



The 'Chosen' Fast

A Biblical and Messianic Introduction to
Fasting

*ADONAI said to Moshe, “The tenth of this seventh month is Yom-Kippur; you are to have a holy convocation, you are to deny yourselves, and you are to bring an offering made by fire to ADONAI.”
Vayikra (Leviticus) 23:26*

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6/29/2009

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Note: All translations are taken from the Complete Jewish Bible by D H Stern

Updates:

First Published: 29 July 2009

Updated: 11 September 2009

THE 'CHOSEN' FAST

“Pray with fasting ...”



“Now when you fast, don’t go around looking miserable, like the hypocrites. They make sour faces so that people will know they are fasting.

Yes! I tell you, they already have their reward already! But you, when you fast, wash your face and groom yourself, so that no one will know you are fasting – except your Father, who is with you in secret.

Your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

Mattityahu (Matthew 6:16-18)

Prayer combined with fasting is denial of 'self' for higher purposes than mere abstinence from food; to impress others, or as a 'means to an end'.

It is vital therefore, to check our motives and our heart attitudes and establish them with ADONAI Elohim, before we contract to pray with fasting.

There is no compulsion involved, because Elohim does not violate our free-will. We are free to eat or not to eat, as our heavenly Father directs.

Richard Foster in his book Celebration of Discipline comments:

“Fasting is the voluntary denial of a normal function for the sake of intense spiritual activity.”

For Reflection:

*When you seek me, you will find me, **provided** you seek for me whole-heartedly; and I will let you find me,’ says ADONAI.*

Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 29:13,14

If a person is willing to set aside the appetites of the body to concentrate on praying, they demonstrate they mean business. Then they are seeking ADONAI with all their heart.

WHY PRAY WITH FASTING?

*“Yet even now,” says ADONAI,
Turn to me with all your heart
With fasting, weeping and lamenting.”
Tear your heart, not your garment;
And turn to ADONAI your G-d.*

Yo’el (Joel) 2:12,13

Yo’el’s call to the Children of Isra’el makes it quite clear that fasting is an expression of wholeheartedness.

To obey a Mitzvot of our ADONAI ELOHIM

The FIFTH Annual Shabbaton: Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)

*ADONAI said to Moshe, “ ‘The tenth of this seventh month is **Yom-Kippur**; you are to have a holy convocation, you are to **deny¹** yourselves, and you are to bring an offering made by fire to ADONAI.*

*You are not to do any kind of work on that day, because it is **Yom-Kippur**, to make atonement for you before ADONAI your G-d.*

Anyone who does not deny himself on that day is to be cut off from his people; and anyone who does any kind of work on that day, I will destroy from among his people.

*You are not to do any kind of work; it is a permanent regulation through all your generations, no matter where you live. It will be for you a **Shabbat of complete rest**, and you are to deny yourselves; you are to rest on your Shabbat from evening the ninth day of the month until the following evening.*

Vayikra (Leviticus) 23:26-32

Of the seven of the Annual Shabbaton, the Fifth Annual Shabbat stands in isolation. It is not a day of great feasting before ADONAI our G-d. Yom Kippur is quite extraordinary in its uniqueness.

It is the day set aside by ADONAI Tzva’ot so that we might make atonement before ADONAI our G-d.

¹ ‘Deny’ in the sense of ‘afflicting oneself, ie going without the pleasures of body and life’ in order to make teshuva, ie restitution by humbling oneself, confession of sin, seeking forgiveness and thereby entering a deeper, more loving relationship with our Abba Father.

It is the **only** day in each and every year - when we are called upon to both rest from work and 'to afflict ourselves'.

Yeshua HaMaschiach gave us an example to follow

'Man does not live on bread alone...'

"After Yeshua had fasted forty days and nights, he was hungry. The Tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of G-d, order these stones to become bread." But He answered, "The Tanakh says,

*Man does not live on bread alone,
But on every word that comes from the mouth of ADONAI."*

Mattityahu (Matthew) 4:2

'Fasting is a powerful discipline for bringing the body under submission... Each great servant of God has had his/her time of fasting. It is an essential spiritual discipline and without it we are weak. It fortifies spiritual foundations, builds intimacy with God and strengthens resolve.

When John baptized Christ, the Spirit led Him into the desert not for a vacation, but a preparation through fasting. Each day was another day closer to the suffering of the Cross. Any man would want to run from such a fate, but Christ used fasting to strengthen His resolve. One of Satan main tactics is to encourage any addiction or lifestyle that makes the body the master, where man is moved by every little whim of the flesh...'

Tom Coghill of Fasting.ws

Next, Yochanan's talmidim came to him and asked, "Why is that we and the P'rushim fast frequently, but your talmidim don't fast at all?" Yeshua said to them, "Can wedding guests mourn while the bridegroom is still with them: But the time will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them; then they will fast.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 9:14-15

Yeshua HaMaschiach expects His talmidim to fast

Next day they said to him, "Yochanan's talmidim are always fasting ad davvening², and likewise the talmidim of the P'rushimⁱⁱ; but yours go on eating and drinking." Yeshua said to them, "Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is still with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them; and when that time comes, they will fast."

Luke 5:33-35

Edersheim³ writes that:

² Davvening that is: praying

³ The Temple: Its Ministry and Services: Chapter 17: Other Fasts by Alfred Edersheim

'It was customary to fast *twice a week* (Luke 18:12), between the Paschal week and Pentecost, and between the Feast of Tabernacles and that of the Dedication of the Temple. The days appointed for this purpose were the Monday and Thursday of every week—, according to tradition, Moses went up Mount Sinai the second time to receive the Tables of the Law on a Thursday, and came down again on a Monday.....'

By the time of the 1st Century, fasting and prayer played an important role in was a common practice amongst the many schools of thought of Judaism that existed at that time.

Yeshua's comments regarding fasting are simple and straightforward. His disciples *will* fast⁴ However, He did not specify when, how long or how often. In Romans we find that Sha'ul commented that fasting is an individual concern between the believer and Yeshua.

Yeshua, knowing that His talmidim both then and today would fast, left ample instruction in both the Tanakh and the Brit Hadashah on how to go about it and the purpose of going for a time without food and drink.

In Mattityahu⁵ Yeshua explains that fasting is not to be an outward show of our righteousness before men, but rather it is a personal affair between us and our Father. Further by all outward appearances no one should be aware of our fasting. Our dress and demeanour should not broadcast to others that we are fasting. Fasting is to be done in secret.

Additionally, when one is called upon to fast, we are reminded that fasting should not be for selfish pleasure or gain. ADONAI will not take note of someone who is fasting with a wrong attitude.⁶

As a free-will offering to our Father to give Him pleasure.

'Sh'mu'el said, "Gather all Isra'el to Mitzpah, and I will pray for you to ADONAI." So they gathered together at Mitzpah, drew water and poured it out before ADONAI.'

Sh'mu'el Alef (1Samuel) 7:5,6

Produces a spiritual and physical discipline

Do not deprive each other, except for a limited time, by mutual agreement, and then only so as to have extra time for prayer....

1 Corinthians 7:5

After appointing elders for them in every congregation, Sha'ul and Bar-Nabba, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the L-rd in whom they had put their trust.

Acts 14:23

⁴ Luke 5:33-35

⁵ Mattityahu (Matthew) 6:16-18

⁶ Yesha'yahu (Isaiah) 53:3-5

Andrew Murray⁷ said,

"Fasting helps to express, to deepen, and to confirm the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything - to sacrifice ourselves - to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God."

Prayer aligned with fasting puts a 'cutting edge' to the intercessory prayer life.

*But I, when they were ill, wore sackcloth;
I put myself out and fasted;
I can pray that what I prayed for them might also happen to me.
I behaved as I would for my friend or my brother;
I bent down in sorrow as if mourning my mother.*

Psalm 35:13-14

⁷ Andrew Murray 1828-1917 Author of over 250 books, he was the minister at the Dutch Reformed Church of Wellington (South Africa) from 1871 to 1906, and lived there until his death in 1917

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF FASTING?

Strengthens and implements prayer: Voice heard on high!

Some time later, the people of Mo'av and the people of 'Amon with other 'Amonim came up to fight Y'hoshafat. Y'hoshafat was told, "A huge army from beyond the [Dead] Sea, from Aram, is on its way to fight you; right now they are in Hatzatzon-Tamar" (that is, 'Ein-Gedi). Y'hoshafat was frightened, so he determined to seek ADONAI. He proclaimed a fast throughout all Y'hudah, and Y'hudah assembled to seek help from ADONAI; they came from all the cities of Y'hudah to seek ADONAI.

Divrei-Hayamim Bet (2 Chronicles) 20:1-4

Blessing of obedience

"But you, when you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. Your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

Mattityahu (Matthew 6:6)

Humility through personal repentance and sincerity of heart

I turned to ADONAI, G-d, to seek an answer; pleading with Him in prayer, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to ADONAI my G-d and made this confession: ..

Dani'el (Daniel) 9:3-4

Revelation of ADONAI Elohim's ways and Elohim's will for the future.

Dani'el's intercession found in the Book of Dani'el chapter 9: perfectly illustrates this principle.

Authority and power in prayer and in spiritual warfare.

The Temptation and Victory of Yeshua HaMashiach:

Mattityahu (Matthew) 4:1-11

Then the talmidim went to him privately and said, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?” He said to them, “Because you have such little trust! Yes! I tell you that if you have trust as tiny as a mustard seed, you will be able to say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there!’ and it will move, nothing will be impossible for you!” But this kind does not go out except through prayer and fasting.”

Mattityahu (Matthew) 17:19-21

The reason why the talmidim failed to heal the boy with a demon was they lacked faith....

...faith needs a life of prayer in which to grow and keep strong...prayer needs fasting for its full and perfect development.⁸

⁸ Andrew Murrey on Prayer and Fasting: The Prayer Foundation

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBICAL CONCEPT OF FASTING

The basic concept of the biblical fast is to get closer to our Father through Yeshua HaMaschiach. It is a means by which a person can have their sins forgiven and be cleansed. It is an opportunity to pray for ourselves and to pray for others. It is an opportunity to be empowered or anointed in a greater measure to preach, teach and live a life full of grace and compassion and most of all love for our fellow man.

A Biblical fast is done by abstaining from all foods, cigarettes, drugs and beverages (with the exception of water).

After Yeshua had fasted forty days and nights, he was hungry."

Mattityahu (Matthew) 4:2

You will notice from Mattityahu that Yeshua was not thirsty and hungry. Simply '*he was hungry*'. It is a medical fact that a healthy adult male can go without food for between 50 -70 days.

Today, with the advances of modern science we know so much more about the science of the body and its amazing healing capacities. Fasting is not only very beneficial for the mind and spirit – but often times fasting gives our bodies – a ‘temple’ – time to heal itself from the ravages caused by the stress and wrong food that we eat.

Understanding What Biblical Fasting is NOT

It is very important that we examine the nature of our hearts to determine WHY we are fasting. It is so very easy to be fasting for the wrong reasons. A biblical fast is NEVER:

A) A Physical or Psychological Discipline

Remember ADONAI never encourages fasting for solely discipline or self-denial reasons. This is not a biblical reason for fasting. He has a higher purpose in mind to connect with Him at a deeper level.

- **A biblical fast has purely spiritual goals in mind.**

B) A Manipulative Tool

Your ADONAI does not respond to pressure! Others have tried and failed:

‘Then ADONAI said to me, Don’t pray for this people or for their welfare. When they fast, I will not hear their cry; when they offer burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Rather, I will destroy them with war, famine and disease.’

Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 14:11,12

- **A biblical fast is not a vehical by which you can manipulate our Father to achieve your own goals.**

C) A Hypocritical Religious Exercise

*The crucible [tests] silver, and the furnace [tests] gold,
But the one who tests hearts is ADONAI.*

Mishlei (Proverbs) 17:3

Edersheim⁹ writes that:

‘..... After prayer, the people retired to the cemeteries to mourn and weep. In order to be a proper fast, it must be continued from one sundown till after the next, when the stars appeared, and for about twenty-six hours the most rigid abstinence from all food and drink was enjoined.

Most solemn as some of these ordinances sound, the reader of the New Testament knows how sadly all degenerated into mere formalism (Matt 9:14; Mark 2:18; Luke 5:33); how frequent fasting became mere work- and self-righteousness, instead of being the expression of true humiliation (Luke 18:12); and how the very appearance of the penitent, unwashed and with ashes on his head, was even made matter of boasting and religious show (Matt 6:16).

So true is it that all attempts at penitence, amendment, and religion, without the Holy Spirit of God and a change of heart, only tend to entangle man in the snare of self-deception, to fill him with spiritual pride, and still further to increase his real alienation from God.’

- **You can fool yourself as to why you do what you do - BUT you will never fool your ADONAI.**

Instead, since G-d has tested us and found us fit to be entrusted with Good News, this is how we speak: not to win favour with people but with G-d, who tests our hearts.

1 Thessalonians 2:4

⁹ The Temple: Its Ministry and Services Chapter 17: Other Fasts by Alfred Edersheim

Biblical Fasting IS:

A) Personal

“But you, when you fast, wash your face and groom yourself, so that no one will know you are fasting – except your Father, who is with you in secret. Your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

Mattityahu (Matthew 6:17-18)

B) Removes Burdens

“Here is the sort of fast I want – releasing those unjustly bound, untying the thongs of the yoke, letting the oppressed go free, breaking every yoke, sharing your food with the hungry, taking the homeless poor into your house, clothing the naked when you see them, fulfilling your duty to your kinsmen!”

Yesha’uahu (Isaiah). 58:6

Often it is not just others that are bound unjustly, or oppressed, or homeless and without food (including spiritual nourishment). It is oneself that is in need of prayer and healing.

Yeshua’uahu tells us that fasting can loose these bands of sin, remove heavy burdens, allowing us to escape from oppression and break the yoke of bondage that sometimes afflicts us.

In humbling ourself and seeking ADONAI’s Face we allow ourselves to be searched and the root cause to be found and dealt with as the Ruach HaKodesh¹⁰ allows. Mistakes and errors are revealed to us, allowing us an opportunity for true repentance which aids us towards a greater reconciliation with our Father and with our brothers and sisters in Yeshua HaMaschiach.

¹⁰ Holy Spirit

C) AIDS US IN SEEKING ADONAI'S HELP

In ancient times fasting was invaluable in a period of trouble when ADONAI's help was desperately needed.

"And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. So Judah gathered together to ask help from the LORD; and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD."

Chronicles 20:3-4

Yeshua HaMaschiach fasted in order to endure a period of testing:

"Then the Spirit led Yeshua up into the wilderness to be tempted by the Adversary. After Yeshua had fasted forty days and nights, he was hungry."

Matthew 4:1-2

Acts records several instances where fasting was used in seeking ADONAI's help in making major decisions:

One time when they were worshipping the L-rd and fasting, the Ruach HaKodesh said to them, "Set aside for me Bar-Nabba and Sha'ul for the work to which I have called them." After fasting and praying, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

Acts 13:2-3

After appointing elders for them in every congregation, Sha'ul and Bar-Nabba, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the L-rd in whom they had put their trust.

Acts 14:23

Fasting should be an individual matter between the believer and our Father. Fasting helps us to humble ourselves and to draw closer to our Father. It brings us into a deeper loving relationship with our Father as we seek our His will.

WHEN SHOULD I FAST?

Obedience to the Mitzvot

In obedience to the command (mitzvah) found in Vayikra (Leviticus) 23:26-32 where the 10th day of the Seventh month has been set aside by ADONAI Elohim for Yom Kippur – the Day of Atonement.

REMEMBER!

- Fasting is not an endurance test, an optional extra, nor is it a religious ritual.
- Fasting IS NOT a substitute for obedience. **Matt 6:16-18**
- Always use the ‘chosen’ fast period to the maximum by praying alone or with others.

IMPORTANT!

- If you are pregnant or on medication, ALWAYS consult your doctor before commencing a fast.

As and when directed by the Ruach HaKodesh

It is quite common for believers who lead a Spirit led life to find them selves prompted at various times throughout the year to fast or hold a vigil.

“If you love me, you will keep my commands; and I will ask the Father, and he will give you another comforting Counsellor like me, the Spirit of Truth, to be with you forever.”

Yochanan (John) 14:15-16

One of the difficulties for believers is to know when one should pray with fasting. No one can answer that question except the believer.

One guiding principal that might be used is to know that in ADONAI’s Word fasting is always connected with a very troubled spirit or a very anxious heart before our Elohim.

The reason for fasting is not something that the believer chooses on the spur of the moment. The reason consumes the believer.

‘There was also a prophet named Hannah Bat-P’nu’el, of the tribe of Asher. She was a very old woman – she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage and had remained a widow ever since; now she was eighty-four. She never left the temple grounds but worshipped there night and day, fasting and praying.

She came by at that moment and began thanking G-d and speaking about the child to everyone who was waiting for Yerushalayim to be liberated.’

Luke 2:36-38

The reader can only make an educated guess at how many YEARS Hannah Bat-P'nu'el had fasted and prayed. If we assume that Hannah married at 20, her husband would have died when she was 27. This means Hannah had waited before her L-rd and G-d for **57** years. And Elohim answered her perseverance by allowing her to be in the right time and place and to see His One True begotten Son.

- **If you are praying and fasting for the right reason – answers may take a little time to be answered. Allow the Ruach – the Spirit of Truth to search your heart and then commit to persevere.**

According to the believer's disciplined prayer life

Now every athlete in training submits himself to strict discipline, and he does it just to win a laurel wreath that will soon wither away.

But we do it to win a crown that will last forever. Accordingly, I don't run aimlessly but straight for the finish line; I don't shadow-box but try to make every punch count.

I treat my body hard and make it my slave so that, after proclaiming the Good News to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

1 Corinthians 9:25-27

The Didache

[The Teachings of the Twelve Apostles: The Didache](#)ⁱⁱⁱ (meaning 'Teachings') is thought to have been authored by the twelve Emissaries (Apostles) and is dated circa 50-80 CE. It is the oldest surviving literature that should have canonical. It is viewed by some as the instruction book for new believing disciples who came from a gentile background coming into the Jewish faith.

The Eighth Chapter discusses fasting. It would seem from this Instruction book that new believers were encouraged to fast two days of the week, on the fourth day (Wednesday) and the sixth day (Friday).

Chapter 8

8:1 And let not your fastings be with the hypocrites, for they fast on the second and the fifth day of the week;

8:2 but do ye keep your fast on the fourth and on the preparation (the sixth) day.

8:3 Neither pray ye {as the hypocrites,} but as the Lord commanded in His Gospel, {thus pray ye.

8:4 Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name;

8:5 Thy kingdom come;

8:6 Thy will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth;

8:7 give us this day our daily bread;

8:8 and forgive us our debt, as we also forgive our debtors;

8:9 and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one;}

8:10 for Thine is the power and the glory for ever and ever.

8:11 Three times in the day pray ye so.

HOW SHOULD I FAST?

The most commonly understood method is that of the **The Food Fast**. This is a voluntary abstinence from either food or beverages or both for a set period, determined either by mitzvot (Yom Kippur) or as the believer is led by the Ruach HaKodesh.

24-Hourly Fast

The period of denial lasts for **24 Hours** and begins at sunset and ends at sunset on the following evening. During this period one should abstain from solids. One may drink fluids only.

During Yom Kippur, many believers deny themselves food, drugs and drink, including water for the duration of the period.

The Dani'el Fast

The Dani'el Fast takes its guiding principles from Dani'el 1: 8-16, where Dani'el requests that he and his companions are given only vegetables and water to eat and drink for a period of 10-days.

The Daniel Fast is a '*partial*' fast where one abstains from '*pleasant*' foods. Cereals (pulse), soups, fruit juices and other plain foods are recommended.

Alternatively substitute one meal a day for prayer during the allotted fast period.

The Ester (Esther) Fast

"..... and have them fast for me, neither eating nor drinking for three days, night and day; also I and the girls attending me will fast the same way. Then I will go in to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish."

Ester 4:16

Serious situations call for a serious response. The lives of the all the Jewish people were being held in the balance. But to appear before the King without his invite, was to break the law of the land punishable by death.

Ester Fast 1

This is a total abstinence fast where neither food nor drink is taken. **Take sips of water** throughout the duration.

Ester Fast 2

Abstinence from food for a three-day period, starting at sunset on the first day and ending at sunset on the third day. **Water** is allowed but no other drink.

A Different Kind of Fast

Nazarite Vow

*ADONAI said to Moshe, “Tell the people of Isra’el, “When either a man or a woman makes a special kind of vow, the vow of a **nazir**, consecrating himself to ADONAI, he is to abstain from wine and other intoxicating liquor, he is not to drink vinegar from either source, he is not to drink grape juice, and he is not to eat grapes or raisins. As long as he remains a nazir he is to eat nothing derived from the grapevine, not even the grape-skins or the seeds.*

*Throughout the period of his vow as a **nazir**, he is not to shave his head. Until the end of the time for which he has consecrated himself to ADONAI he is to be holy; he is to let the hair on his head grow long.*

“Throughout the period for which he has consecrated himself to ADONAI, he is not to approach a corpse. He is not to make himself unclean for his father, mother, brother or sister when they die, since his consecration to God is on his head.

Throughout the time of his being a nazir he is holy for ADONAI.....

Numbers 6:1-8

The vow of the Nazarite was voluntarily made by those who desired “to separate themselves unto the LORD” (v.2) for a determined season. “All the days of his separation he is holy unto the LORD” (v.8). During the time of his separation, the Nazarite was bound by **three absolute restrictions**.

The term "nazarite" comes from the Hebrew word *nazir* meaning "consecrated" or "separated". This vow required the man or woman to:

- Abstain from wine, wine vinegar, grapes, raisins, and according to some — alcohol and vinegar from alcohol
- Refrain from cutting the hair on one's head
- Avoid corpses and graves, even those of family members, and any structure which contains such

After following these requirements for a designated period of time (which would be specified in the individual's vow, and not to be less than 30 days), the person would immerse in a Mikvah and make three offerings, a lamb as a burnt offering (*olah*), a ewe as a sin-offering (*hatat*), and a ram as a peace offering (*shelamim*), in addition to a basket of unleavened bread, grain offerings and drink offerings, which accompanied the peace offering.

These restrictions for a Nazarite meant:

A personal sacrifice by giving up the fruits of the vine. The vine and its fruits were taken in ancient times as a symbol of joy, ie joy in the harvest.

Shame: for a man not trimming his beard or cutting his hair was a sign of mourning and in later times long hair on a man was viewed as sinful.¹¹

Separation from the Dead: To separate oneself from the daily lives and more pointedly from the deaths of those around us is a painful one.

It has been said that the world is dead in trespasses and sins. In order to serve the L-rd with all our hearts, we must follow Yeshua HaMashiach entirely and turn our backs on the things of this world.

Yeshua told the would-be disciple,

“Follow me; and let the dead bury their own dead”

Mattityahu (Matthew) 8:22

To follow Christ requires us to separate from the deadness of this world.

For Reflection:

What would ADONAI have you sacrifice for His sake? Whatever pleasure it may bring you, the joy of obedience is greater still.

What shame would He have you take upon yourself? That is your cross. Bear it with thanksgiving and Yeshua will reward you accordingly.

From what, or from whom, would ADONAI have you separate? Separate yourself and Yeshua will be glorious in your sight!

May we all separate ourselves to be holy unto the ADONAI.

The Gift of *Ahavath Chesed* (Loving of Kindness)

“Rabbi, which of the mitzvot in the Torah is the most important?” Yeshua told him, “You are to love ADONAI your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.’ This is the greatest and most important mitzvah. And a second is similar to it, ‘You are to love your neighbour as yourself.’”

All of the Torah and the Prophets are dependent on these two mitzvot.”

Mattityahu (Matthew) 22:36-40

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 11:14

In this passage, Yeshua our Teacher¹² teaches that at the heart of Torah there are two commandments: 'Love ADONAI with all your heart' AND 'love your neighbour as yourself'.

As we are in-filled each day by the Breath of ADONAI, the Ruach HaKodesh, our spirit within soars heavenward and we find ourselves filled with love and praise and we worship our Father with joy and thanksgiving.

For many of us, the second part of the mitzvah needs slightly more work. Especially if your neighbours have a particular fondness for Meatloaf and the nocturnal habits of a partying vampire. This extraordinary 'fast' gives each one of us an opportunity to practise:

BEING KIND TO ONE ANOTHER!

These *gifts of kindness* or as they are also known: '*ahavath chesed*' are as unlimited as your imagination.

Kindness - exposing the beauty of the soul

Kindness and compassion create a caring society in which crime and violence cannot thrive.

Jacqueline Tommasini , October 23, 2000

Ahavath chesed should surely be a daily requirement for each of us. It is most succinctly manifested in the act of giving, a smile, a kind word, a small deed of love, even to the ones that we don't like. Especially to those who persecute us.

It implies attitudes integral to the person's character, inseparable from one's inner nature, and spans the whole gamut of virtues which operate in interpersonal relationships -- charity and compassion, love and respect.

For Reflection:

What reward do you get if you love only those you love you? Why even tax-collectors do that! And if you are friendly only to your friends, are you doing anything out of the ordinary? Even the Goyim do that!

Mattityahu (Matthew) 5:46-47

Being nice to people that we don't like, who hurt us, who persecute us, who beat us, who lie to us, who murder us..... takes a special kind of bravery on our part. Do not underestimate how difficult performing an act of loving kindness can be and don't be surprised at the depth of the blessing you will receive from our Heavenly Father when you overcome.

¹² Matthew 23:8-10 "But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ.

*You have heard that our fathers were told, ‘**Love your neighbour**’ – and hate your enemy.’
But I tell you, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! Then you will become
children of your Father in heaven.*

Mattityahu (Matthew) 5:43-45

INTRODUCING CHILDREN TO FASTING

When is My Child Ready to Fast?

*He raised up a testimony in Ya'akov
And established a Torah in Isra'el,
He commanded our ancestors
To make this known to your children,
So that the next generation would know it,
The children not yet born,
Who would themselves arise
And tell their own children,
Who could then put their confidence in G-d,
Not forgetting G-d's deeds,
But obeying his mitzvoth.*

Tehillim (Psalms) 78:5-7

*Train a child in the way he [should] go;
And even when old, he will not swerve from it.*

Tehillim (Psalms) 22:6

These two Psalms encourage the believer to instil in their offspring from an early age, the mitzvoth of the Elohim. It is a known fact that children, will by themselves, will pick up and adopt many (often completely undesirable) habits and phrases.

In short, children learn by example!

A parent leads by example. If they see their parent fasting, then there is a high probability that they too will wish to join in and fast.

Children Under the Age of Seven

Fasting for a whole day is hard for most adults and great care should be taken when introducing the idea of fasting to a child.

It is certainly not advisable for a child under the age of nine to complete even a part food-fast, their bodies are far too small for such a task.

However, for those children, perhaps around the age of 6 onwards, who express a desire to join in with, and understand the nature of fasting there are several ways in which they may join in:

- Setting aside a favourite toy for a specified duration (morning, or the afternoon, or for the designated period);
- By not eating sweets or candy for a time;

- Giving up watching their favourite television programme, or indeed not watching television at all.
- Or perhaps your child might be encouraged to perform an act of kindness, such as helping their brother or sister in some small task.

Children Aged Seven to Nine

Between the ages of seven and nine the concept of food-fasting can be introduced very gradually, if the child is willing. In the beginning, the child could be encouraged to fast until 10 am. And then break his fast with a small cup of juice and a piece of fruit.

It is the job of the parents to determine whether their children are ready to fast.

Only they know their children's health.

A parent should be aware that fasting can be more difficult for some children than for others especially if they have a weak constitution or are taking medication. Other children who normally need to eat more frequently, or who are extra active in their play may also find fasting difficult.

In these instances a partial fast (a variation of the Daniel fast) might be the most sensible solution. Suggest to the child that he or she might like to give up crisps or sweets (or other suggestions at the discretion of their supervising parent).

If the child needs to take medications, then total abstinence should be discouraged. But again there are other ways in which the child can take part. Take this opportunity to explore with them the things they could give up or the little acts of kindness that they could perform.

**Parents! – Only YOU knows what is best for your child.
Trust your instincts in this matter!**

Children Aged Ten and Over

Medically speaking those children who are 10 years of age and older, AND who are healthy and fit should be able to cope with a period of fasting.

For those children who express a desire to join in with the fast encourage them gradually each year by starting with the Partial-Fast rather than a full fast. But if they want to try a full fast and you are quite convinced they will not come to any harm, then do allow them to try.

Do not worry if they find that they are not quite able to complete what they set out.

Make sure you praise them heartily and give the child recognition in front of the rest of the family for what they **HAVE** achieved.

MEDICATION? PREGNANCY? BUSY MOTHER?

A Broader View of Fasting

For a busy mother, or for those of us who have been blessed with pregnancy, who are nursing, or for those of us who are ill and are taking medication and where total abstinence is simply not practical fasting may well have not been considered before now.

Do not despair, if you have a desire to join in and fast, there are other viable and acceptable options available to you that are possible allowing you to perform this mitzvot that the Ruach HaKodesh is lying on your heart.

Whilst it is true that 'fasting' can be defined as '*a believers voluntary abstinence from food for spiritual purposes*', there is an even more broader view of fasting that is widely accepted:.

Richard Foster in his book Celebration of Discipline wrote:

"Fasting is the voluntary denial of normal function for the sake of intense spiritual activity."

Is a Pregnant Women Permitted to Fast?

'In Judaism there is "Life over Law", which is why it is permissible to wage war on Sabbath and High Holy Days: you cannot live by the commandments if you are dead. This is why the Maccabees fought on Sabbath and Holy Days.

One may work on Sabbath and High Holy Days as a doctor, police or fire fighter because they are all deal with life or death matters. The unborn child takes precedence and according to the Talmud a pregnant woman is permitted not to fast, because children who are not bar/bat mitzvah age are exempt from fasting, how much more so and unborn child?

If the woman desires to fast, yes a physician should be consulted, but she does not HAVE to fast at all - simply because she is pregnant.'

Rabbi Yehudah ben Shomeyr¹³

What Can I Do?

We can choose to fast from any activity that might get in the way of our spending quality time with ADONAI in prayer.

So, don't shy away from fasting because you feel you will have a really hard time "not eating" or because for medical reasons you cannot go without food.

Consider fasting from this more broad perspective and "give up" whatever it is that might distract you from having a quality, rich, deep prayer time with the Lord! Here are some ideas of what you can 'deny' yourself:

¹³Rabbi Yehudah is affiliated with MONJA - Messianic Orthodox Natsari Jewish Alliance

- meat
- sweets / candy / rich (pleasant) food
- caffeine / tea / alcohol
- watching TV
- listening to the radio
- reading the paper
- talking on the telephone
- sleeping
- reducing the hours we spend on Facebook or other social forums

How Long Should I 'Fast'

As dictated by the Ruach HaKodesh.

For example a 24 hours period beginning the 'fast' at twilight on one day and ending the 'fast' at twilight on the following day.

Please realize there is nothing more "spiritual" about embarking upon a more severe fast than a less severe one — the point is not to torture yourself, but rather to abstain from something that might normally "fill" you or satisfy you instead of ADONAI's Presence.

Eating wisely is tricky, but then how much more so is fasting wisely?

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J-e-m". The letters are connected and have a cursive, flowing appearance.

Tzom Kal

(“fast easy an have“ meaning **Kal Tzom** transliterated)

ⁱ The rending of clothing as a sign of mourning and grief has its origins in antiquity. This practice continues amongst Jewish people even today. When a close relative (parent, sibling, spouse or child) first hears of the death of a relative, it is traditional to express the initial grief by tearing one's clothing. The tear is made over the heart if the deceased is a parent, or over the right side of the chest for other relatives. This tearing of the clothing is referred to as *keriyah* (lit. "tearing"). The mourner recites the blessing describing G-d as "the true Judge," an acceptance of G-d's taking of the life of a relative. Source: [Jewish Virtual Library: Life Death and Mourning](#)

ⁱⁱ Pharisees: one of the two main components of the religious establishment in Yeshua's time. The P'rushim focussed on the Torah and what it requires of ordinary people, rather than on temple ritual. When the temple was destroyed in 70 CE the P'rushim were in a position to develop their tradition into the basis for Jewish life everywhere; this tradition is the core of the Talmud and of modern Judaism. **D H Stern Glossary: Complete Jewish Bible**

ⁱⁱⁱ [The Didache : APOSTOLIC FATHERS \(trans. and ed., J. B. Lightfoot\)](#)