. there, in Damascus, he could offer sacrifices on the earthen altar.”

Elisha grants Naaman’s request in verse 19 by saying “Go in peace.” That’s a phrase used in the OT to say, “Yes you may.” (Ex. 4:18; Jug. 18:6; 1 Sam. 20:42) So Elisha respected Naaman’s desire to build an altar and sacrifice to Yahweh, and to do so in a foreign land, without the

tabernacle or Levite priesthood. The prophet must have understood Exodus 20:24 in the manner I've been presenting in these lessons.

As a side note, in verse 18 Naaman asks for an exemption. When he goes back to Aram, he knows he is the king's right hand man. So when Naaman goes into the temple of Rimmon (a Syrian deity of wind, rain, and storm; BDB Lexicon) he knows he will have to bow. He seeks to be pardoned in his bowing, suggesting that it is an outward gesture only, and not from the heart. Elisha's "Go in peace" from vs. 19 covers this request too, so the prophet recognizes the heart or spirit over the letter, something Yeshua later comments on (Mt. 5; 23), and that people think only came into view in the NT.

### **Closing**

Building an altar shouldn't be done haphazardly, and offering an animal shouldn't be done casually. There should be thought and prayer put into each, and the performance of each should be done in a reverent manner; it's holy space and time when doing so. But that doesn't mean it shouldn't be done, or that it's unlawful to do so because we are in Georgia, USA. Now, I don't have any dirt from Elisha's property laying around, but I have consecrated this property to the service of Yahweh. We've also consecrated the land where our assembly sits to the service of Yahweh. I realize literally obeying Exodus 20:24 sounds strange to modern people, but since when does anything we do for Yahweh not sound strange to someone? May Yahweh help us be obedient to all of His word.

### ***"Leviticus 17 and Goat-Demons"***

**Read Exodus 20:22-25; Leviticus 17:1-9** :: No matter what position you take on any given subject in Scripture, you will find verses (if you're honest) that do not fit as well as into your belief system as you would like them to. Different people study the Bible and come to different conclusions, oftentimes because different verses stick out to them as being most important.

It all goes back to hermeneutics. That's a big word isn't it. Hermeneutics. *It sounds like someone named Herman got tics on him or something.* This word refers to the laws or rules of interpretation. How we go about interpreting and understanding Scripture, what methods we use, how we arrive at what a text not just says, but means.

We do this by asking questions (who wrote this, who was it written to, when was it written), and keying in on words, phrases, and context (both surrounding text and culture). Other good rules are to interpret the unclear in light of the clear, and the few in light of the many. So if you have 10 texts teaching one thing clearly, you don't overturn those texts with 1 verse that seems to teach something else but isn't as clear.

Also, in Bible study, you are to take direct commands over examples. Examples of people (Hebrews) doing things can be approved or disapproved; approved examples (where Yahweh

gives His approval of something a Hebrew does) are strong, but direct commands from Yahweh are always paramount. There's other things to consider, but these are some of the big ones.

The two texts I began with are both direct commands. The Exodus text is Yahweh speaking at Mount Sinai just after the giving of the Ten Commandments. I don't think it's a difficult text. Make an altar of earth, sacrifice burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, and He'll come to you and bless you in all the places He causes His name to be proclaimed. When we look through Scripture both before and after this, we find approved examples of men doing this and being blessed (just like He said).

### **The Apparent Contradiction**

The Leviticus text we read seems to go contrary to this on its first reading, but it's also a direct command spoken by Yahweh. Is Leviticus 17 prohibiting sacrifices apart from the Tabernacle/Temple and Levite priest? It's a sobering text, because it includes the clause, "that person must be cut off from his people" when going against what is commanded. How do we understand this in light of what we've learned from Genesis, Exodus, and the approved examples we looked at last week with Manoah, David, and Naaman, where they received direct commands from Yahweh through an angel or prophet about making a private altar and sacrifice?

Well, I think what we've went over so far is many and clear, so I decided to slow down and go back over Leviticus 17, and study it in more depth. We don't have to throw our hands up, or pit one text against another. We've went over the others in detail, so let's take some time to go over this text in detail.

### **Exegesis of Lev. 17**

Lev. 17:1-4 "(1) Yahweh spoke to Moshe: (2) Speak to Aaron, his sons, and all the Israelites and tell them: This is what Yahweh has commanded." (3) Anyone from the house of Israel who slaughters an ox, sheep, or goat in the camp, or slaughters it outside the camp, (4) instead of bringing it to the entrance to the tent of meeting to present it as an offering to Yahweh before His tabernacle - that person will be charged with murder. He has shed blood and must be cut off from his people."

It's very serious here with the murder charge. I've actually had someone send me this text a few years' back when they found out I slaughtered a lamb for Passover. So... they must have viewed my actions as a violation of this command.

Now, let's remember the context here. This was first spoken to Israelites in the wilderness. They were, at this point, camped at Mount Sinai, still early on, in the second year of their wilderness wanderings. You can see this by reading the last chapter in Exodus and the first chapter in Leviticus; one moves right into the other.

They are commanded here, in the wilderness, DO NOT slaughter an ox, sheep, or goat without first bringing it to the entrance of the Tabernacle - why? - (vs. 4 tells us) in order to present it as an offering to Yahweh. The key is to make certain the animals are being brought to Yahweh.

### **Slaughter vs. Sacrifice**

Now... what many people miss here is the word slaughter. The Hebrew word here is *shachat*. This word is not limited to a religious, ceremonial sacrifice which carries regulations for not only the killing, but: who can eat it, how long it can be eaten of, what particularly is to be done to the animal while slaughtering or afterwards, etc.

Think here of the Passover lamb (you have to be clean to slaughter it, no bone may be broken, cook it whole, only eaten one night - in one house, burn remains in the morning, etc.) vs. slaughtering a cow let's say to store meat in a freezer. Both are clean animals, and both are slaughters, but only the Passover is technically a ceremonial sacrifice or we might say, a "special slaughter."

A few examples of the word *shachat*: Genesis 37:31 where Joseph's brothers killed a kid of the goats so they could dip Joseph's coat in it and act like he'd been killed by a wild animal. Numbers 11:22 the word is used of killing flocks and herds to daily feed the people of Israel. 1 Kings 18:40 when Elijah slew the prophets of Ba'al, and in Jeremiah 9:8 it's used metaphorically as a tongue which speaks deceit being like an arrow which is *shot out* (the shot arrow pierces to kill).

This word can refer to a religious, ceremonial sacrifice, but that's not what the word means in itself. The word means to kill or slaughter, and since a ceremonial sacrifice has to be slaughtered, those sacrifices fall under the category of *shachat*, but *shachat* covers more than just these ceremonial sacrifices.

In Jewish history, there were two Rabbis who took opposing views on this (early second century A.D.). Rabbi Akiva held that the Leviticus 17 law was only regulating technical sacrifices and not all slaughters. Rabbi Yishmael held that Leviticus 17 prohibited all sacrifices including common slaughters. Akiva believed a later text in Deuteronomy 12 showed that general slaughterings were always permissible locally. Yishmael believed that Deuteronomy 12 rescinded a temporary restriction - while in the wilderness bring all slaughters to the tabernacle; when entering the land you can now slaughter and eat within your gates.

It should be noted as well here that in one sense, all slaughtered animals are sacrifices, in that the animal has to lose it's life - even in a general slaughter - for the provision of food for a person or persons, and even with general slaughters, the blood and fat is still not to be eaten (ref. Leviticus 17:10-14 and Leviticus 7:22-27).

## Why Shachat is Important

Leviticus 17:3 uses the word *shachat* when speaking of what was to be brought to the entrance of the tent of meeting. According to the overall meaning of this word, it wasn't just ceremonial sacrifices that had to be brought to the tent of meeting in the wilderness, it was all domestic animals that would be slaughtered in the wilderness. I think Rabbi Yishmael was right.

Here's the point... if you're going to use this text to teach against, let's say, slaughtering a lamb for Passover, then you have to equally use this text against slaughtering a cow on your property or a local farmer's property for the purpose of putting the meat in your freezer to last you and your family for a while. See the point? (*But there's more. What's the reason for this command?*)

## The Primary Reason

Lev. 17:5 "This is so the Israelites will bring to Yahweh the sacrifices they have been offering in the open country. They are to bring them to the priest at the entrance to the tent of meeting and offer them as fellowship sacrifices to Yahweh."

Now the word *zebach* is used, which is a stronger word for ceremonial sacrifice. The point of the command to bring all oxen, sheep, and goats to the tabernacle in the wilderness is so that no matter what domestic animal is slaughtered, it will be brought to Yahweh (whether a technical ceremonial sacrifice or a general slaughtering sacrifice). No slaughtering will be left out or questioned if they are all brought to the entrance of the tent of meeting. Any slaughter that is done for religious, ceremonial sacrifice is covered.

Lev. 17:6-7 "(6) The priest will then sprinkle the blood on Yahweh's altar at the entrance to the tent of meeting and burn the fat as a pleasing aroma to Yahweh. (IMPORTANT) (7) They must no longer offer their sacrifices to the goat demons that they have prostituted themselves with. This will be a permanent statute for them throughout their generations."

Now... why in the world are goat-demons all of sudden mentioned? Lol - First, it's important here to notice the continued reason for the command. Remember, verse 5 says the command was so the sacrifices that the Israelites had been offering *in the open country* would be brought to Yahweh, verse 7 gives us more clarification of verse 5 by saying that the command is put into play to prohibit the Israelites from continuing to offer sacrifices to *the goat-demons*.

## Goat-Demons

The goat-demons (devils, in the KJV) is the Hebrew word *saw-eer* (*seireem*, plural) and has to do with a shaggy or hairy he-goat, oftentimes in Torah just used for a goat. For example, one chapter earlier, in Leviticus 16:27, it speaks of the "goat for the sin offering." That's *saw-eer*. So why is it translated as devils or goat demons here in Leviticus 17:7?

The Bible Background Commentary (by John Walton, also Matthews and Chavalas) says here, "The term most likely refers to satyrlike demons who were believed to haunt the open fields and uninhabitable places."

This is tied into what many scholars believe Leviticus 16:8 refers to (on the Day of Atonement). For instance, in the CEV this reads: "where I will show you which goat will be sacrificed to me and which one will be sent into the desert to the demon Azazel." The JPS Torah Commentary on Leviticus suggest there is a thematic relationship of Azazel to the goat demon of Leviticus 17:7.

Among Israel, this is a carry-over from the worship in Egypt. Think here to the episode of the golden calf in Exodus 32. The Israelites were trying to worship Elohim through the image of a calf. Well, the same was done in Egypt through the image of a goat. The male shaggy goat was seen as a representation of a demon deity, and thus the Egyptians would erect statues of goats across their nation. This is actually where the popular image of the devil (with horns, tail, a goat-tee, and cloven feet) comes from. Some cultures called the goat-demon Pan. Our English word panic comes from the Greek word *panikon* (lit. "pertaining to Pan") and actually goes back to the fear struck in one's heart upon the appearance of the goat-deity Pan.

This false worship had become engrained among the Israelites due to their long stay in Egypt (*you can take the Israelite out of Egypt, but you can't always take Egypt out of the Israelite*), so they'd often perform syncretism in their slaughterings, blending the worship of Yahweh with the worship of some form of an deity-image from Egypt. Thus the golden calf in Exodus 32, and the goat-demons here in Leviticus 17. In Joshua 24:14, after Moshe was passed, Joshua still urges the Israelites to: "Get rid of the elohim your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates and in Egypt, and worship Yahweh." Later in 2 Chronicles 11:15 we find that Jereboam not only erected golden calves (from the original writing in 1 Kings 12), but also goat-demons which were worshiped at the high places.

### **Temporary Restriction**

Now Leviticus 17:7 says the Israelites "must no longer offer their sacrifices to the goat-demons," showing that this was still going on to some degree in the wilderness. The command here in verses 1-9 to bring all slaughterings to the entrance of the tent of meeting, would stop (or at least slow down) the false worship inherited from Egypt.

I'd like to suggest today that this was a temporary restriction, put in place in the wilderness, in order to teach the Israelites, and get them in the habit of slaughtering or sacrificing to Yahweh apart from any image depicting him.

### **Tee-Ball Illustration**

I used to help TJ coach in a kids' softball league, and I remember one time we coached the young kids, like ages 5-7 I think. I remember one little girl in the outfield picking wild-flowers during

the game, and a ball hitting her right in the head. Bless her heart... and the parents often thought their kid was the star player.

One thing we were allowed to implement was a tee, where you put a tee on home plate and set the softball on it stationary where the little kids can learn coordination and hit the ball. The tee is there to teach them, but it doesn't stay in the next level up, because you graduate to being able to hit a moving ball.

### **What is Permanent?**

I think that's what is going on here in the wilderness; a temporary legislature whereby Israel - as little children who have just exited pagan Egypt - are learning how to slaughter properly. In the future they would graduate, and be able to do the same slaughtering (loyal to Yahweh) privately at times, due to a long journey, or persecution, dispersion, or distance away from the central worship location.

Some object to this view on the basis of Leviticus 17:7b where we read "This will be a permanent statute for them throughout their generations." What this objection fails to recognize is what exactly the permanent statute is. What is permanent is NOT bringing all slaughters to the entrance of the tent of meeting, but THAT Israel not offer their sacrifices to the goat-demons they have prostituted themselves with. That's the connection from 7a to 7b.

According to Deuteronomy 12:15-25, after entrance into the land there would exist the situation where a person was far away from the central location of worship, and they were allowed to slaughter and eat meat within their gates, but make sure not to eat the blood (or the special fat portions). Granted, that chapter does say to bring all the burnt offerings, sacrifices, *tithes*, and personal contributions to the one, central place of worship, but again - that is specifically when all the tribes are at rest in the land and a theocracy is in order. (*But let me make a quick point on Deuteronomy 12:21 - and I'll continue to study this further - the phrase "IF you are too far from the central worship location, THEN you can slaughter of your herd and flock" sounds like permission is given in one situation that would normally be carried out another way if one was in close proximity to THE PLACE. If you could always do this, the If/Then clause doesn't make sense.*)

### **The Best Harmony**

The best harmony I can see at this time is that in cases when we are not at rest in the land under a theocracy, and are either in a Genesis like environment (too far, far away), or a semi-captivity, private sacrifices can be made.

### **Temporary: Exodus or Leviticus?**

I think this makes sense of the altar of earth (Exodus 20:22-25) built in the places (plural) that Yahweh puts his name. Some may think I'm stretching Leviticus 17 to say it's temporary, but let me remind you that this is what other people do with Exodus 20:24 - they say it was temporary. Same with the sacrifices in Genesis - they say they were temporary until the tabernacle/temple

and Levite Priesthood. So I guess you will have to decide which argument holds more weight. *To view Genesis and Exodus 20 as temporary or Leviticus 17 as temporary.* I've given you my reasons in these lessons for viewing Leviticus 17 as temporary, and a big reason is that this view allows for the approved examples of private sacrifices to Yahweh, commanded by angels and prophets (in various locations) to breathe freely.

Yahweh's acceptance of Manoah's offering in Zorah, David's offering on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, and Naaman's offering in Damascus (along with others like Gideon, Saul, Samuel, and a group of Israelites in Mizpah). All these can be understood best by letting Genesis and Exodus 20:24 control the general rule of law, and Leviticus 17 be a restriction in the wilderness for teaching purposes.

### ***“Answer Questions and Meat-Eating”***

**Read Exodus 20:22-25** :: This will be my last lesson on these verses. There is more material to cover in Scripture on this, but for now I think I've exhausted the knowledge Yahweh has given *me* at this present time. I'm sure I'll be adding to this study as I grow in age and wisdom, but after today I feel like it's time to move on to the next verse in our Torah study.

#### **The General Questions**

Today we'll begin with some questions I've gotten. First one: "Brother Matthew, are you saying we should still be offering animal sacrifices today, on our personal properties?"

Yes, that's exactly what I'm saying, so long as your property is dedicated to the service of Yahweh. I believe it is permissible to offer sacrifices as individual believers, as expressions of thanksgiving, appreciation, and fellowship. I'm seeing this as an action of worship, something along the lines of prayer and fasting.

"What kinds of private sacrifices are permissible?"

The command in Exodus 20:24 specifies the burnt offering and peace offering. The burnt offering (*ola*) is entirely consumed on the altar, and the worshiper has nothing to partake from it. It's a total gift to the Almighty, telling him you are thankful for what he has done (and was sometimes used for seeking Yah's favor and averting judgment). This is what Noah offered after he got off the ark. It appears to me though that the blood was still drained from the animal, and then covered over with dirt (Lev. 17:13; Deut. 12:16, 24). It's possible that in some cases the blood is placed on the altar and burned, but of this I'm not yet sure.

The peace or fellowship offering (*shelamim*) was an edible offering. The blood is still not partaken of, and the fat portions are burned on the altar. The rest of the animal is eaten by people in covenant with the Creator, as a sign of fellowship with him and each other. According to Leviticus 19:5-8, most peace offerings were only to be eaten for two days, and the remainder

burned on the third day. With the Passover (which is a peace offering) it is to only be eaten on one night and the remainder burned early the next morning.

Although grain offerings aren't specified in Exodus 20:24, Judges 13 does show that Manoah privately offered a grain offering along with his burnt offering, with Yahweh's approval. These were also edible offerings, but I haven't studied in depth enough to know exactly how these are to be done. You can read about the grain offerings in Leviticus 2 (with the Levite Priest involved), but they were also done apart from a priest in Genesis 4 with Cain. I realize Cain's offering was rejected, but it's only because he didn't divide correctly or offered inferior product. Even though his offering wasn't sufficient, Yahweh did tell him - "If you do well, won't you be accepted?" - which showed that he could bring an appropriate grain offering, just as Abel brought an appropriate peace offering.

"What about sacrifices for sin?"

I haven't seen any approved examples of private sin (*chata't*) offerings or guilt (*asham*) offerings. These are the two remaining classes of offerings mentioned in Leviticus, and the only categories that deal with guilt and sin in Torah. (*It's a mistake to assume all animal sacrifices were for sin.*) For now, I won't be making any of these, but I want to make two things clear: (1) I don't believe sin sacrifices are a bad thing (Yahweh implemented them, so they are good), and (2) I don't believe the animal sacrifices for sin **ever** took care of sin on the eternal redemptive scale. Only the blood of the Messiah does that, according to Isaiah 52-53, the book of Hebrews (among other Scriptures).

If the Temple still stood, and the Levite priesthood was active, I would personally have no problem offering a sin sacrifice. Mary brought one (with Joseph), when she went to the Temple in Luke 2, and she had recently birthed Yahweh's Messiah (knowing who he was, Luke 1). Paul participated in the sacrifices for four men concluding a Nazir vow in Acts 21, and those sacrifices (according to Numbers 6) included an unblemished year-old female lamb for a sin offering. The sin offerings purified the flesh not the conscience, pertaining to the earthly not the heavenly.

"But are you **encouraging** people to start doing these burnt, peace, and grain offerings?"

Yes, but with care and caution. I'm encouraging these personal, private sacrifices, because I think Exodus 20:24 commands them, and I see approved examples in Genesis, and in Judges through 2 Kings, but I'm encouraging that they be done properly. Don't just go out and try to do something before studying. Study the Scriptures, look at the approved examples, go back over the teachings I've done, and if you decide to do a burnt or peace offering, do the very best you can. I'm not saying you'll get it all right the first time. I've learned better and more appropriately over the years how to keep the Passover. Just do your best and always remain open to correction from the Scriptures, and from other well-studied believers.

I want to make the point here that I've not found any examples of women in Israel offering up these sacrifices by themselves. All the approved examples I've found have been men doing so, and mostly the heads of the households. I'm not saying women can't be present, I just don't see any Scriptural precedent for a woman offering a sacrifice by herself. I would encourage the sisters who want to participate in this to wait until you are around a righteous male servant of Yahweh who is offering sacrifice, and then seek to help in whatever way you can.

"What about making the altar? How should I do this?"

It's clear to me that altars in the Bible were built for the purpose of offering sacrifice on. I'm not sure the animal was placed on the altar and slaughtered. It may have been slaughtered, blood drained out (see 1 Samuel 14:31-35), animal died, and then either the whole animal (burnt offering) placed on the altar to be consumed by fire, or in the case of a peace offering, the fat portions that belonged to Yahweh were burned on the altar. Again, as we continue to study, we will learn and grow, but we must begin somewhere.

I've been asked about how to exactly make an altar. I don't think it's complicated. I think one of the main points in Exodus 20:24-25 (about the altar of earth or stone) is that its building is simple and primitive. It's either a mound of dirt or mound of uncut rocks. It's up off the ground, but not too high to be able to reach it while standing.

### **Did Yahweh Not Command Sacrifice?**

Let's move now to Jeremiah 7:22-23 which I've written on at length, but will hit the highlights here. Yahweh speaking, "For when I brought your ancestors out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak with them or command them concerning burnt offering and sacrifice. (23) However, I did give them this command: Obey Me, and then I will be your Mighty One, and you will be My people. You must walk in every way I command you so that it may go well with you."

I've had a few people ask me specifically about this text since I've been teaching these lessons. Some people try to use this verse to teach that all the passages in the Bible that speak about animal sacrifice and eating meat are later interpolations added by the lying pen of the scribes. It's strange how they just accept Jeremiah 7 as authentic, but any passage that doesn't go along with what they believe they claim, "lying pen of the scribes," which actually is also a horrible reading of Jeremiah 8:8. (I can send you my written exegesis on Jeremiah 8:8 if you're interested.)

Did Yahweh command about animal sacrifices when He brought the Israelites out of Egypt? Well I'd say He did! The whole exodus was based upon the sacrifice and blood of the Passover lamb (Ex. 12), and that has to do with the initial deliverance from Egypt. Then we have Exodus 20:24 where He commands it again at Mount Sinai immediately after the giving of the commandments. So what in the world is going on in Jeremiah 7?

If you go back and read all of Jeremiah 7, you'll see that YHWH is reprimanding the Israelites for their overall disobedience. He's calling them to amend their ways, not trust in the Temple for their salvation, stop oppressing their widows and orphans, and get rid of syncretism in their worship. Oftentimes the people of Israel used tangible items as somewhat of a good luck object. Here they figured if they had the Temple, and could come and offer sacrifice, they would be alright.

I'm reminded of how some people view the sinner's prayer and baptism. In their mind, they think that saying a prayer and being baptized makes everything else they do okay. A person could pretty much do whatever they wanted to do and just trust in their prayer/baptism. Prayers of repentance and baptism are beautiful things according to many Scriptures, but to use them as a replacement for a life of holiness is filthy.

In His anger Yahweh is telling the Israelites to keep their animal sacrifices they are giving to Him for themselves. He goes so far to say that He did not command them about burnt offerings and sacrifices when he delivered them from Egypt. What Yahweh is doing is speaking *comparatively* here (this over that; main thing vs. minor thing). The meaning is that His overall commandment is obedience. He doesn't want disobedience coupled with bringing a sacrifice to the Temple.

Comparative speaking can be found in other texts of Scripture. Think about Genesis 45:8 where Joseph told his brothers, "It was not you who sent me here, but the Almighty." Yet Joseph's brothers were the ones who threw him into a pit and sold him to some traders which eventually led to his time in Egypt. Joseph's point though is comparative; although his brothers did all this to him, ultimately it was Yahweh who had it planned out for a greater purpose. There are many examples of comparative speech in Scripture.

Sacrifices mean nothing if they aren't brought from a pure heart. What Yahweh ultimately desires is obedience. When we serve Him, and then bring a sacrifice, it is acceptable. Just like with our repentance and baptism. None of us live perfectly without sin, but when our lifestyle is one of overall obedience and dedication, we can indeed look back and trust our repentance and baptism.

People who attempt to use Jeremiah 7 to speak totally against animal sacrifices haven't read Jeremiah closely, and they have thrown out the commands given by Yahweh in Exodus 12 and 20. It can be a fearful thing, because some are leading people astray from the inspired Scriptures and direct commands of Yahweh.

### **When Did Meat-Eating Begin?**

I'd like to now address the issue of meat-eating vs. vegetarianism. I feel led to address this, because the more I study about animal sacrifices: all the commands, approved examples, and the phrase "a sweet smelling savor to Yahweh," I believe we've inherited some false beliefs about vegetarianism being preferred in the beginning over meat-eating.

I don't believe a follower of Yahweh has to be a vegetarian (as some try to push either gently or forcefully), because in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 Yahweh says in his commands, "of these (clean animals) you may eat." So this at least shows meat eating is a righteous option.

But, I also think it's a sin for a believer to be a complete vegetarian, because the Passover lamb is commanded to be eaten each year, and if a believer with animals was doing the appropriate offerings, their firstborn from the flock would also have to be eaten by them (Deut. 15:19-23) as a fellowship offering. So those are areas where the eating of meat is commanded.

So why do some Bible believers push being vegan or at least say it is preferred and the original way? They claim the original diet in the garden of Eden was vegan. They base this on Genesis 1:29-30 where Elohim says (in part), "I've given you every seed-bearing plant, and every tree whose fruit contains seed. This will be food for you and the animals. I've given you every green plant for food."

### **SDA Man at Church**

One man came to our assembly years ago and sat in the back, he approached me afterwards and told me about his Seventh Day Adventist background, and then told me he wanted to discuss some things with me the next time he came, so I invited him to come early the next week and we'd talk. That next week he came back and I found out he wanted to talk about being vegan, from Genesis 1:29-30.

One thing he stressed from this text was that before the fall (of Adam and Eve) mankind only ate fruits and vegetables, and that this must mean it's best and preferred if we abstain from meat and eat only fruits and vegetables. So I asked him to turn over to Genesis 2:25 and we read where (also) before sin man and woman walked around naked and unashamed. I told him, "If we are going to say we must be vegan because of Genesis before the fall, then we would have to say we also must go around naked because of Genesis before the fall." He look at me for a few seconds and said, "I don't think we're ready for that teaching brother Matthew." Lol

### **Genesis 9**

In my younger years of Bible study I had this idea that meat-eating didn't begin until Genesis 9, after the flood, where Yahweh told Noah that fear and terror for you will be in the animals, and every living creature will be food for you. I've taught on this text in light of the dietary law before, so I won't do that here, but you can listen to that other teaching online where I show that Genesis 9 isn't saying Noah was allowed to eat pig, or camel, or wolf. (*I know that sounds funny, but the conclusion some make has to allow for you to eat the family dog.*)

I later came to the conclusion that Genesis 9 wasn't the first time animals were eaten, based primarily on two earlier texts in Genesis, Genesis 4 (Abel) and Genesis 7 (Noah). Genesis 4 shows Abel making an offering of the firstling of his flock with the fat portions. Knowing the whole Torah, I knew that firstling offerings were edible offerings. Abel tended his flock and

made appropriate sacrifices, even separating the fat portions. I don't believe all this was done only to throw away the meat.

And with Noah, Elohim told him how many clean and unclean animals were to be taken on the ark, which was **before** the flood. The clean and unclean designations are seen in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 to specifically be about what may and may not be eaten by a follower of Yahweh. I believe it was the same for Noah. One may try to argue that it was just for sacrificial purposes before the flood, but that dismisses the understanding that one of the main purposes of the sacrifices was to eat the meat. All animal sacrifices, minus the burnt offering, were eaten by someone.

So I came to see the Genesis 9 text as contrasting the eating of meat with the prohibition of eating the blood of an animal. Such contrasts are throughout the Torah, where Yahweh says, "You may do this, except for this." He's not introducing law, he's emphasizing something of importance. He also tells Noah in Genesis 9 to, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." That doesn't mean that command didn't exist previously, it did, back in Genesis 1:28. He's reiterating for emphasis.

### **Genesis 1 and Eating Meat**

So what about Genesis 1:29-30? Was the original diet, before the fall, vegan? Well, I used to think so. Even though I back-tracked my view on eating meat to Genesis 4, I still thought that meat-eating was introduced after the fall into sin. I no longer believe that, due to the command in Genesis 1:26-28 given to mankind to rule over and subdue the fish of the sea, birds of the sky, animals on the earth, and crawling things. The words rule and subdue are harsher terms in Hebrew than we get in English, and carry the idea that animal death existed before the fall. I do not believe animals were created immortal. I believe they died natural deaths and part of ruling and subduing included sacrificing an animal and using it for meat.

The purpose of this sermon is not to go into this in detail, but you can read a PhD dissertation paper online by Joshua John Van Ee titled, "Death in the Garden: An Examination of Original Immortality, Vegetarianism, and Animal Peace in the Hebrew Bible and Mesopotamia" from 2013. He details the Hebrew words for rule/dominion (*radah*) and subdue (*kabash*) to be military conquest or ruling over servants terms; not words that speak of caring or tending something, but warfare or killing. If you want a condensed version Ben Stanhope has a chapter on it in his book titled "Misinterpreting Genesis" (chapter 11). He also did an 18 minute video teaching you can find on YouTube, and I can send to anyone who'd like to watch.

I now see Genesis 1:29-30 as giving additional information on what could be eaten. In other words, Genesis 1:26-28 says to rule and subdue the fish, birds, animals of the earth, and crawling things. This would be done by killing some for protection, using some for clothing (think Genesis 3:21 and the coats of skin/leather), and others for eating. In Genesis 1:29 Elohim additionally says he's given the plants and fruits for food.

### **The Genesis 3 Curses**

Note here that in Genesis 3 when the curses are spelled out after the fall, there's no indication that animal death comes into being. Human death (from dust you are and to dust you will return), the ground being cursed, pain in child-bearing, and the serpent (Satan) are all mentioned and cursed, but there's nothing about "now the animals will start dying."

### **Paul to Timothy**

This also makes sense when comparing what Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 4 where he was warning Timothy about doctrines of demons. One was forbidding people to marry (probably a command of celibacy), and the other was commanding to abstain from meats that Yahweh created to be received. We know the meats that we may receive as food from Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. They're sanctified by the Word and prayer. But when were they created? In Leviticus 11? No, back in Genesis 1-2. Paul says they were **created** to be received as food, but I used to tell people they weren't created to be received, only fruits and vegetables were. I believe I was wrong.

### **Adam Wasn't Biologically Immortal**

As a brief side note, I do not believe there was human death before the fall, I think that's the point of Genesis 3 and Romans 5, but I don't believe mankind was created immortal. I believe their lack of death was made possible by the tree of life in the Garden. This is why Genesis 3:22-24 reads: "Yahweh Elohim said, 'Since man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil, he must not reach out, and also take from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever. (23) So Yahweh Elohim sent him away from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. (24) He drove man out, and east of the Garden of Eden He stationed a cherubim with a flaming, whirling sword to guard the way to the tree of life.'" So the way man would be sustained to live forever is not from his biological properties, but because he was close to and could partake of the tree of life in the Garden.

So... I believe animal sacrifice is the ancient form of worship in Scripture, and the eating of meat is a blessing in Scripture, and this has all existed since the very beginning of mankind. I don't believe it was something introduced after the fall of man into sin, or after the flood, and I actually believe it's healthier for us humans to have a well-rounded diet consisting of meats, fruits, nuts, and vegetables.

### ***"Modesty: for Men and Women"***

**Read Exodus 20:25-26** :: Today we move into the next verse in our study through the Torah, specifically here in the book of Exodus, but we'll continue to branch out into every book of the Law, as well as the Prophets when looking at these commandments.

Exodus 20:26 is what we'll begin looking at today, and it's not a complicated verse, but there is a wealth of knowledge we can pull from it. When an Israelite built an altar on which to offer animal, grain, and drink offerings, he was not to build the altar at such a high elevation that steps

were needed to reach the top. The altar was up off the ground, but the top was able to be reached by simply standing up beside it.

The reason steps were prohibited had to do with making sure a man's nakedness was not exposed. Remember, this law pertaining to altars and offerings is not a law given only to the Levite priesthood. This was a law for all the men of Israel. I haven't seen anywhere in Scripture where the women of Israel built altars and offered sacrifices by themselves, so I think the command here in Exodus 20:26 against exposing nakedness is primarily to the men, although it stands in principle to both male and female.

During the time this command was given, the Hebrew men wore robes or tunics, oftentimes without pants or breeches as undergarments. If a man had to climb up high steps to offer sacrifice, the community or family participating in the offering might see the man's nakedness, turning a holy act into a lewd act.

### **Outward Modesty**

Modesty - in outward appearance - is the command here. Modesty is more than just the way we dress, but it is not less than the way we dress. In general modesty has to do with being humble, kind, quiet, and simple. But modesty also extends to dressing in a way that doesn't expose one's nakedness. According to this text, the men of Yahweh are to dress in such a way that their nakedness is not seen by others.

### **Warped Teaching**

Modesty in dress isn't taught much anymore, especially to men. In some of the more fundamental churches they do harp on the women, but mostly in the wrong way. I've seen some churches demand that the women's sleeves reach to the wrist, and the skirt or dress reach the ankles. Most of time these churches place unscriptural restraints on women, and make them feel like sex objects instead of people who portray the image of the Almighty.

These same churches often have men who dress in tight pants or shirts (which is a double standard)... and it's framed from the pulpit that it's always a woman's fault if a man is lusting after her. They constantly tell the women to stay covered so the men don't lust, instead of placing the blame on the person doing the lusting. It is true that a woman can purposefully dress in such a way that they want an outside man to lust after them, but it's also true that a woman can be dressed beautifully while modest and decent, and a lustful man will still gawk at her.

### **Sound Teaching**

I want to get away from all of this modern, Christian fundamental ideology. I'm not here to harp on the women and leave the men out. I'm not here to preach church standards to you either. I think some preachers get their kicks by making up rules and telling other people what to do. I'm not interested in any of that. What I want to do is teach you from the Bible that as men and women of Yahweh we are called to be set-apart, and that includes in how we look on the outside.

Outward modesty is about honor, dignity, and privacy. Parts of our body are not meant for everyone to see. Outward modesty doesn't always mean there has been a change of heart, but wherever there has been a change of heart, outward modesty will be found. The reason is because when Yahweh changes a person's heart, He begins to write His law upon it (your inner-person). This means your desires change, and they change toward wanting to be obedient to the law of Yahweh. This includes a desire to be obedient to the laws that deal with outward appearance, which sometimes means our dress - face, hair, and apparel - change. We don't desire to fit in with the world. We only desire to please our Creator.

What this Divine work produces is a person who thinks, acts, and looks different from the world - not because they looked at the world and did everything opposite, but because they began looking at Scripture and making the effort to be obedient.

### **Stop Watching the World**

You are the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16). You don't have to watch the world for anything brothers and sisters; not to tell you what *to* do or what *not* to do. Yahweh's law is all you need. Sometimes people ask me about this current event, or that world situation, or this "famous" person... and I'm usually clueless because I don't spend my time dwelling on what is going on in the world.

Some people rebuke me for that, and they try to use the verse that says "watch and pray" that nothing comes on you unawares to teach that we've gotta' know what's going on in the world. Watch and pray doesn't mean watch the world and pray, it means keep guard over Yahweh's law for your life and pray. So... I don't have to watch the Grammys... or the Government... to stay informed. This book keeps me informed.

I just keep reading and studying Yahweh's law, working on myself, and being a good influence to my inner circle, and to anyone I may meet along the way. Remember that you have the power to control yourself. You can't control John Doe out in California. You can only control you. When you make changes in your personal life, and work daily on yourself, it's then that you will be a light that shines in the path of those around you, and you'll have some good influence in the world.

### **Forcing Doesn't Work**

1 Peter 5:2-4 says this to the elders (from the ERV). "(2) Take care of the group of people you are responsible for. They are God's flock. Watch over that flock because you want to, not because you are forced to do it. That is how God wants it. Do it because you are happy to serve, not because you want money. (3) Don't be like a ruler over those you are responsible for. But be good examples to them. Then when Christ the Ruling Shepherd comes, you will get a crown - one that will be glorious and never lose its beauty."

So I don't believe in forcing (or trying to force) people to do anything. A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still. If a person does something by coercion, they aren't really doing it, because *really* doing something means it comes from the heart. So I'm not going to stand up here and bark at you, because I don't want anyone to do anything in a robotic way. Yahweh wants service and worship that stems from an inward desire to please Him.

I think the best way to encourage modesty is to remind people of this: You belong to Yahweh. Yahweh loves you, and wants what is best for you. Belonging to Yahweh means that He gives commands to you for your good, to bless you. Yeshua, Yahweh's Son, died for you - he gave up his life so that you could be forgiven of your sin and have eternal life. Knowing and believing these things causes our heart and soul to swell up with appreciation, and that in turn makes you want to do what is right, even when it comes to how we present ourselves on the outside.

### **Genesis Foundation**

This is an introductory sermon, but let's go now to the Word for some foundation. We are pulling from Exodus 20:26, but I want to go back even further and show you something from the book of Genesis. We learn so much from the book of beginnings, but we miss a lot of it because we drive-through instead of camp-out. The first few chapters of Genesis probably get read more than most else in the Bible, because of people starting Bible reading plans and then stopping after a few days. I question how much is retained or understood. You can read something just to be reading it, or you can read something because you want to understand and apply what you learn.

Towards the end of Genesis 2 (vs. 21-24, ERV) we have the first recorded marriage in Scripture. Yahweh formed woman out of man and then brought the woman to the man. This is actually the origin of where we get the practice of the father giving away his daughter. It's not an act of belittlement, as though the daughter has no say in who she marries... it's an act of recognizing that a female is precious. The father is concerned about who she marries because he doesn't want her mistreated or belittled in her adult life.

Yahweh is the father of Eve in Genesis 2. Remember, Adam and Eve are unique in that they had no earthly parents, so Yahweh (in Genesis 2:22) made woman from out of the side of man, and then brought her to the man. Adam proclaimed, "Finally! One like me, with bones from my bones and a body from my body." Adam recognized that he was going to be attached to Eve. Then he prophetically says (in vs. 24), "This is why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife. In this way two people become one."

Notice the proper family unit is mentioned here twice. Father and mother are mentioned, and then the man who leaves father and mother bonds with his wife. So a family unit is male and female, who join together to make more males who eventually join with females, or more females who eventually join with males. The closeness of a marriage is seen here by the male and female becoming one. One here is used in the sense of unity; one in purpose, thought, and goal.

## **Naked and Unashamed**

Then Genesis 2:25 says, “Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame.”

This is *before sin* enters the picture in Genesis 3. There was something about the time period “before sin” that allowed people to walk around naked and there be no shame in it or nothing wrong with it. We cannot apply that to the time period in which we live, because we are now “after sin,” and “in sin” not “before sin.”

In Genesis 3 sin enters. I’m not going to do a whole verse-by-verse exegesis here (that’s not the main point of this sermon), but I am going to remind you of the big picture. Yahweh gave a command, and Adam and Eve violated the command. Adam was held responsible as the head of that marriage and creation, and that brought ruin upon mankind and upon the land. Sin has consequences. We cannot disobey Yahweh and think everything will just run smoothly after.

## **Naked and Ashamed**

One of the things that happened after man and woman sinned was a realization of the shame nakedness. Genesis 3:7 says, “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.”

The act of sin and realization of disobedience brought upon the necessity of nakedness needing to be covered. So they make loin cloths out of some fig leaves. A loin cloth has to do with what we would think of a type of underwear. Some translations say “aprons,” but that’s not an apron like you’d wear in the kitchen cooking, but more like what we call a nail-apron for a carpenter. The word is *chagor* in Hebrew, and literally refers to the waist where the belt is worn.

I always think here of little Mowgli on the old Jungle Book cartoon. So this has to do with covering up the midsection of male and female... but this covering was insufficient. It was the human attempt at covering nakedness, but not the Yah-ordained way to completely or sufficiently cover nakedness.

This may have been an honest attempt to do the right thing, but it was still insufficient. It would be like your boss giving you a task and you do your best, but you for whatever reason didn’t have the right tools or the “know-how.” The boss comes along later and doesn’t scold you for trying, but corrects your wrong and shows you the proper way.

This is what we see Yahweh do later in this chapter, in Genesis 3:21, where we read, “Yahweh (the) Mighty One made clothing out of skins for Adam and his wife, and He clothed them.” This is the foundation text for modesty, but we don’t always see it due to the translation.

The old KJV I grew up with says “coats of skin” here. In our modern vernacular we might think that means bottoms aren’t necessary, lol. Other translations say clothing or garments, but a couple of them say “tunics of skin.” I think that’s currently the best way to bring over the

Hebrew into English. Both the Amplified Bible and NKJV say tunics. The NETS (LXX) gets this right as well by saying, “And the Lord God made leather tunics for Adam and for his wife and clothed them,” (also LES = “tunics of skin”). An animal (or animals) were slaughtered, and the skin (the hide, possibly the hair) was used to make tunics for the man and woman in order to cover their nakedness.

You see that word “made” there in Genesis 3:21? Did Yahweh himself actually make the tunics for Adam and Eve? Maybe... The Hebrew word there is *asah*, and it can be used in a wide variety of ways, one of which is to *appoint* or *institute* something. I personally think that’s the meaning here, but it could just as easily mean Yahweh actually made them himself. Either way, the implication is that this is the clothing Yahweh wanted Adam and Eve to properly cover themselves with.

You can consult just about any Bible dictionary or encyclopedia, and it will tell you this was the basic garment for both sexes. A shirt-like garment that hung from the shoulders to the knees or ankles. I’ll cite one reference work here, The IVP Bible Background Commentary, page 33: “The long, outer tunic is still the basic garment for many people in the Middle East. This replaces the inadequate fig-leaf covering made by Adam and Eve. God provides them with these garments as the type of gift given by a patron to a client. Gifts of clothing are among the most common presents mentioned in the Bible (see Joseph in Gen. 41:42) and other ancient texts. It also prepares them for the rigors of weather and work which await them.”

It was basically a long, loose shirt-like garment, covering the upper body and the mid section of a person modestly. Pants hug and outline a person’s midsection, whereas a tunic drapes over it.

I’ll go into more detail on this next week, but I’ll close today with this thought. Modesty has been defined as “behavior, manner, or appearance intended to avoid impropriety or indecency.” People should be able to look at us and know something is different, in a good way. We should stand out in a crowd, not from a sense of arrogance or better-than-thou-ness, but from a sense of letting our light shine to bring glory to our Heavenly Father. It might be said that when someone looks at us they think, “They must be a religious person.” I realize religion can be messed up sometimes, but that’s how outsiders say it. Our appearance should signal that we serve the Creator.

### ***“Pants, Skirts, and Dresses”***

**Read Exodus 20:26 (HCSB) and Genesis 3:21 (NKJV) ::** Last week our study through Exodus brought us to a law where the men of Israel were to take precaution to cover their nakedness in public. I talked about modesty in outward appearance and laid some groundwork. Modesty is about honor, dignity, and privacy.

I then took us back through Genesis 2 and 3 and the foundation for modesty. Before sin entered, the man and his wife were naked and unashamed in a holy way. They were in paradise. After

they disobeyed Yahweh's command, the realization of their nakedness came upon them, and they made loincloths out of fig leaves to cover their mid-section. That was man's attempt at covering nakedness, but it was not sufficient. We read in Genesis 3:21 that Yahweh made (or appointed, or instituted) tunics to appropriately cover the nakedness of man and woman.

The Holman Bible Dictionary says this under the heading *Clothing Styles*: "The Bible gives only general descriptions of the types of garments worn in biblical times. Egyptian, Assyrian, Roman, and Hittite monuments provide extensive pictorial evidence of dress in the ancient world. The need for clothing derives its origin from the shame of nakedness experienced by Adam and Eve in the garden (Gen. 3:7-8). God's provision for His people is reflected in the animal skin garments given in response to human need. Men and women wore tunics made of linen or wool hanging from the neck to the knees or ankles. The Beni Hasan Tableau from the tomb of Khnum-hotep in Egypt depicts tunics worn by Semitic peoples as having diverse patterns and colors."

As you read throughout Scripture, the tunic wasn't the *only* garment worn by men and women. We read about outer coats, breeches, head coverings, belts, sashes, etc. A variety of clothing is acceptable and fine, the main issue here is that the tunic is not removed, because it is the piece of clothing Yahweh gave to man and woman to sufficiently cover their nakedness. So long as the tunic is on, other clothing may be worn underneath or overtop for practical reasons or even stylistic desires.

### **Everyone Knows the Tunic**

I believe everyone knows that the tunic was the basic, everyday garment of both Hebrew men and women, it's just that most have not stopped long enough to think about the implications. If you've ever been to a play depicting a scene in the Bible (at a church or drama theatre), you see how the men and women are dressed. You can tell them apart, but their garments are basically the same (tunics, robes).

I've recently enjoyed watching a new TV series called *The Chosen*, depicting the adult life and times of the Messiah. There's been a lot said about it, both pro and con, among Christians and Messianic people. I don't agree with every single liberty they've taken to recount Bible history, but for the most part I believe they are doing their best to make it feel as authentic as possible. One of the ways they do this is through dress, and the Messiah and all of his disciples are dressed in: tunics. The man who plays Yeshua wears this basic, tan tunic, with tassels at the four corners. It has longer sleeves and reaches to the knees, with no pants underneath. And that's probably what our Messiah walked around in on a day-to-day basis. No one has a problem with this... until someone like me suggests, "Hey, why aren't we still wearing tunics for modesty?" Then all the objections start coming out.

### **Only Animal Skin**

One I heard years ago (when I first began this study back in 2004) was that if we use Genesis 3:21 as the foundation text for modesty, then we'll have to say that not only is a tunic required, but a leather tunic is required, because the first ones there were made of animal skin.

The problem with this argument is that it doesn't take into account ALL of Scripture. Genesis is the foundation, yes, but we keep building on it through Scripture from there. As we continue to read (all the way to the end in Revelation) we see other pieces or items of clothing to be acceptable (over or under the tunic), and we also see that Hebrew men and women wore tunics made of different material like linen, cotton, wool, or even silk. The key is that the basic garment didn't change. A tunic is still a tunic whether it's made from animal skin, sheep wool, or spun and sewed from cotton. All one has to do is type in "linen" or "wool" in the search engine on their Bible app or computer program and look at all the examples.

### **Primitive Times**

Another argument I heard to try to weasel out of wearing the tunic was, "Matthew, do you expect everyone to go back to primitive times and only wear sandals, or only ride camels, or draw water manually from a well?" This argument is fallacious because it thinks I'm presenting a "back to ancient culture" teaching, which I'm not.

The argument from Genesis 3:21 isn't based on thinking we've can't advance in technology and practice, like the Amish or Mennonite mindset. Style changes are perfectly fine. I consider myself pretty stylish in some of my tunics (although some people may disagree, lol). Genesis 3:21 is a modesty or type argument. It's not an argument saying we have to dress like ancient Hebrews due to an attempt to get away from modern things, it's an argument saying we need to dress like this because it was Yahweh's appointed modest garment.

### **Even Protestant Reformers**

When we get from Genesis to Revelation, thousands of years later, we still see tunics and robes being worn by both men and women. As a matter of fact, if we even fast forward from there to the Protestant Reformation with men like John Wycliffe or John Calvin... they all still wore tunics or robes in the 15 to 1600's A.D. They may have worn breeches or pants underneath, or a coat overtop, or a belt around their waist, but they still donned the tunic.

### **Western Culture and Skirts for Men**

When you first start meditating on all of this it sounds a bit strange, because in our western culture mindset, during the 20th century, we see pants as defining a man and a dress (which is more closely in style to a tunic or robe) as defining a woman. We hear a word like "skirt" mentioned in the context of clothing, and we automatically think "woman's apparel."

But, for example, the word skirt is used 12x in the KJV (OT), and every single time it's talking about the skirt of a man. One example is where Ruth was quietly and secretly laying at the feet of Boaz during the night (in Ruth chapter 3), and when he realizes it she says to him, "I *am* Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore **thy** skirt over thine handmaid; for thou *art* a near kins**man**." Boaz had a skirt.

Another is in Zechariah 8:23: "Thus saith [Yahweh] of hosts; In those days *it shall come to pass*, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take

hold of the skirt of **him** that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard *that* Elohim *is* with you.” Some Bibles say “robe” or “hem” there, and there are cases where the skirt does refer to the hem or border of one’s tunic or robe, but the point here is that we generally associate the word skirt with a female. The King James Version associates the word skirt with a male.

Why then do we think skirts are for women and pants are for men? Why do the signs on the bathroom doors have one stick figure in what looks like a dress, and the other one... well it looks like it’s wearing nothing, but I guess it could be considered pants. You know why? Modern, Western culture from the 17 to 1900’s. If the Messiah or one of his disciples walked up to these two bathroom doors wearing his tunic, he would think the one depicting a person with clothes (in the skirt) was probably the one he was supposed to go into.

### **Pants and Deuteronomy 22:5**

We assign pants to men and skirts to women because of modern, Western culture not Hebrew culture, and some of us who grew up in Pentecostal or fundamental Baptist type churches heard Deuteronomy 22:5 pounded, mainly in an attempt to keep the women from wearing pants. (I don’t understand why we were taught the law was done away with, but yet still heard the Deuteronomy 22:5 law preached. It’s kind of like the tithing law; they can’t let it go.)

It says there (KJV), “The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so *are* abomination unto the LORD thy God.” So “there it is” they’d say, “don’t wear pants women,” but that verse doesn’t say anything about pants, and here is an excellent example of learning how NOT to read the Bible. When we try to take our modern day mindset and transfer it back to the Bible (ancient Hebrew culture + Hebrew language) we will often get ourselves into interpretive trouble.

When Deuteronomy 22:5 was first given, it was given to Hebrew men and women, and the men and women both wore the same basic garment based on Genesis 3:21, the tunic or robe. So Moshe and his wife Zipporah are standing there wearing tunics. Maybe Moshe’s had stripes and Zipporah’s had flowers; I don’t know, we aren’t told. The point is that whatever colors, patterns, or style, they had on the same basic garment.

Could they have been wearing something like pants underneath their tunics? Yes, they could have. We aren’t specifically told in many of the texts, but I’m sure other items of clothing were worn for protective and practical reasons.

For example, we aren’t told anything about sandals in Genesis 3:21, but as we continue to read we know Moshe had on sandals because he was told to take them off in Exodus 3 when he encountered the burning bush. Sandals would have been practical to protect the feet while walking and working. Pants would have been practical to protect the legs while working, and for more warmth in cold weather (and that’s fine), but we are never, ever told in Scripture that pants are a man’s garment and shouldn’t be worn by women.

## The Truth about Deuteronomy 22:5

All some churches use is Deuteronomy 22:5, and that just doesn't work when we read it in light of the Hebrew culture and practice of that time. So what is it talking about?

One thing we should notice carefully here is the Hebrew word for man in the verse. We won't get this from the English, because we just read "man" twice here, but behind the one English word man can stand a few different Hebrew words, and they are different for a reason.

The English word man is used 81x in the book of Deuteronomy, but there are only 2x in Deuteronomy where the word man is based on the Hebrew word *geber*. Guess where those 2x are? Deuteronomy 22:5. All the other 79x use the words *iysh*, *adam*, *ebyon*, *ibriy*, *asher*, *chalal*, *naphal*, *ayin*, *bachur*, and *seybah*. I sounded like I just talked in tongues didn't I? I guess I did, the Hebrew tongue.

Granted, some of these words describe actions associated with a man. For instance, the Hebrew word *naphal* means to fall down, so the translator will write "If a man falls" and *naphal* describes the man who falls. The point still stands though that in all of these cases, only 2x is the word *geber* used for a man, and both are in Deuteronomy 22:5. You think that's significant?

As a matter of fact, in this very chapter the word man is used just a few verses later in Deuteronomy 22:13 where a man takes a wife, and there the word *iysh* is used, the same word used back in Genesis for Adam. But *iysh* isn't used a few verses earlier in verse 5. Why?

The Hebrew word *geber* is defined by Strong's (H1397) as "Properly a valiant man or warrior; generally a person simply." Brown, Drivers, Briggs Hebrew lexicon defines it as "A man, strong man, warrior, emphasizing strength or ability to fight." Both lexicons track it back to H1395, *gabar*, meaning "to be strong, prevail, act insolently."

Because of this, the old, Methodist commentator Adam Clarke concludes that this law is about a woman dressing as a soldier or warrior. He says in part: "It is very probable that armor is here intended; especially as we know that in the worship of Venus, to which that of Astarte or Ashtaroth among the Canaanites bore a striking resemblance, the women were accustomed to appear in armor before her. It certainly cannot mean a simple change in dress, whereby the men might pass for women, and vice versa. This would have been impossible in those countries where the dress of the sexes had but little to distinguish it, and where every man wore a long beard." So that's one possibility, but it doesn't really deal with the part in the verse where the man is told not to wear the woman's garment.

The Jewish historian Josephus does comment on this verse in his Antiquities 4.8.43 where he says, "Take care, especially in your battles, that no woman use the habit of a man, nor man the garment of a woman." So it could be understood that for a man to wear the woman's garment mean he swapped places with her; he stayed home from a battle or stopped doing the providing for the family, but notice carefully that Josephus doesn't limit this to war or battle; he says "especially in

your battles” showing that he viewed this as a general law to be kept always, but especially at war time.

### **Role and Sex Changes**

My view on Deuteronomy 22:5 is that it’s about role changes and a purposeful attempt at switching one’s look to be like the opposite sex. The CEV, though not a literal-wooden translation, captures the meaning by saying, “Women must not pretend to be men, and men must not pretend to be women, Yahweh your Elohim is disgusted with people who do that.”

For a man to try to look like and act like a female is an abomination. For a woman to try to look like and act like a male is an abomination. This doesn’t mean a man can’t wash dishes and a woman can’t drive a tractor. I’m not saying that. I’m talking about a specific desire to take away what Yahweh has given you as male or female and try to be the opposite. Anytime a man tries to look feminine or a woman tries to look masculine it looks awkward. You know why? Because it is not natural.

So the command is a general one forbidding transvestites and transgenderism. Some of this may not have been a “thing” back then in Hebrew culture, but then again maybe it all was? There’s nothing new under the sun right? Regardless, the principle holds true, very similar to how a high deck needs a railing around it in the same way that an ancient Hebrew roof needed one (Deuteronomy 22:8). So we learn in Deuteronomy 22:5 that men are not to try to be women and women are not to try to be men. Yahweh made us male and female in the beginning, and that is the way it should stay. All of this modern talk of blurring the sexes and gender fluidity is an abomination in the sight of Yahweh.

What we do not learn in Deuteronomy 22:5 is that pants are for men and not for women. Pants are actually NOT an appropriate, outer garment for either sex. Pants are a practical garment for warmth and protection, or even style, but not for modesty. The tunic is what is given by Yahweh for modesty in Genesis 3:21. Pants may be worn by either man or woman, under the tunic, and you can still differentiate who is man and who is woman by their manner of conduct and the way they present themselves. Tisha and I have walked into Home Depot many times, both in tunics with pants underneath, and no one has trouble telling which one of us is male and which one is female. *That may have something to do with my beard...* but this isn’t a beard message. Regardless, Tisha isn’t trying to be a man by wearing pants, and I’m not trying to be a woman by wearing a tunic. We are both trying to be obedient to what Yahweh instituted in Genesis 3:21.

### **Closing**

A wise, Hebrew sage once encouraged the study of Torah by saying, “Turn it over, and turn it over again, because everything is in it. Look into it, grow gray haired and old in it, and do not depart from it, for you have no better standard of conduct than it.” So there’s more to be said on this topic, and I’ll save that for next week when I wrap this up.

## **“Nakedness and Practical Modesty”**

**Read Exodus 20:26 and Genesis 3:21** :: In my first sermon on modesty I laid some ground work from both of these texts, and then last week we covered some more about the tunic and looked at Deuteronomy 22:5 in its cultural context. Today I want to deal with a few more points from Scripture, and then give you some practical advice and encouragement on modesty in dress.

I ended last week with the point that there is nowhere in Scripture that defines pants as being a man’s garment. After my lesson, Brother Arnold approached me and asked, “What did you say someone told you about your tunic to make fun of you?” I told him I’ve had men ask me where I got my dress at. *He said to tell them, “Men are supposed to get dressed and pantsd.” Lol*

What Hebrew men wore was more similar to what we would call a dress or skirt today. I mentioned that the 12x the word skirt is used in the Older Testament it’s talking about a man’s skirt, and of course we have one word - *ketoneth* - describing the garment for both Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:21.

Here is a great quote and point from an article I read many years ago titled, “The Truth About Deuteronomy 22:5” by Mr. Jason Young

“A thorough study into the clothing norms of the Bible reveals that there was no distinction between men’s and women’s clothing in the Bible beyond stylistic differences such as trim, color and size. In fact God Himself made clothing for Adam and Eve that was so similar that one word (*ketoneth*) could describe the specific garment he made for each of them. This same word describes the clothing worn by Godly men and women throughout the Bible from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Yet today, many Christians demand much more than even the Bible did by requiring not only a difference in style but a difference in function and form as well. If God makes no such clothing demands on His people, then who are we to make them? Do we know better than God?”

### **Breeches, Trousers**

One objection or point I’ve had some people bring me over the years are the five mentions of the word breeches in the KJV. Here’s one, in Exodus 28:42-43, “And thou shalt make them linen breeches to cover their nakedness; from the loins even unto the thighs they shall reach: (43) and they shall be upon Aaron, and upon his sons, when they come in unto the tabernacle of the congregation, or when they come near unto the altar to minister in the holy place; that they bear not iniquity, and die: it shall be a statute forever unto him and his seed after him.”

All five of the occurrences of breeches are in the same context, the Aaronic priests. Never are the breeches commanded to be worn by common Hebrew men, or Hebrew women for that matter.

Notice that the breeches are not pants in the sense as we wear pants today, they are basically... underwear. The HCSB uses the word “undergarments” in each place where the KJV uses “breeches.” They reach from the waist to the thigh, and in the context of the priesthood, they are

never worn by themselves. The priests didn't put on these breeches and walk around in front of people with nothing else on, and they didn't put on these breeches and a t-shirt and walk around in front of people. They wore these breeches *under* their robe. Back in verse 4 of Exodus 28 we read, "And these *are* the garments which they shall make; a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a brodered coat, a mitre, and a girdle: and they shall make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, and his sons, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office."

So the robe, coat, girdle, ephod, and breastplate were all worn over top of the breeches; another person would never even see the breeches, just like when you and I go out in public, no one ever sees our underwear.

Other Bible translations do not call them breeches. The ESV says "linen undergarments." Brentons Septuagint says, "linen drawers." In Leviticus 16:4 where they are mentioned again as a holy, priestly garment, the NET says "linen leggings." *Us men might say, "I ain't wearin' no linen leggings." If you want to be a priest you will. Lol.* The point is we are dealing with a type of shorts that are used as underwear, not a pair of Levi jeans like men wear today.

### **What Nakedness?**

A long time ago when I first studied this subject, I thought the high priest and the priests under him would wear these breeches when they ministered so that if anyone in the community was around watching their ministry, no one would see up under their tunic or robe. I thought that Exodus 28:42 was covering their nakedness in general. Later in my studies, I realized that didn't make sense because the commandment in Exodus 20:26 specifically implies that the altars built in Israel weren't high up so that you'd have to use steps to reach it. So a man would be standing on the ground when he worked the altar. No one was going up steps or a ladder to where someone else might see up their robe.

I think a better understanding here is that the breeches were on the priests to cover their nakedness securely in the presence of Yahweh. Notice here in the picture of the high priest... no one is seeing the breeches. Listen carefully to the context of Exodus 28:42: "(The linen breeches) shall be upon Aaron, and upon his sons, when they come in unto the tabernacle of the congregation, or when they come near unto the altar to minister in the holy place." The covering of nakedness here is not covering one's nakedness among society in public, but covering one's nakedness in Yahweh's special presence.

Genesis 3:21 teaches us how men and women are supposed to cover their nakedness in general. Exodus 28:42 teaches us how a priest was to cover his nakedness while he ministered before Yahweh. A priest could be all by himself ministering, and he'd still have to wear the linen breeches under his robe.

### **Breeches: Just for Men?**

Now the argument goes that priests were men so the breeches are here worn by men. My rebuttal is that (1) there's nothing here about men in general, (2) the breeches were worn underneath the tunic or robe so no one would ever see them anyhow, and (3) just because something is said to be worn by a priest doesn't mean a similar shaped garment wasn't ever worn by a common man or woman.

Exodus 28:4 says that one of the priestly garments was the brodered coat. The word coat there is *ketoneth* in Hebrew, the same word in Genesis 3:21 for the clothes of Adam and Eve. So if you say that the breeches are only for men because they're mentioned for the priests, then what about the *ketoneth*? Should a woman not wear that because it's mentioned here for the priests?

Or what about the belt or girdle? It's mentioned in this chapter for the priests too. Can a woman not wear a belt or girdle then? See it's not a good argument. The texts that mention breeches don't teach us anything about pants being only for men. This is a grasping for a straw argument that some Christians use who just don't want to give up their man-made doctrine of pants are for men and dresses are for women.

### **The Ketoneth and King Jehu**

Here's a quote from a book I have titled *Manners and Customs in the Bible*, by Victor Matthews, and this is on pages 117-119 where clothing styles are covered.

The basic dress for both men and women was the ketoneth, a shirtlike garment which is depicted in ancient art in a variety of styles. Usually made of wool, it could reach as far as the ankles or just to the knees: it might have either long or short sleeves. This garment is mentioned in the "Black Obelisk" inscription of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III (842 B.C.). In a series of sculpted, captioned registers, Jehu, king of Israel, is depicted bowing down before the king; his servants are shown carrying gifts as tribute payments. Jehu is wearing a fringed ketoneth tied with a girdle which also has tassels hanging from it. His head is covered by a pointed cap, and his beard like those of the Israelite porters carved on this monument, is trimmed to a point.

Here is the stone inscription mentioned in this book (it's housed at the British Museum in London). You can see the ancient cuneiform writing up at the top describing what's going on in each block or panel on the stone.

On panel two is a chiseling of King Jehu bowing down, and wearing a ketoneth with tassels. It's also interesting to point out that it appears that Jehu is donning the side-locks from the temples of his head. One brother up in Michigan pointed this out to me years ago when I was studying Leviticus 19:27. This stone lends credence to the view taken still by the Hasidic Jewish community that the command about cutting of the sides of your head means to let the hair on one's temples grow out. I take a slightly different view of this; one day I'll review my notes and teach on it.

The main point here that is seen in this ancient stone inscription - mentioned by this Bible dictionary, and mentioned in every single Bible dictionary I have (and I have quite a few) - is that the basic, everyday dress of Hebrew men (and women) was the ketoneth or tunic. It was not pants for men and dresses for women. It's really an undisputed point in scholarship, it's just that not many people want to push it to its logical conclusion.

### **Modestly Clothed**

Genesis 3:21 doesn't just teach that male and female must be clothed, it teaches that male and female must be clothed modestly. It's a verse that Christians have just skimmed over without digging into it and taking it seriously. Swimming trunks and a bikini doesn't work here. I might add briefly that according to Genesis 3:21, it's just as wrong for a man to go topless in public as it is a woman. The only reason people today don't view it this way is due to modern culture. What's good for the goose is good for the gander.

A follower of Yahweh is not authorized to wear anything he or she wants and claim they are covered. If you do that you are doing what Adam and Eve did in Genesis 3:7 when they made those loincloths out of fig leaves. Yahweh doesn't recognize that as modest apparel. He appointed a specific garment for male and female that covers nakedness modestly, and devout Hebrew men and women wore it from Genesis to Revelation. It never changes in all the Bible.

### **Q&A and Practical Application**

So now we come to the close of this series, and I'm going to answer some questions, give some advice, and hopefully encourage you some in this. This is the first time in over 10 years that I've taught on this subject from the pulpit. It might be another 10 years before I teach on it again, I don't know. I'm not gonna' harp on this or try to force this, but I do want to encourage you to let go of your modern thinking... and maybe let go of some pride - and take an honest look at what I've taught from the Bible for these past three sermons.

### **Dresses and Skirts**

Some sisters have asked me about dresses and skirts, are they similar to the tunic? Yes, some dresses are basically tunics, and some skirts cover the body in the same way a tunic does, draping loosely over the mid-section. That's really the goal here, to not reveal the shape of our body. Our clothes should compliment our body or beauty, not reveal everything to the outside world. Nakedness is something private to you, or private between you and your spouse if you're married. It's not for the whole world to see.

### **Loose Pants?**

Others have asked me about loose pants. Yes, some pants are more modest than others. I have some linen pants that don't hug my mid-section like a tight pair of blue jeans would... *or a pair of those priestly linen leggings*. Now I don't wear these linen pants without a tunic, but if I did

they would be more modest than a pair of blue jeans or regular dress pants. But... I'm not really interested in more modest, I'm interested in what Yahweh appointed in Genesis 3:21.

### **Men... I Know it's Different**

For the men... I know this is a hard teaching. When I first started wearing the tunic (2004) I got stared at by so many people. I remember walking through Kohls with Tisha back then and this was all new to me, and I saw all kinds of people do a double-take and point. It was hard back then; I had to get rid of a lot of this flesh.

Not too long ago I was standing in line at Chick-fil-a and I saw a couple of girls point at me, whisper, and laugh. It didn't bother me at all. *I looked straight at them, waved and smiled, and they got red in the face and went back to working real quick-like.* It's become a way of life to me, kind of like the lunar reckoning of the months and weeks. Things from the Bible that seem difficult or strange are only that way because we are unfamiliar with them. When you change to Yahweh's instructions, the longer you walk in them the less you want out. You become in tune with the old, Hebrew ways and the modern ways start becoming strange.

Men, you can begin this with baby steps if it's too much to take in all at once. When you buy your shirts there are some shirts that have long tails in the front and back, and there are other shirts with an extra T on the tag standing for "tall" that hang down 2 to 4 inches longer than most shirts. Look for those kind, and I would definitely encourage you to at least wear your shirts untucked men, and then work your way up to a tunic eventually. They used to teach little boys to tuck in their shirt to be presentable, but that's a violation of Scripture. *Wear that shirt untucked men.* If you don't start somewhere you'll gradually forget about this teaching.

### **To the Women**

The same goes for the sisters here. It's kind-of become a little bit stylish now for the short tunics. I see them on the clothes rack some times in stores, and I think some of them are too short - like a mini-tunic - but at least it's a start. The women can look for these type shirts if they are wearing pants, shirts that at least start to cover or drape over the mid-section. I think many dresses and skirts are fine as well.

### **Tops and Shirts**

Let me add here about the tops we wear too. I understand that clothes will at times show some of our form, that's unavoidable, but we shouldn't be wearing tops that are too tight or that reveal too much of our chest area. *I've seen some fellas who I guess strike their-self as a ladies man and unbutton a few of those buttons down their chest to let some of that hair show.* That's not appropriate, and neither is it appropriate for a female to show off her chest area. According to Genesis 3:21 covering nakedness in general is from the shoulders to at least below the thigh. I

don't really like shorts, but I don't think the bottom of the leg is nakedness in Scripture. I think a tunic above the knee or with shorts is sufficient.

### **The Tunic is Modest**

If you put this into practice and start becoming conscious about what you wear, you will start to notice how much more modest a tunic is than regular clothes. I'm a people-watcher and I'm sure some of you are even though you might not want to admit it. You will see people at the grocery store in pants, and then you might see a woman dressed in a long coat in the winter time. You will immediately notice how much more modest the long-coat is because it hangs over the mid-section.

### **Thanks for Listening**

Do you know how hard it is to teach a sermon like this? *Let's all take a deep breath, lol.* I really appreciate everyone's attentiveness to this series. I've seen you really trying to listen and learn. Y'all are such good students of the Bible. I'm just up here trying to be a good shepherd. I'm not interested in policing anyone, but I am interested in encouraging everyone in holiness.

Like I said before, I won't be talking about this much anymore. This past week I went through my booklet on modesty and revised and updated it; it needed it, the last time I did an update was 2011 (where did all that time go?). This morning I posted it on the book section of the website for the whole world to read. It does go into more detail on some things I've mentioned in these sermons, and there are more reference works as well. I hope you'll take the time to read and study it.

### **Closing**

So... I love everyone, and I love everyone right where they are at. I have to, because Yahweh loves me right where I'm at, and I know that I'm not yet at the level I ought to be. When we share this message with others, let's do so in kindness and not in a judgmental way. That song we sing - don't let me judge but love - it's about not being judgmental. We all have to make judgments everyday, but we don't have to walk around with a stuck-up judgmental attitude, looking down our nose at everyone. Yahweh's people should be the kindest people on this earth. So let's not pounce on anyone with this modesty message. Let's mainly share it by example, and when someone asks, be as gentle and patient with them as Yahweh has been with you.