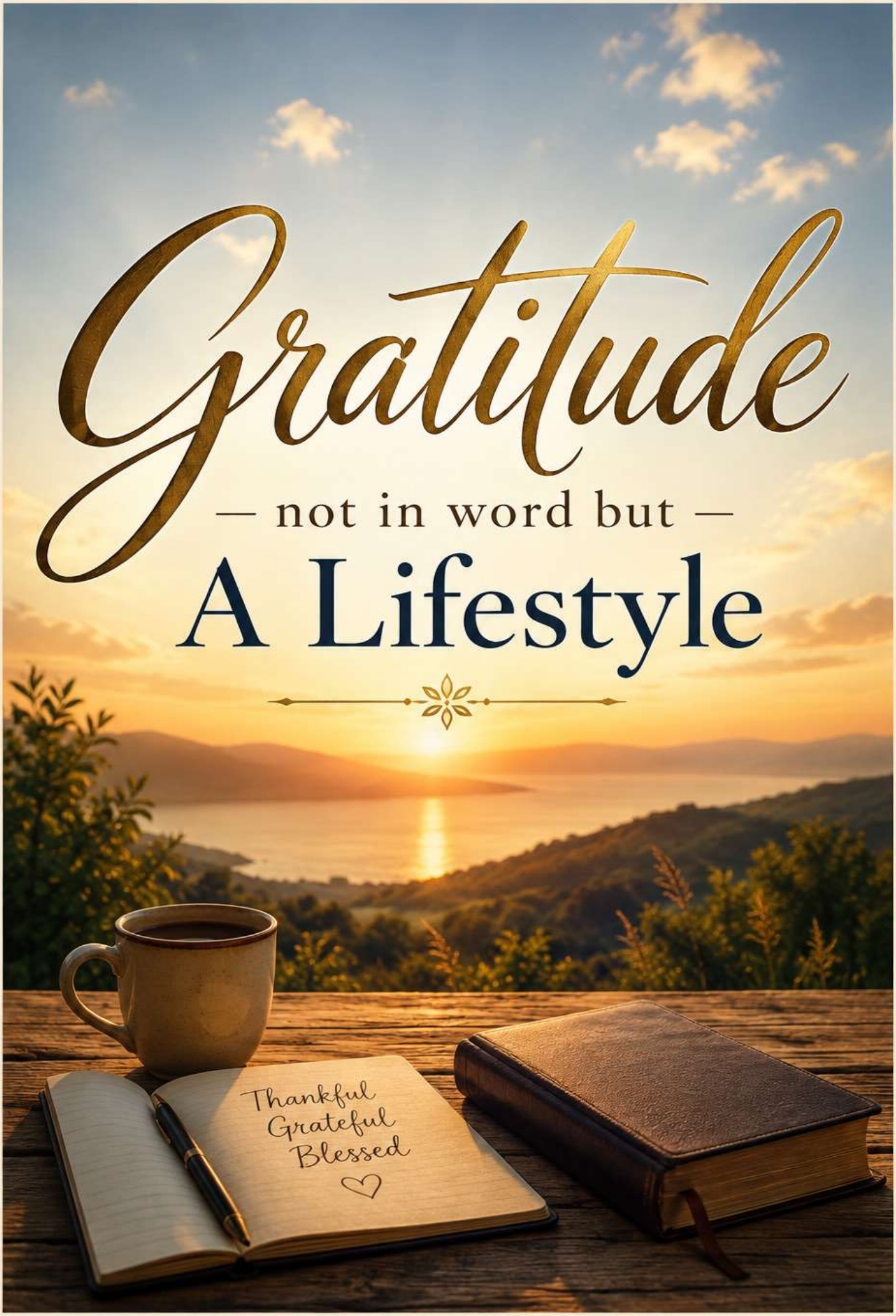
Gratitude
— not in word but —
A Lifestyle
Thankful
Grateful
Blessed

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Gratitude

Living the Fulness of Gratefulness

Introduction

When the Holy Spirit planted the seed for this book, the title “Gratitude” came as a surprise, like discovering an unexpected pregnancy. It settled deeply within my spiritual womb shortly after my personal court case on 27 July 2026, when I found myself standing in a different court than the one I had known for the previous seven years. When I asked the Holy Spirit for clarity and guidance on this book's content, I received a complete download of the Table of Contents the very next morning. At first, I planned to take my time and jot down some thoughts, but I could not stop writing. I completed the book, and for the first time, after writing several books, I wrote the introduction at the end.

From this, the reader will understand that every word, sentence, paragraph, and page originates from Him alone. I came to realize that this message was first and foremost for me: a message of confirmation, covenant, relationship, and deep communion between my Beloved and me. Each word I wrote felt deeply personal, too sacred to share. Yet the deepest revelation of this journey was the true heart of our beloved Father and His desire for us, revealed through the redemptive work of His Son, Yashuah HaMashiach. Through Him, the Father established a covenant with humanity that goes far beyond a mere promise. This covenant was fulfilled through the Blood of the Lamb, reconciling us to Him so that we are no longer foreigners but heirs. Because of His covenant promises, we can

stand firmly in the assurance that He, Sar-Shalom, will fully recompense and restore all generational losses. Yet this can only manifest in our lives through faith. The assurance of this covenant immediately places us on the path of gratitude. This book is about walking in that gratitude and demonstrating it in our daily lives. And now, my little children, we are "heirs—heirs of God and joint-heirs with Messiah—if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him" (Romans 8:17 TLV).

When we participate in His sufferings, we also share in His death, burial, and resurrection. Our suffering qualifies us to receive greater authority in Him, enabling us to overcome the darkness of this world.

> *They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives even in the face of death. Revelation 12:11 TLV*

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A Court Case

In the first half of September 2025, just after we returned from our trip to Kenya and Zanzibar, where the Lord wants to establish healing centers, I found myself in a Heavenly Court Case with the Lord. The Lord made it very clear that He wants to lift a heavy burden from my shoulders and revealed that the burden is the outstanding bond on the land we owned.

> We bought a piece of land in 2002, and I was deeply involved in the family business then. We earmarked the land for development and envisioned a wildlife estate, which didn't materialize and fell apart after the 2008 global economic crash. At that time, I didn't know the Lord had earmarked the land for His purposes, called me to a healing ministry, or predestined it for a healing center.

Because of this economic crash, and because the Lord led me out of my own desires into my God-given calling, the debt escalated enormously over time. When the Lord indicated to me in this Court case that He wanted to take away the financial burden, relief came over me, but it also brought a deep challenge of faith. I could not imagine how He would do it. Many things have happened since then, all of which contributed to the subtle doubt that crept in.

It became increasingly clear that the Lord wants to redeem the land and restore it as my inheritance. For the first time, I deeply felt in my spirit to reclaim the land for the Kingdom. When the Lord asked us what we wanted to see as the outcome, without considering the consequences of my own decision, I walked on the land, blowing the shofar with my wife, reclaiming the land for the Kingdom and canceling in the spirit the two purchase contracts on the table, awaiting transfer to the new owner. Two weeks later, the attorney announced that the buyer had canceled the contract. How

strange it might sound, I was more anxious than excited as reality set in about the outstanding debt on the land. Soon after, a letter came from the Bank demanding repayment of the outstanding amount. I could not sleep at night and simply surrendered it all to the Lord to deal with the fear, stress, and anxiety. To better understand this, I was in the middle of my own deep healing, cleansing, and purifying process with the Holy Spirit. At each sunset, I was putting pieces of my life on the altar, awaiting the Holy Spirit to burn them in my heart. Soon I realized there were still many elements in my life that hindered God's blessing from flowing, and that God was using our circumstances to bring them to the surface so we could get rid of them all. It was painful, but worth it when the relief came.

On Monday morning, the 27th July 2026 I was in the Heavenly Courts again.

> To better understand this Court Case, I first need to provide some additional background. A well-known person came for a healing and deliverance session in 2019 and has since attended many more sessions. Recently, the Lord took her to a library and made it clear that few people, even angels, have access to this place. He revealed to her that it is a place where many scrolls of unrighteous deeds are stored and that He desires to turn these unrighteous and unjust deeds into righteousness and justice. Yahweh handed her a new mantle and an anointing and said that He would teach her to read these scrolls, as if they were all written in Hebrew.

Out of the blue, we entered a new Court Room in Heaven for the first time; it was the Court of Title Deeds!

Wow, it was the first time I had ever heard of this Court Room.

Yahweh, our Advocate in the Courts, made it clear that an unfair and unrighteous land deal within the bloodline needed to be set straight.

> Again, to fully understand what the Lord wants to do, the reader must take note of the writer's background. From the very first land transaction to date, every land purchase contract has come with major, very complicated issues. I knew something was wrong spiritually, as this was not normal.

Nevertheless, the Lord indicated that a land-purchasing contract within the bloodline had been swindled and that the Courts must set it right. This injustice echoes through the bloodline into my life. An Angel entered with the Book of Evidence and handed it to our advocate, who then presented our case before the righteous Judge. The Accuser of the brethren entered and appealed. Yahweh permitted him to speak, showing a signed document for an unjust contract. Here I realized again that righteousness and justice are the foundation of the throne, for no one will ever enter the Heavenly Courts with an unrighteous deed and get away with it.

Yahweh continued explaining to the righteous Judge that the hearts of my ancestors who signed the contract were pure, that they did not fully understand the consequences of the swindled contract, and that His Blood sealed, paid for, and overrides any unjust contract. He is our Kinsman Redeemer, and He is redeeming the land to give it back to the one to whom it belongs. Christ made it clear in the Courts that when baptism took place, these accusations can no longer stand, because baptism created a new creature in Christ Jesus and canceled all unrighteous and unjust deeds. Then, as in the case of Boaz (the Kinsman Redeemer for Ruth), Yahweh took off His shoes in the Courts, presented them to the Father, and said, "Let this be the evidence that no man lies." That settles the matter.

It cuts off the echo of unjust deeds in my life!
No accusations can stand against me anymore!
It has been washed by the Blood and the Water!
The ink of the unjust document has disappeared!
The Blood has taken away every legal right the enemy has!
Angels have been charged and sent out to enforce the verdict in my favor!

Golden scales measure out the costs of recompensation!

Debt has officially been cancelled in this Shmita Year according to Biblical Law!

The land must rest – it has been redeemed!

The Lord's Warning:

After this, the Lord made it very clear:

> "Guard your heart against those who oppose you. Keep a **clean heart** *, as My restoration will always put all parties in a better condition. Both parties will benefit from My verdict."

***** When I wrote this, I was unaware of what the Lord wanted to reveal in this book to me and the reader. The Lord used this personal opening statement, addressed to me, to lead me to the deepest, most profound revelation of my life by the end of this book. I can only fall to my knees in gratitude – "who could have known the plans of the Lord, using the Holy Ghost inside of me to share with the reader a lifestyle of gratitude."

Everything is just coming full circle at the end of the Book.

The Father's Heart

Isn't it amazing to realize that all our tears came to the Father in remembrance, because He is storing them in a bottle (Psalms 56)? What is more profound is that our tears are liquid words, and the Father reads and understands them all (Psalms 38:9). In another Heavenly Court Case, Yahweh made it clear that it is because of these tears of fathers, mothers, and children that came in remembrance before Him that it is enough, and He desires to turn all unrighteous and unjust deeds into righteousness and justice. Glory to Adonai. Let us rejoice in the Lord. Let us enter His Throne of Grace with boldness in our time of need!

> *Therefore let us draw near to the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace for help in time of need. Hebrews 4:16 TLV*

Let this testimony encourage the reader today: the Lord is waiting for you, the believer to come in your time of distress, when you are desperate for help and in need; He is eagerly awaiting us to come! After this Heavenly Court Case, it was just as if the Holy Spirit led me and dropped into my spirit;

How can a believer live a life of gratitude toward our Lord and Savior, our precious Bridegroom, who loves us so much and longs to bless us more and more?

If man can only capture this desire for Him – indeed, He is the one who gives life in abundance! And the thief, the accuser of our brethren, is out to kill, steal, and destroy!

> *[10] A thief has only one thing in mind—he wants to steal, slaughter, and destroy. But I have come to give you everything in abundance, more than you expect—life in its fullness until you overflow! [11] I am the Good Shepherd who lays down my life as a sacrifice for the sheep. John 10:10-11 TPT*

The Good Shepherd will not lay down His life for us (the sheep) only to become a source of distress or destruction in our lives. Let us "delight ourselves in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart" (Psalms 37:4 ISV).

> *For I know what I have planned for you,' says the LORD. 'I have plans to prosper you, not to harm you. I have plans to give you a future filled with hope. Jeremiah 29:11 NET*

As believers, we must discover the true heart of the Father by believing the Scripture that reveals His heart to us. "Never doubt God's mighty power to work in you and accomplish all this. He will achieve infinitely more than your greatest request, your most unbelievable dream, and exceed your wildest imagination! He will outdo them all, for his miraculous power constantly energizes you" (Ephesians 3:20 TPT). Notice that the Amplified Classic Bible explicitly states that He is working it by His power to carry out His purpose!

> *Now to Him Who, by (in consequence of) the [action of His] power that is at work within us, is able to [carry out His purpose and] do superabundantly, far over and above all that we [dare] ask or think [infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes, or dreams] Ephesians 3:20 AMPC*

Indeed, it is the Father's heart and His desire that we all might prosper in spirit, soul, and body.

> *Beloved, in regard to all things I pray that you prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers. 3 John 1:2 MKJV*

Many misunderstand the Scripture, thinking that a lack of finances means not walking in prosperity. Saints, prosperity in the Bible is far beyond money. Of course, it includes money, but those who have only money are poorer than the poorest on earth. Paul understood this when he told his readers that God's priority is to carry out His purpose (not ours). Because

of this, the power at work is far beyond our wildest dreams, desires, prayers, thoughts, and hopes. "That is what the Scriptures mean when they say, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9 NLT).

Sela! Let's pause and think about this for a moment.

The question remains.

"How can a believer live a life of gratitude to our Lord and Savior, our precious Bridegroom, who loves us so much and longs to bless us more and more?"

The answer to the question above gave birth to this book. As I asked the Holy Spirit this question, the day after the Holy Ghost downloaded the Table of Contents into my spirit. Hopefully, He (the Holy Spirit) will answer this for all of us!

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Gratitude

Let’s be honest, we all deserve eternal damnation because of man’s fall in the Garden of Eden. After the fall, we are born of corruptible seed, and only by God’s grace and mercy do we receive a second chance to be born again incorruptibly.

Grace is to receive what we do not deserve

Mercy is not receiving what we deserve!

Even after our rebirth, when we receive nothing else in life, we are supposed to live a life of gratitude. A life of gratitude toward God is a continuous spiritual stance of humility and awareness. It means recognizing that every breath, benefit, and, above all, spiritual grace through Jesus Christ is an unearned gift from the Creator. It transforms thankfulness from a passing emotion into a daily way of life. Man became his own idol and, most of the time, depends on so many worldly things and systems that few acknowledge total dependence on Adonai. Knowing you do not sustain yourself but rely completely on God's daily goodness is living in gratitude. Christianity today has become a list of needs before God, instead of shifting the focus from what we lack to God’s constant presence. We only appreciate God when life is good, but we quickly forget Him in hard times, when correction and lessons are meant to teach us and build our character. Society has taught us to take more and more from life without giving anything back. In this process, we have lost our peace and now live a life of discontent, dissatisfaction, and unhappiness. Only when we begin to appreciate and walk in God’s peace can a life of gratitude slowly return. When we learn to walk in joy, peace, and contentment, deep appreciation can push out anxiety, fear, and pride. A life of gratitude matters because it reduces stress and brings better sleep patterns back into our lives. It brings people closer together, builds stronger friendships, and shifts our focus from worries to positive feelings.

Sela! Let’s pause!

Let us make a list before our Lord and begin to thank, praise, and worship Him for what we have! Start walking in gratitude for your toothbrush, soap, water, and your daily food and clothing. Above all, let's thank Him for our salvation and for giving us a second chance at eternal life.

"Because of this pause, I woke up the next morning with a profound awareness that I could get out of bed and walk to the bathroom—something we had always taken for granted in our lives."

Gratitude as a Lifestyle

In my search to understand how a believer can express a life of gratitude to our Savior, I soon discovered that no words in any human vocabulary can fully express such gratitude. Instead of trying to express our gratitude to our Lord and Savior, the soul must choose to demonstrate it through lifestyle.

And this is precisely the purpose and the main aim of this Book – to help and guide the reader with such guidelines.

Of course, the Bible offers many examples of a lifestyle of gratitude, but the lifestyle of the Apostle Paul stood out to me for many reasons. He recorded that he learned, not naturally but through many trials and persecutions, to be content and satisfied in all circumstances.

> *[11] I'm not telling you this because I'm in need, for I have learned to be satisfied in any circumstance. [12-13] I know what it means to lack, and I know what it means to experience overwhelming abundance. For I'm trained in the secret of overcoming all things, whether in fullness or in hunger. And I find that the strength of Christ's explosive power infuses me to conquer every difficulty. Philippians 4:11-13 TPT*

The writer offers a heartfelt prayer for the reader, hoping that we, too, may learn the secret to overcoming all challenges. Rather than mourning, groaning, or complaining about minor inconveniences, we should strive to live a life of gratitude. To fully understand Paul's verse on being content in all circumstances, we must look more closely at his sufferings and compare them with our own trials and tribulations.

> *23 Are they servants of the Anointed One? I'm beside myself when I speak this way, but I am much more of a servant than they. I have worked much harder for God, taken more beatings, and been dragged to more prisons than they. I've been flogged excessively, multiple times, even to the point of death. 24 Five times I've received thirty-nine lashes from the Jewish leaders. 25 Three times I experienced being beaten with rods. Once they stoned me. Three times I've been shipwrecked; for an entire night and a day I was adrift in the open sea. 26 In my difficult travels I've faced many dangerous situations: perilous rivers, robbers, foreigners, and even my own people. I've survived deadly peril in the city, in the wilderness, with storms at sea, and with spies posing as believers. 27 I've toiled to the point of exhaustion and gone through many sleepless nights. I've frequently been deprived of food and water, left hungry and shivering out in the cold, lacking proper clothing. 28 And besides these painful circumstances, I have the daily pressure of my responsibility for all the churches, with a deep concern weighing heavily on my heart for their welfare. 2 Corinthians 11:23-28 TPT*

How many of us truly care about the welfare of our brothers and sisters in Christ? Before answering, let's take a moment to examine our hearts. In today's world, many people lead selfish lives, focusing solely on their own needs and problems rather than reaching out to help our neighbors. We are often tempted by the lure of wealth and materialism. Even believers may use and exploit others—sometimes unknowingly—in their pursuit of riches. The issue isn't money itself but the love of money that leads to these behaviors.

People who want to get rich fall into traps, temptation, and harmful lusts that sink them into ruin. The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. 1 Timothy 6:9-10

David warned us when he wrote in the Psalms;

"The wealth of the world is nothing to God. So if your wealth increases, don't be boastful or put your trust in your money. And don't you think for a moment that you can get away with stealing by overcharging others just to get more for yourself". Psalms 62:10 TPT

Paul continues in this regard: "Keep your lifestyle free from the love of money and be content with what you have (1 Timothy 6:7-8 TPT). For God Himself has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5 TLV). The point is that we are misled and trapped into pursuing riches and wealth at the cost of ourselves, our family, and our neighbour."

Do not wear yourself out to get rich; do not give up your understanding. Proverbs 23:4

Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied. Ecclesiastes 5:10

Such a lifestyle of pursuing riches is a counterfeit of gratitude.

The author of the Book of Ecclesiastes in the Bible (most believe it was Solomon, the richest man who ever lived on earth) wrote that human life can feel temporary and empty when you own everything your eyes lust for on earth. He examines human effort, wealth, and wisdom "under the sun" and calls them "vanity" or "meaningless" because they do not last forever on their own. Man's deepest problem is unbelief that God can and wants to supply all our needs abundantly. The deepest root of our unbelief is a trust issue. David understood this when he wrote:

> *3 Keep trusting in the Lord and do what is right in his eyes. Fix your heart on the promises of God and you will be secure, feasting on his faithfulness. 4 Make God the utmost delight and pleasure of your life, and he will provide for you what you desire the most. 5 Give God the right to direct your life, and as you trust him along the way you'll find he pulled it off perfectly! 6 He will appear as your righteousness, as sure as the dawning of a new day. He will manifest as your justice, as sure and strong as the noonday sun. 7 Quiet your heart in his presence and pray; keep hope alive as you long for God to come through for you. And don't think for a moment that the wicked in their prosperity are better off than you. Psalms 37:3-7 TPT*

When God gives us promises, we need to trust and patiently wait upon Him. He is faithful to grant the desires of our hearts, most of the time on His conditions and in His time. How easily we can rob God because of our impatience. We need to rest in God to see His promises come to pass.

> *I am humbled and quieted in your presence. Like a contented child who rests on its mother's lap, I'm your resting child and my soul is content in you. Psalms 131:2*

A lifestyle of gratitude can be demonstrated only when we humble ourselves before our Lord, patiently waiting as He works behind the scenes.

The waiting is the lifestyle of gratitude!

"Be content with what you earn. Never extort money or terrify others by threats of violence or be guilty of accusing the innocent" (John 3:14 TPT). Contentment is not natural to humanity, and we need to learn to be content regardless of our circumstances, as Paul expressed it.

> *I have learned to be content [and self-sufficient through Christ, satisfied to the point where I am not disturbed or uneasy] regardless of my circumstances. Philippians 4:11 Amp*

1 Timothy 6:6 states that godliness with contentment is great gain, and 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says to give thanks in all things. This is God's will for you. Shalom peace is far more valuable than the riches of this world.

"What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?" (Matthew 16:26; Mark 8:36; Luke 9:25)

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. Be thankful.
Colossians 3:15

This lifestyle of gratitude begins with trusting the Lord before anything manifests in our lives. David prayed this prayer and explicitly stated, "when you succeed" – no room is left for you not to succeed – when it comes, you shall shout for joy! But this kind of gratitude cannot come through man's achievement but through God alone.

[4] May God give you every desire of your heart and carry out your every plan as you go to battle. [5] When you succeed, we will celebrate and shout for joy. Flags will fly when victory is yours! Yes, God will answer your prayers and we will praise him! [6] I know God gives me all that I ask for and brings victory to his anointed king. My deliverance cry will be heard in his holy heaven. By his mighty hand miracles will manifest through his saving strength. [7] Some find their strength in their weapons and wisdom, but my miracle deliverance can never be won by men. Our boast is in the Lord our God, who makes us strong and gives us victory! Psalms 20:4-7 TPT

Ask!

We do not have, because we do not ask. Most believers know this scripture, but few put it in context. James explained.

You want things, but you cannot have them, so you are ready to kill; you strongly desire things, but you cannot get them, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have what you want because you do not ask God for it. James 4:2 GNB

This Scripture confirms our impatience. When we want something and it does not come on our terms, we quarrel, fight, and are ready to kill. It is because we do not go to the Father first and ask Him.

May I share with the reader that the Lord has never said "no" to me. Whenever I asked, His answer was always yes — but I had to learn to wait for Him. A few years ago, a new bakkie model was released. We applied for financing, but the deal did not go through. Then the Lord told me to be patient, because He wanted to give it to us. Three years later, we bought that very vehicle at an astronomical discount. But that is only half the story. The other half involved my own insistence on a specific colour, which I still believed had come from the Lord. When the only vehicle available in that colour was sold, I continued to stand on God's promises, even though the dealers confirmed there was no stock left in that colour. Two weeks later, that exact bakkie, in that exact colour, was delivered.

Such small faithfulness of the Lord slowly grows in my personal life into a lifestyle of gratitude. And this is also true for the reader.

"And when you ask, you do not receive it, because your motives are bad; you ask for things to use for your own pleasures" (James 4:3 TPT).

> *You have become spiritual adulterers who are having an affair, an unholy relationship with the world. Don't you know that flirting with the world's values places you at odds with God? Whoever chooses to be the world's friend makes himself God's enemy! James 4:4 TPT*

The Holy Spirit explicitly led me to investigate the lives of characters who expressed gratitude as God worked in them. Studying these characters' lives of gratitude will hopefully answer our question.

"How can a believer live a life of gratitude to our Lord and Savior, our precious Bridegroom, who loves us so much and longs to bless us more and more?"

Contentment

It may also help to bring in a perspective on contentment, since Scripture teaches us to be content with what we have.

> *7 Isn't it true that our hands were empty when we came into the world, and when we leave this world our hands will be empty again? 8 Because of this, food and clothing is enough to make us content. 1 Timothy 6:7-8 TPT*

In society today, we are obsessed with having more and competing with everyone around us, so we are never satisfied with what we have.

> *Don't be obsessed with money but live content with what you have, for you always have God's presence. For hasn't he promised you, "I will never leave you alone, never! And I will not loosen my grip on your life!" Hebrews 13:5 TPT*

I have discovered that we spend our whole lives searching for what we lost in the Garden of Eden. We try to fill ourselves with things, such as shopping to feel better, extreme adrenaline sports, lust and cravings, and similar pursuits, rather than ceasing and returning to our first love. As we mentioned earlier, Paul had to learn to be content in all circumstances (Philippians 4:11). Contentment therefore comes from the inside. It means letting go of the love of money and being satisfied with what is already provided. Nowhere (not even in churches) are we taught to pursue godliness as a great spiritual wealth rather than physical hoarding. David wrote about this hoarding and asked to whom we will leave our belongings.

> *We live our lives like those living in shadows. All our activities and energies are spent for things that pass away. We gather, we hoard, we cling to our things, only to leave them all behind for who knows who. Psalms 39:6 TPT*

It all comes down to one thing: 'we are not trusting in God'. We cannot believe or imagine that He can supply all our needs. The sooner we start believing Scripture in this regard and trusting God's promises, the less fear, stress, and anxiety we will walk in.

> *25 "This is why I tell you to never be worried about your life, for all that you need will be provided, such as food, water, clothing—everything your body needs. Isn't there more to your life than a meal? Isn't your body more than clothing? 26 "Look at all the birds—do you think they worry about their existence? They don't plant or reap or store up food, yet your heavenly Father provides them each with food. Aren't you much more valuable to your Father than they? 27 So, which one of you by worrying could add anything to your life? 28 "And why would you worry about your clothing? Look at all the beautiful flowers of the field. They don't work or toil, 29 and yet not even Solomon in all his splendor was robed in beauty more than one of these! Matthew 6:25-29 TPT*

We worry all the time and reach a stage where we no longer worry. Many quote Solomon and Scripture on wealth, but they use these scriptures out of context, trying only to convince themselves to gain physical riches. Just look at the word of the Messiah himself – even Solomon, in all his wealth, had clothes as beautiful as one of these flowers (Matthew 6:29 GNB).

> Vanity of vanities, says the preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. What is the profit to a man in all his labor which he labors under the sun? A generation passes away, and a generation comes; but the earth remains forever. Ecclesiastes 1:204 MKJV

Even Solomon, in all his splendor, wrote at the end of his life, "vanity of vanities." Even Solomon could not hold on to his own wealth for a single generation. His father, David, wrote:

> *1 A song of the stairway, by King David. Lord, my heart is meek before you. I don't consider myself better than others. I'm content to not pursue matters that are over my head—such as your complex mysteries and wonders—that I'm not yet ready to understand. 2 I am humbled and quieted in your presence.* ***Like a contented child who rests on its mother's lap, I'm your resting child and my soul is content in***

you. *[3] O people of God, your time has come to quietly trust, waiting upon the Lord now and forever. Psalms 131:1-3 TPT*

That was my personal prayer for many years until the Holy Ghost did a marvelous work that the flesh could never do – from the innermost being (independently of circumstances), my soul cried out:

I AM CONTENT!

Contentment is a state of inner satisfaction, while gratitude is the active feeling of appreciation for what you have. Contentment is how you feel about your life as a whole, whereas gratitude is a specific response to gifts or blessings. Many believe that gratitude leads to contentment, but I prefer a slightly different approach. God is always working from the inside out. So, if contentment is about our inner peace, then once that peace settles and the soul cries out, "I am content," active thankfulness flows, and we begin to demonstrate a lifestyle of gratitude.

Contentment is thus our inner peace, a calm and quiet mind in our current life. We are now satisfied, feeling that our present situation is enough. We then reach a stable state, a long-lasting condition of rest and freedom from worry.

Gratitude is active thankfulness. It is the practice of noticing and thanking others or life for good things. It shifts your mind to see daily blessings and gifts. It can also foster a feeling that often builds contentment over time. It does not come naturally, as Paul indicated, and must be learned over time. In his book, The Art of Actually Seeing God in Your Life, Clark David wrote;

I discovered that contentment wasn't about having more—it was about seeing more.

- Seeing Christ in the quiet.
- Seeing God's hand in the ordinary.
- Seeing grace in unexpected places.

My circumstances did not improve, but my soul found peace. I learned, slowly and painfully, that contentment is not the absence of desire—it is the presence of trust.

Clark, David R. Gratitude: The Art of Actually Seeing God in Your Life (Connecting With Christ Book 2) (p. 62). (Function). Kindle Edition.

"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." — Philippians 4:11

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Gratitude while bedridden

While I was writing, I found David Clark's story even more poignant than Paul's sufferings. Both stories confirmed that gratitude does not come without a price; it comes at a great cost and must be learned. In his book, "Gratitude – The art of actually seeing God in your life," Clark wrote that gratitude entered his life not during a season of ease but during a season of stripping – when nearly everything that once defined him was unmercifully ripped away.

> "What I learned, slowly and painfully, is that gratitude is not the result of seeing good circumstances. Gratitude is what teaches us to see God – especially when circumstances collapse".
>
> Clark, David R. Gratitude: The Art of Actually Seeing God in Your Life (Connecting With Christ Book 2) (p. 15). (Function). Kindle Edition.

During his military service in Iraq, his body was exposed to toxic material and his body collapsed. This toxic exposure shut down his body, and he has been bedridden for more than ten years. He can no longer practice law (his profession), travel with his family (what they did for 20 years as a family), attend church (as a spiritual leader), stand, walk, or sit, hold his children or enjoy simple pleasures, such as soaking in a warm bath. He chose a unique path of gratitude that defied all expectations and began to thank God for what remained:

- "I thank Him for pain, because pain reminded me there were moments without it.
- I thanked Him when the pain eased, even briefly.
- I thanked Him for the strength to breathe when breathing itself felt uncertain—when drawing one more breath required conscious effort.
- I thanked Him for breath when it came without thought or strain.

- I thanked Him for one more sunrise—especially after long nights spent awake, unsure whether morning would come.
- I thanked Him for the ability to speak, even if only through a microphone.
- And I thanked Him for the body's most basic functions—eating, swallowing, elimination—because I had learned that even these simplest processes are gifts, not guarantees".

"My circumstances did not improve – but I did. The room that confined me became holy ground. Silence became a place of encounter. Limitation became intimacy. Through gratitude, I began to recognize the presence of Christ – not in spite of my suffering, but within it. Peace replaced panic. Joy began to outweigh pain. Hope took root where despair had once lived.

Gratitude did not heal my body – but it saved my life"

Clark, David R. Gratitude: The Art of Actually Seeing God in Your Life (Connecting With Christ Book 2) (p. 24, 25). (Function). Kindle Edition.

Regardless of our own stories, there is always something to be thankful for. At times, we may feel hopeless until we hear another person's testimony and realize how much we still have to thank God for. Let us bow low before our Creator and begin, at the very least, to thank Him with our words: for His grace, which we receive in abundance and far beyond what we deserve, and for His mercy, by which He does not punish us as we deserve. May our words of gratitude gradually shape our hearts until thankfulness becomes more than something we say. May it become the way we live.

> "Gratitude is not learned in a single step—it unfolds over time, through understanding, formation, and daily practice.
>
> Scripture shows us that gratitude is closely tied to remembering, noticing, and recognizing what God has already done. Before gratitude becomes a habit, it must become a way of seeing.
>
> Gratitude does not only change how we see God—it changes how we see ourselves, others, and our circumstances. Here, gratitude becomes formative, shaping relationships, service, humility, and trust."

Clark, David R.. Gratitude: The Art of Actually Seeing God in Your Life (Connecting With Christ Book 2) (p. 27-28). (Function). Kindle Edition.

To embark on this journey, let us study the Bible and learn from the Bible characters who lived lives of gratitude.

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Biblical Characters Living a Life of Gratitude

The Grateful Leper

"So where are the other nine?" Jesus asked. "Weren't there ten who were healed? Luke 17:17 TPT

If Jesus was trying to give us statistics in this verse, we might say that only 10% of believers speak out loud their gratitude to the Lord, which means even fewer believers live a lifestyle of gratitude. In my walk with the Lord, working daily with believers, I might fully agree with such a statement. Very few souls are truly thankful when one is just listening to the mourning and complaining of everyday life.

My second observation is that a true life of gratitude seems to come only after a miracle and/or full restoration. Let us carefully examine the following passage.

> *15 One of them, a foreigner from Samaria, when he discovered that he was completely healed, turned back to find Jesus, shouting out joyous praises and glorifying God. 16 When he found Jesus, he fell down at his feet and thanked him over and over, saying to him, "You are the Messiah." This man was a Samaritan. Luke 17:15-16 TPT*

Ten lepers stood at a distance as Jesus entered a certain village. They lifted their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" When He saw them, He said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed. Notice that all ten lepers received their physical healing on their way to the priests, but only one returned. The nine hurried off to fulfill the legal requirements for re-entry into society, while the outsider (the Samaritan) chose a relationship with the Healer over the rules

of the religion! Nine performed the "duty," but only one responded with gratitude.

> *17 "So where are the other nine?" Jesus asked. "Weren't there ten who were healed? 18 They all refused to return to give thanks and give glory to God except you, a foreigner from Samaria?" 19 Then Jesus said to the healed man lying at his feet,* ***"Arise and go. It was your faith that brought you salvation and healing."*** *Luke 17:17-19 TPT*

The King James Version translates "healing" as "made thee whole," and the Greek word for making whole is **sõzõ**, which speaks of healing, deliverance, and wholeness. That is what Peter wrote in his epistle about full salvation. Few believers are equipped with this deep Biblical truth.

G4982 (Strong)

σώζω

sōzō

sode'-zo

From a primary word σως sōs (contraction for the obsolete σάος saos, "safe"); to *save*, that is, *deliver* or *protect* (literally or figuratively): - heal, preserve, save (self), do well, be (make) whole.

For more information about full salvation, please visit our website and download or order online my book, "The Apocalypse of Full Salvation"

True gratitude comes only through a personal encounter with Christ Jesus. Many believers pray and beg God for help, only to return to normal life after receiving what they asked for.

A third observation and common practice is that those who have belonged to a "church" (congregation) since childhood often exhibit a Pharisee-like spirit, claiming that they are descendants of Abraham and were never in bondage (John 8:34-36). This Pharisee-like spirit claims rights based on lineage rather than a true relationship with the Messiah. Notice the outsider – a Samaritan (foreigner) – who was not part of Israel, was the one to

return and receive his deeper spiritual healing and wholeness. Only those who truly attain full salvation can shout for joy, praise, and glorify Adonai. When that miracle of full restoration comes from the only true source, Jehovah Raphe, our healer, you cannot but fall at our heavenly Father's feet and thank him over and over. Only then, spontaneously, will a true voice of gratitude declare:

"You are the Messiah."

Being physically healed because the medical profession helped does not mean you are sanctified. You might have received what you asked for, but a true gratitude lifestyle comes only when you recognize the source of the miracle, return, and acknowledge the only true healer – Jehovah Rapha.

A gratitude lifestyle will always lead to a personal relationship with the Messiah, where full restoration and wholeness are realized. That is the work of our Covenant Redeemer, our Sar-Shalom – the Prince of Peace! Let's adopt the same posture of worship, recognizing that physical healing is temporary, but the salvation that comes through active faith makes a person entirely whole.

The Grateful Leper: Out of ten healed men, only one returned to loudly praise God and thank Jesus.

Let us, too, learn to appreciate our daily life even more, returning at each sunrise and sunset to pause in gratitude for His goodness, His mercy, grace, and loving-kindness, as David wrote;

> At each and every sunrise we will be thanking you for your kindness and your love. As the sun sets and all through the night, we will keep proclaiming, "You are so faithful!" Psalms 92:2 TPT

Let us pause at sunrise to experience the love of our Bridegroom. Let us pause at sunset to proclaim His faithfulness throughout the day. Let us pause daily simply to enjoy life with our Beloved. God does wonderful things for us each day, and gratitude begins when we learn to recognize those sacred moments. Now let us learn from the one who could not stop praising and worshiping Him: David, a man who made singing, dancing, and praising God a daily priority, and whose life became a lifestyle of worship.

A Lifestyle of Worshipping

I find David's genealogy not only very interesting but also profound. In Genesis 38, we read the story of Judah and Tamar. Judah refused to give his son, Shelah, to Tamar in marriage. Tamar decided to sit by the road, offering herself as a prostitute to Judah. When Judah asked Tamar what she wanted, instead of asking for money or livestock, she asked for his seal, his cord, and the staff in his hand.

> *13 Then Tamar was told, "Look! Your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his flocks." 14 And she removed her widow's clothes from herself, covered herself with a veil, wrapped herself, and sat by the entrance to the springs on the way to Timnah (for she saw that Shelah had grown up and she had not been given to him as a wife). 15 When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute because she had covered her face. 16 So he turned aside to her along the way and said, "Please let me sleep with you" (for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law). "What," she asked, "will you give me to sleep with me?" 17 "I will send you a young goat from the flock," he said, "Provided you give a pledge until you send it," she said. 18 "What kind of pledge shall I give you?" he asked. "Your seal, and your cord, and your staff in your hand," she said. So he gave them to her and he slept with her, and she got pregnant by him. Genesis 38:13-18 TLV*

Genealogy

Tamar gave birth to twins out of wedlock: Perez and Zerah. Generations later, Salmon descended from the line of Perez. Salmon married Rahab, the woman from Jericho who protected the spies Joshua sent. Together, Rahab and Salmon had a son named Boaz. Boaz later married Ruth, the Moabite woman who had returned with Naomi to Bethlehem, Naomi's hometown. Their son, Obed, was lovingly regarded as "Naomi's baby boy." From Obed came Jesse, and from Jesse came David.

> And we all know that the "Son of Man" came from the root of David, of the Tribe of Judah.

What seemed like humiliation to Tamar, having twins out of wedlock, turned out to be a matriarch in the Messiah's genealogy. Rahab did not for a moment in Jericho think she would be part of this royal bloodline of the Messiah, nor did Ruth the Moabite dream of being the great-great-grandmother of the son of Jesse, David.

"Imagine the gratitude they would have felt if they had known!"

Let this be a great encouragement that nothing is impossible for the Lord and that He can redeem anything – yes, even if you were born out of wedlock.

David

Just think how special David must feel, knowing that he came from a bloodline of prostitution, was appointed king of Israel, and then became well known to the world: "the man according to My heart," says the Lord.

> *"But now your kingdom will not endure; the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him ruler of his people, because you have not kept the Lord's command. 1 Samuel 13:14*

> *"After removing Saul, he made David their king. God testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do." Acts 13:22*

According to the Lord's heart, this man truly lived a life of gratitude because of his deep relationship with the Lord. David, a true worshipper, showed this gratitude when the dwelling place of God, the Ark of the Covenant, returned to Jerusalem. David wore a linen ephod instead of his royal garments, symbolizing humble worship before God rather than displaying his kingly status. This act of gratitude sparked conflict in his household when his wife, Michal (Saul's daughter), watched from a window and despised him, thinking he had exposed himself shamefully to the servant girls.

Notice David's response to his wife, Michal.

> *[21] "It was before Adonai," David said to Michal, "who chose me instead of your father and all his household, appointing me ruler over the people of Adonai, over Israel! So I danced Before Adonai, [22] and will dishonor myself even more than this, and will be low in my own eyes. Yet in the eyes of the slave girls whom you mentioned, I will be honored." 2 Samuel 6:21-22 TLV*

One might wonder why Michal had no children until her death following this event (2 Samuel 6:23). Might it be that the Lord warned us not to touch His anointed ones? (Psalm 105:15 and 1 Chronicles 16:22).

David, the odd one, the youngest of the sons of Jesse, was set apart and prepared to become the king of Israel. There in the wilderness, David learned to truly worship Adonai, wrote many songs, and fought many battles to protect the sheep. David learned to fully trust in the Lord, and gratitude grew from that trust to such a level that the king humbled himself before the people so he would not be ashamed to show his gratitude to His Savior. The key Scriptures on David's gratitude are found in the Psalms.

- Praise God at all times:

"I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth." Psalm 34:1

- Wholehearted thanksgiving:

"I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing your praise." Psalm 138:1

- A humble response to God's grace:

"Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far?" 2 Samuel 7:18

- A public song of thanks:

"Oh, give thanks to the Lord! Call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples!" 1 Chronicles 16:8

As we study David's life, we find that he constantly sought the Lord's face to save him from all his enemies. Even his closest friends and family turned against him in his old age. Through all his hardships, David remained grateful. He thanked and trusted God even as he hid in caves and fled from enemies. He often remembered his humble beginnings as a shepherd boy and recognized that everything he had came from God.

David truly walked in a lifestyle of worship. He made singing, dancing, and praising God a daily priority.

This lifestyle comes with a price few are willing to pay. We are all familiar with David's struggle to survive against all his enemies, especially the "Saul spirit."

Protect Me

Protect me, O Lord, was David's constant cry. Through these trials and persecution, even in his old age, David lived a life of gratitude. Let David's

biography be an example for us of how he, too, learned this precious lesson of life.

> *[1] A poetic song, by King David. O Lord, fight for me! Harass the hecklers, accuse my accusers. Fight those who fight against me. [2-3] Put on your armor, Lord; take up your shield and protect me. Rise up, mighty God! Grab your weapons of war and block the way of the wicked who come to fight me. Stand for me when they stand against me! Speak over my soul: "I am your strong Savior!" [4] Humiliate those who seek my harm. Defeat them all! Frustrate their plans to defeat me and drive them back. Disgrace them all as they have devised their plans to disgrace me. [5] Blow them away like dust in the wind, with the Angel of Almighty God driving them back! [6] Make the road in front of them nothing but slippery darkness, with the Angel of the Lord behind them, chasing them away! [7] For though I did nothing wrong to them, they set a trap for me, wanting me to fall and fail. [8] Surprise them with your ambush, Lord, and catch them in the very trap they set for me. Let them be the ones to fail and fall into destruction! Psalms 35:1-5 TPT*

David relied on Adonai-Tzva'ot, the military commander of the Heavenly Hosts. In David's very first battle, he faced Goliath and announced it!

> *"David said to the Philistine, 'You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied'" 1 Samuel 17:45 NIV*

Show me Mercy

A lifestyle of gratitude is to cry out with honesty to Adonai-Tzva'ot for mercy.

> *[12] When I show them mercy, they bring me misery. I'm forsaken and forlorn, like a motherless child. [13] I even prayed over them when they were sick. I was burdened and bowed low with fasting and interceded for their healing, and I didn't stop praying. [14] I grieved for them,*

heavyhearted, as though they were my dearest family members or my good friends who were sick, nearing death, needing prayer. Psalms 35:12-14 TPT

David showed mercy, interceded for his people, yet his best friends turned against him.

Meanwhile my enemies are out to kill me, plotting my ruin, speaking of my doom as they spend every waking moment planning how to finish me off. Psalms 38:12 TPT

A true gratitude lifestyle is marked by spiritual maturity, showing mercy when people betray you.

37 But you can tell who are the blameless and spiritually mature. What a different story with them! The godly ones will have a peaceful, prosperous future with a happy ending. Psalms 37:37 TPT

19 My enemies are many. They hate me and persecute me, though I've done nothing against them to deserve it. 20 I show goodness to them and get repaid evil in return. And they hate me even more when I stand for what is right. Psalms 38:19 TPT

God will vindicate you

That kind of spiritual maturity will humble us, as we realize only Adonai will vindicate us.

23 Now is the time to awake! Rise up, Lord! Vindicate me, my Lord and my God! 24 You have every right to judge me, Lord, according to your righteousness, but don't let them rejoice over me when I stumble. Psalms 35:23-24 TPT

While the wicked hatch their evil plots against the righteous, it is the Lord alone who will step in with righteousness and justice.

4 They lie awake at night to hatch their evil plots, always planning their schemes of darkness, and never once do they consider the evil of their ways. 5 But you, O Lord, your mercy-seat love is limitless, reaching higher than the highest heavens. Your great faithfulness is infinite,

stretching over the whole earth. [6] Your righteousness is unmovable, just like the mighty mountains. Your judgments are as full of wisdom as the oceans are full of water. Your tender care and kindness leave no one forgotten, not a man nor even a mouse. Psalms 36:46 TPT

A Life Motto

A spiritually mature life brings us to the place where we guard our ways and our speech. When we succeed in living this life motto, David encourages us all to step in. A life of gratitude will be evident in our walk with the Lord.

1-2 For the Pure and Shining One. A song of praising, by King David. Here's my life motto, the truth I live by: I will guard my ways for all my days. I will speak only what is right, guarding what I speak. Like a watchman guards against an attack of the enemy, I'll guard and muzzle my mouth when the wicked are around me. I will remain silent and will not grumble or speak out of my disappointment. But the longer I'm silent the more my pain grows worse! Psalms 39:1-2 TPT

Restore Us

What more evidence can we provide than these liquid words of David for a restored life of joy before he dies.

[11] No one endures when you rebuke and discipline us for our sins. Like a cobweb is swept away with a wave of the hand, you sweep away all that we once called dear. How fleeting and frail our lives! We're nothing more than a puff of air. Pause in his presence

[12] Lord, listen to all my tender cries. Read my every tear, like liquid words that plead for your help. I feel all alone at times, like a stranger to you, passing through this life just like all those before me. [13] Don't let me die without restoring joy and gladness to my soul. May your frown over my failure become a smile over my success. Psalms 39:11-13 TPT

It is in this waiting period that the Lord reads and understands our tears, like liquid words, and we learn the deepest lesson of gratitude from our lives.

Righteousness

Throughout Scripture, we find a golden thread concerning righteousness, which we will discuss in greater detail later. Notice how David continually relies on righteousness while also exposing unrighteousness wherever it appears.

> *6 It's not sacrifices that really move your heart. Burnt offerings, sin offerings—that's not what brings you joy. But when you open my ears and speak deeply to me, I become your willing servant, your prisoner of love for life. 7 So I said, "Here I am! I'm coming to you as a sacrifice, for in the prophetic scrolls of your book you have written about me. 8 I delight to fulfill your will, my God, for your living words are written upon the pages of my heart." 9 I tell everyone everywhere the truth of your* ***righteousness****. And you know I haven't held back in telling the message to all. 10 I don't keep it a secret or hide the truth. I preach of your faithfulness and kindness, proclaiming your extravagant love to the largest crowd I can find! 11 So Lord, don't hold back your love or withhold your tender mercies from me. Keep me in your truth and let your compassion overflow to me no matter what I face. 12 Evil surrounds me; problems greater than I can solve come one after another. Without you, I know I can't make it. My sins are so many! I'm so ashamed to lift my face to you. For my guilt grabs me and stings my soul until I am weakened and spent. 13 Please, Lord! Come quickly and rescue me! Take pleasure in showing me your favor and restore me. 14 Let all who seek my life be humiliated! Let them be confused and ashamed, God. Scatter those who wish me evil; they just want me dead. 15 Scoff at every scoffer and cause them all to be utter failures. Let them be ashamed and horrified by their complete defeat. 16 But let all who passionately seek you erupt with excitement and joy over what you've done! Let all your lovers rejoice continually in the Savior, saying, "How great and glorious is our God!" 17 Lord, in my place of weakness and need, I ask*

again: Will you come and help me? I know I'm always in your thoughts. You are my true Savior and hero, so don't delay to deliver me now, for you are my God. Psalms 40:6-17 TPT

A lifestyle of gratitude is constantly aware that help is on its way.

Gratitude in the Midst of Battles

The memory of that day is still fresh in my mind, when the Holy Ghost announced my victory in many battles. That day, the Lord himself announced victory over my circumstances from the Book of Chronicles.

And the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was quiet. For his God gave him rest round about. 2 Chronicles 20:30 MKJV

We find the story of King Jehoshaphat in the Book of Chronicles, a testimony to the king who let go and let God (2 Chronicles chapters 17-20). When foreign kings came against Israel in great numbers, Jehoshaphat feared and called for a fast.

[1] And it happened after this the sons of Moab, and the sons of Ammon came in, and with them others besides the Ammonites, to battle against Jehoshaphat. [2] And they came in and spoke to Jehoshaphat, saying, A great multitude has come against you from beyond the sea on this side of Syria. And behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar, which is En-gedi. [3] And Jehoshaphat feared and set himself to seek Jehovah, and called for a fast throughout all Judah. 2 Chronicles 20:1-3 MKJV

We all knew we serve a great God, but faith isn't faith until it faces hard times. Judah came under attack from several strong armies. He knew he couldn't fight them all off, so he went straight to the temple and asked God for help. Jehoshaphat feared, but he didn't try to figure it out himself or grow discouraged. Instead, he asked God for help.

> *14 And the Spirit of Jehovah came on Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the congregation. 15 And he said, Listen, all Judah, and you people of Jerusalem, and King Jehoshaphat! So says Jehovah to you, Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude. For the battle is not yours, but God's. 16 Tomorrow go down against them. Behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz. And you shall find them at the end of the valley, before the wilderness of Jeruel. 17* ***You shall not fight in this battle****. Set yourselves and stand, and see the salvation of Jehovah with you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not fear nor be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them, for Jehovah will be with you. 2 Chronicles 20:13-17 MKJV*

Sometimes we read scripture without realizing its emotional depth. Try to put yourself in Jehoshaphat's place and imagine you are the one surrounded by these forces, knowing you are doomed. And then, on top of it, someone comes to you and says, thus says the Lord, you shall not fight.

Let's be honest. Most of us will not start praising and worshiping. Most believers would rather make their own plans and call for help. Even more ridiculous is calling the band to make music while facing the enemy, instead of calling troops, archers, infantry, and artillery. What powerful spiritual warfare armor to carry when the enemy comes in like a flood, arise with music, praising and worshiping Adonai.

> *And they rose early in the morning and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. And as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and you people of Jerusalem. Believe in Jehovah your God, and so you shall be established. Believe His prophets, and so you shall be blessed. 2 Chronicles 20:20 MKJV*

"And he consulted with the people, and **he appointed singers** to Jehovah and praisers to praise the beauty of holiness as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise Jehovah, for His mercy endures forever" (2 Chronicles 20:21 MKJV).

> *22 And when they began to sing and to praise, Jehovah set ambushes against the sons of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, who had come against Judah. And they were beaten. 23 For the sons of Ammon and Moab stood up against the people of mount Seir to completely kill and destroy. And when they had made an end of the people of Seir, everyone helped to destroy another. 2 Chronicles 20:22-23 MKJV*

Jehoshaphat and the people decided not to worry but to trust Him. He told them to go out to battle, yet to stand still and see God's power. The battle belonged to the Lord! So the army gathered, and instead of fighting, they sang praises to God. They expressed gratitude before God had even helped them! Notice what has happened. When Judah sent men to the watchtower, behold, dead bodies were scattered all over the place.

> *And when Judah came to the watchtower in the wilderness, they looked at the multitude. And behold! They were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped. 2 Chronicles 20:43 MKJV*

God worked a miracle, and the armies began fighting each other rather than Judah. They ended up killing each other and running away. See what grateful praise will get you?!

Imagine, after such a victory, how the people must have lived a life of gratitude?

The story didn’t end there; it continued as they gathered the spoil for four days and returned with great riches from a battlefield they hadn't even fought on.

> *25 And Jehoshaphat and his people came to take their plunder, they found among them in abundance both riches and precious jewels in great number with the dead bodies, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away. And they were three days in gathering of the plunder, it was so much. 26 And on the fourth day they gathered themselves in the Valley of Blessing. For there they*

blessed Jehovah. And the name of the same place was called the Valley of Blessing until this day. 2 Chronicles 20:26 MKJV

We, too, have to learn this important lesson from this King, Jehoshaphat, to run to the Throne Room of Mercy so that we can receive mercy and find grace in a time of need.

Therefore let us draw near to the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace for help in time of need. Hebrews 4:16 TLV

When the Holy Spirit speaks, we need to obey without questioning it or allowing the enemy to steal the seed. Stealing the seed before it can even germinate breeds doubt and unbelief, hindering us from receiving victory and blessings. "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it" (Luke 11:28). Most believers know the scriptures, but few obey them. James wrote, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says" (James 1:22). Action is required, not just hearing. To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. God cares more about an obedient heart than about ritual offerings (something King David well understood).

And Samuel said, Does Jehovah delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice! To listen is better than the fat of rams! 1 Samuel 15:22 MKJV

Jehoshaphat obeyed God; they listened to the voice of the Holy Ghost and recognized God's authority. Through this act of obedience, they also received a blessing and returned to Jerusalem with riches after the battle.

"We ought to obey God rather than men." God's authority comes first above human rules. Acts 5:29

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Refusing the King's Delicacies

In the Book of Daniel, we often overlook deep biblical lessons for modern believers. Many believers think we have nothing in common with Babylon. And, of course, this is true, but we are also called to shine our light in this perverse world, as Paul wrote.

> *For then you will be seen as innocent, faultless, and pure children of God, even though you live in the midst of a brutal and perverse culture. For you will appear among them as shining lights in the universe. Philippians 2:15 TPT*

That is precisely what happened to Daniel and his friends. Notice that they were of royal descent, just as we are of a royal priesthood. Not only that, but the wise and most intelligent were also brought to Babylon to be taught the Chaldean language. Today, our education system does the same: it takes our noble ones into captivity to teach them a different language.

> *3 Then the king told Ashpenaz the chief of his officials to bring in some of the sons of Israel from royal descent and nobility— 4 youths without any defect, handsome, proficient in all wisdom, knowledgeable, intelligent and capable of serving in the king's palace. He was to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans. 5 The king allotted them a daily portion from the king's delicacies and from the wine that he drank. They were to be trained for three years, and at the end they were to stand before the king. 6 Now among them were some from the sons of Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. 7 The chief officer gave them new names: to Daniel, Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abed-nego. Daniel 1:7 TLV*

This Babylonian system even changes their names and offers them foreign delicacies to drink, just as our worldly system changes our children's names and offers them forbidden delicacies. Even worse, these men were castrated, losing their ability to procreate. Likewise, our generation has lost its spiritual ability to step into our God-given destiny. The Jezebel principality deprives us of our kingship and priesthood, forbidding men from

speaking up and leading spiritually. Daniel and his friends never complained but remained faithful, refusing to eat the king's delicacies.

> *But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the king's delicacies or with the wine he was drinking, so he entreated the chief official for permission not to defile himself. Daniel 1:8 TLV*

His faithfulness to Adonai prepared Daniel's heart to live a life of gratitude, and he never bowed before any statue or the oracles of the kings of Babylon. This lifestyle, as Daniel demonstrated, is the exact opposite of what modern believers live. We criticize the system but bow before the very same system we criticize. When the magicians, astrologers, and sorcerers could not interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream, it was Daniel, with deep insight and revelation, who revealed the secret to the king. Daniel knew it came from Adonai, and he praised God on his knees for it.

> *Daniel praised God after getting a dangerous secret revealed: "I thank and praise you, God of my ancestors: You have given me wisdom and power." Daniel 2:23*

When Nebuchadnezzar made himself a statue and forced the citizens of Babylon to bow before it, it was Daniel's friends who refused. Even when that act put their lives in danger and sent them into the furnace, Adonai came forth and saved them. Daniel lived a life of deep gratitude. He thanked God three times a day, even when facing a death sentence in a foreign land. His habit of thanksgiving remained strong through good times and hard trials. During the reign of King Darius in ancient Babylon, the king was misled by his own pride and tricked into signing a decree that anyone who prayed to anyone other than himself would be thrown into the lions' den.

> *Daniel went to his upstairs room. The windows opened toward Jerusalem. He knelt down three times a day. He prayed and gave thanks to God, just as he always did, even after knowing a new law made it a crime. Daniel 6:10 KJV*

Daniel, a faithful servant of God and loved by Darius, prayed to the one true God three times a day. He wasn't about to stop because of some stupid decree. Of course, he was caught praying and, much to King Darius's regret, was thrown into the den of lions. Daniel refused to obey the system's ungodly requirements, which directly opposed his beliefs, and ended up in the lion's den. Again, Adonai came forth and saved Daniel every single time. Over time, the kings Daniel served perished, but Daniel prospered in Babylon. Notice what happened when Daniel lived a life of gratitude. He found favor in the king's eyes, his enemies were destroyed, and Daniel prospered.

> *24 Then the king was overjoyed, and ordered Daniel taken up out of the den. So Daniel was lifted out of the pit. No injury of any kind was found on him because he had trusted in his God. 25 At the king's command, those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and thrown into the lions' den—they, their children, and their wives. They had not even reached the bottom of the pit before the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones. 26 Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages dwelling in all the earth: "May your peace be abundant! 27 I issue a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom people are to tremble with fear before the God of Daniel. "For He is the living God, enduring forever! His kingdom will never be destroyed, His dominion will never end. 28 He delivers and rescues. He performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on earth. He has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions!" 29 So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.*

Even more than this, Adonai sent a messenger angel to Daniel, who was constantly on his knees in prayer, in response to Daniel's faithfulness and his lifestyle of gratitude, with an end-time prophecy that we in 2026 are still awaiting the fullness of its fulfillment.

Is it possible that a lifestyle of gratitude and faithfulness might open gateways to receive insight, wisdom, and revelatory knowledge about the future?

God is always faithful in making known his plans to his beloved servants.

For the Lord Jehovah will do nothing unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets. Amos 7:7 MKJV

With absolute precision, the angel announced the exact date of the Messiah's crucifixion – the 69th week, when the Messiah would be cut off (put to death), not for himself but for his people (Daniel 9:25-26). The prophecy continues to this day; the 70th week is determined upon thy people and upon the holy city to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy (Daniel 9:24).

Deep Biblical secrets will be revealed to those servants of the Most High God who live a lifestyle of gratitude.

From Prison to Prime Minister

The story of Joseph is, in fact, a typology of the Messiah. Joseph was thrown into a pit, and his clothes were covered with the blood of an animal. In the same way, Christ was cast into the pit the night before He appeared before Pontius Pilate, His own garments covered with His blood. Joseph was sold by his brothers for twenty pieces of silver; likewise, the Messiah was betrayed for thirty pieces of silver. Joseph's brothers did not recognize him on their first visit, just as His own people did not recognize the Messiah at His first coming. Joseph revealed himself to his brothers on their second visit; likewise, the Messiah will reveal Himself to His own people, Israel, at His second coming. All of this happened to Joseph because of envy. As a child, Adonai revealed his mantle, destiny, and anointing to him. But when Joseph shared it with his brothers, jealousy entered their hearts, and they began seeking ways to get rid of him.

One cannot help wondering how often Joseph, too, asked Adonai what was going on in his life. Like many of us, Joseph received many promises but could not see them fulfilled. He received his mantle of many colors, yet he lost it. He saw his own family bow before him, but they rejected and abandoned him, leaving him with the thought that he would never see them again.

Joseph's life in Genesis 37–50 teaches us to choose gratitude and trust God, even in seasons of betrayal and suffering. When his brothers sold him and when he was later imprisoned, Joseph did not allow bitterness to take root. He looked beyond his pain, honored God, and eventually recognized how the Lord used his trials for good. Joseph also had to learn forgiveness, refusing to walk in unforgiveness or resentment toward his own brothers. Adonai allows betrayal to prepare the heart through deep inner circumcision, shaping us to demonstrate the image and likeness of God. We see this clearly in Joseph's words: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (Genesis 50:20). Joseph saw God's greater plan instead of holding on to a grudge. Often, we overlook what God is preparing us for. God cares more about who we become and how useful we are in His Kingdom than about simply providing for our selfish desires. In Psalm 105, we discover a deep secret about God's ways and how He prepares His chosen vessels.

> *16 So God decreed a famine upon Canaan land, cutting off their food supply. 17 But he had already sent a man ahead of his people to Egypt; it was Joseph, who was sold as a slave.18 His feet were bruised by strong shackles and his soul was held by iron. 19* ***God's promise to Joseph purged his character until it was time for his dreams to come true.*** *20 Eventually, the king of Egypt sent for him, setting him free at last. Psalms 105:16-20 TPT*

A man had to be prepared to save a nation, and Joseph was predestined for this purpose. He received his mantle and anointing in advance, yet he

still had to walk the path of separation, refinement, and preparation. The shackles kept Joseph humble, and the heaviness in his soul shaped his character until the appointed time for his release came. Psalm 105:19, in the Jubilee Bible, reveals that this process was part of God's purification, a foundational stone in the believer's life, also known as the baptism of fire. How often do believers try to bypass this process to avoid its pain? Yet it is often through the fire that God purifies the heart and prepares the vessel for the weight of the mantle.

> *Until the time that his word came, the spoken word of the LORD purified him. Psalms 105:19 JUB*

When the time was right, when the Purifier could see His own clear reflection in the molten metal (Malachi 3:3), and when the character was finally ready to bear the weight of the mantle, Joseph was released. Notice now that this kind of preparation is not to achieve your own ambitions but to become a gift to society.

> *[21] Then Joseph was put in charge of everything under the king; he became the master of the palace over all of the royal possessions. [22] Pharoah gave him authority over all the princes of the land, and Joseph became the teacher of wisdom to the king's advisors. [23] Then Jacob, with all of Joseph's family, came from Canaan to Egypt and settled in Goshen.[24] God made them very fruitful, and they multiplied incredibly until they were greater in number than those who ruled them. Psalms 105:16-24 TPT*

From prison to Prime Minister, a prince over all princes, stepping into a position of authority to teach. This is God's way of preparing a people with Kingdom wisdom to serve as heavenly royal ambassadors. Let this thought sink in deeply as encouragement and hope for our own preparation and baptism of fire. When hope is deferred and everything seems not to work out, that is the time to learn to walk in gratitude. Because of Joseph, Adonai made his family fruitful, multiplied them in number, and prepared a nation to go and inherit the land promised to Abraham. This is significant

and shows God's way of preparing and using one man for the benefit of a nation. Joseph's lifestyle of gratitude was deeply instilled in his two sons when he named his firstborn Manasseh, saying, "It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household," and named the second Ephraim, saying, "It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering" (Genesis 41:51-52). Let us learn these lessons from Joseph's life to look beyond hardship and not waste time in self-pity while in slavery or prison. Let us trust in God and realize that His presence is always with us and that He will never leave us nor forsake us. Showing grace to others is not common in the Christian life, yet Joseph chose forgiveness and provided for the very brothers who hurt him. Man's first reaction in such circumstances is to complain, but Joseph chose to praise rather than fall into the trap of self-pity. His thankful heart replaced bitterness with hope!

Let us learn the lesson that when our feet are bruised by heavy shackles and our souls are held in iron, we will submit to the fire to purify our character – enabling us to bear the weight of the mantle.

Women Walking in Gratitude

The Bible offers many examples of women who, through their own suffering, learned to walk in gratitude. In the Book of Samuel, Elkanah had two wives: Peninnah and Hannah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah was barren. Most reflections on these women focus on the pain of infertility, yet Hannah's story reveals something deeper: how sorrow, surrender, and faith can become a pathway to gratitude.

Born From Free Women

Just think of Sarah, who was infertile her whole life, but God opened her womb when the time was right. When the promise came after 25 long years, both Abraham and Sarah learned to walk in gratitude with the

Creator. Waiting upon God is not common to humanity, and in our impatience, instead of waiting to give birth to Isaac, we birth Ishmael. Our impatience sometimes costs us generational heartache, as in the case of the two nations born from Isaac and Ishmael. Although the Old Testament recorded Sarah's laugh of unbelief, Adonai changed her life so she could walk in gratitude. Scripture reports: "*By faith also Sara herself being sterile received strength to conceive seed and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she believed him to be faithful who had promised*" (Hebrews 11:11 JUB).

In the story of Sarah and Abraham, we find that faith and gratitude are deeply connected internal postures that both require looking beyond oneself to recognize God's unseen or undeserved activity. They serve as foundational drivers of a believer's spiritual life. We learn in Scripture that the Lord always announced the end from the beginning. These announcements came with promises, followed by a period of waiting. In the waiting, man learned to walk by faith. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1). That is what births gratitude: through faith we hold on to the promises of Adonai and stay in hope, because the evidence is not in what we see with our physical eyes, but rather in what we see in our spirit.

> *12 In fact, so many children were subsequently fathered by this aged man of faith—one who was as good as dead, that he now has offspring as innumerable as the sand on the seashore and as the stars in the sky! 13 These heroes all died still clinging to their faith, not even receiving all that had been promised them. But they saw beyond the horizon the fulfillment of their promises and gladly embraced it from afar. They all lived their lives on earth as those who belonged to another realm. 14 For clearly, those who live this way are longing for the appearing of a heavenly city. 15 And if their hearts were still remembering what they left behind, they would have found an opportunity to go back. 16 But they couldn't turn back for their hearts were fixed on what was far*

greater, that is, the heavenly realm! So because of this God is not ashamed in any way to be called their God, for he has prepared a heavenly city for them. Hebrews 11:12-16 TPT

And when we learn through faith to walk in gratitude, the final test comes to offer up what we had waited for. Abraham had to offer his only begotten son, the promise he and Sarah had waited 25 years for. But because Abraham and Sarah had learned the lesson well and lived lives of gratitude, Abraham went up the hill to praise and worship.

Testing the Promise

"And it happened after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, Abraham! And he said, Behold me. 2 And He said, Take now your son, your only one, Isaac, whom you love. And go into the land of Moriah and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will name to you. 3 And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son. And he split the wood for the burnt offering and rose up and went to the place of which God had told him. 4 Then on the third day, Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off. 5 And Abraham said to his young men, You stay here with the ass. And I and the boy will go on **to this way and worship** and come again to you". Genesis 22:1-5 MKJV

A life of gratitude will always lead you to offer the most precious treasure of your heart.

17 Faith operated powerfully in Abraham for when he was put to the test he offered up Isaac. Even though he received God's promises of descendants, he was willing to offer up his only son! 18 For God had promised, **"Through your son Isaac your lineage will carry on your name."** 19 Abraham's faith made it logical to him that God could raise Isaac from the dead, and symbolically, that's exactly what happened (Hebrews 11:17-29 TPT).

Sarah and Abraham's lives of gratitude stretched far beyond their own promises. Not only did Abraham become the father of faith, but Sarah

became the mother of us all who are born from above – a typology Paul explained.

> *22 For it is written: Abraham had two sons, the one out of the **slave-woman, and one out of the free woman**. 23 But, indeed, he out of the slave-woman has been born according to flesh, and he out of the free woman through the promise; 24 which things are being allegorized; for these are the two covenants, one indeed from Mount Sinai bringing forth to slavery, which is Hagar. 25 For Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answers to Jerusalem which now is, and is in slavery with her children. 26 But the Jerusalem from above is free, who is the mother of us all. Galatians 4:22-26 MKJV*

Visit our website to download the Book, "Born from Free- and Slave Women"

Faith and gratitude both shift our attention away from human self-sufficiency and turn our focus toward God as the Provider and Source of all things. Both require us to acknowledge realities that are not immediately visible. Faith trusts God's future promises, while gratitude recognizes His past and present grace. In this way, both teach us to rely on the unseen. They also draw us closer to divine fellowship, opening our hearts to deeper intimacy with God. Last but not least, both carry transformative power. They drive out fear, anxiety, and doubt, replacing them with the inner peace that comes from trusting Him.

Hannah

We find another barren woman in Scripture: Hannah, the wife of Elkanah. Hannah longed so deeply for a child that, as she poured out her heart before Adonai, Eli thought she was drunk. Her story, found in the Book of Samuel, begins by telling us that Elkanah's second wife, Peninnah, had children, while Hannah remained barren. If you have ever known the heartache of an empty womb, you can understand something of Hannah's pain. In those days, women also carried tremendous pressure to bear children, which made her sorrow even heavier. Throughout Scripture, Adonai often uses barrenness to reveal His purpose. While Elkanah and his family were

offering sacrifices to the Lord in Shiloh, Hannah was overwhelmed with grief because she had not been able to conceive. Eli, the high priest, found her weeping before the Lord with a broken heart. At first, Eli accused her of being drunk, but Hannah quickly explained that she was pouring out her sorrow and petition before Adonai. She then vowed: 'if God would give her a son, she would dedicate him to the Lord's service for all the days of his life'.

> *[10] And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to Jehovah, and wept sorely. [11] And she vowed a vow and said, O, Lord of Hosts, if You will indeed look upon the affliction of Your handmaid and remember me, and not forget Your handmaid, but will give to Your handmaid a man-child, then I will give him to Jehovah all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. [12] And it happened as she continued praying before Jehovah, Eli noticed her mouth. [13] Now Hannah spoke in her heart, only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. And Eli thought she had become drunk. 1 Samuel 1:10-13 MKJV*

Then Eli answered and said, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have asked of Him" (1 Samuel 1:17 MKJV).

> *And she said, "Let your maidservant find favor in your sight." So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad. 1 Samuel 1:18 MKJV*

Do you notice how Hannah believed? Her request had not yet been granted, yet she went away happy, in faith, believing that God would give her a son. And he did! She named him Samuel, saying, "because I have asked for him from the Lord." Hannah was faithful and kept her promise. When Samuel was old enough to serve under the high priest, Hannah brought him back to Shiloh. There, she reminded Eli of the night he had seen her weeping and praying before the Lord. From her grateful heart flowed these beautiful verses of thanksgiving and gratitude:

"My heart rejoices in the Lord;
My horn is exalted in the Lord.

I smile at my enemies,

Because I rejoice in Your salvation.
"No one is holy like the Lord,
For there is none besides You,
Nor is there any rock like our God.

"Talk no more so very proudly;
Let no arrogance come from your mouth,
For the Lord is the God of knowledge;
And by Him actions are weighed.

1 Samuel 2:1-3

Hannah glorified God in a beautiful prayer of thanksgiving and gratitude as she handed Samuel over to the high priest.

True gratitude will always give back what belongs to the Lord. Just as Abraham was willing to offer his only begotten son, so was Hannah willing to give back her only begotten son, Samuel, to the Lord.

Washing Feet

In Luke 7, Yeshua was having dinner with the Pharisees when he told them a story about two debtors, one owing five hundred denarii and the other fifty. So Jesus explained.

> *42 When neither could repay him, he canceled both debts. So which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon replied,* ***"I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled."*** *"You have judged correctly," Yeshua said. Luk 7:42-43 TLV*

Those in greater debt would much more easily live a lifestyle of gratitude than those who thought they were actually okay.

This was the case of a woman living in town, probably as a prostitute, who came to Yeshua and broke an alabaster jar of perfume over his feet.

> *37 And behold, a woman in the town who was a sinner, when she discovered that Yeshua was reclining at the Pharisee's home, brought an alabaster jar of perfume. 38 As she stood behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to drench His feet with tears and kept wiping them with her head of hair. Then she was kissing His feet and anointing them with perfume. 39 Now when the Pharisee who invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this were a prophet, He would know what sort of woman is touching Him—that she's a sinner." Luke 7:37-39 TLV*

Those who believe they are "*okay*" often struggle to live a life of gratitude because they have not yet reached total surrender or discovered God's true goodness. Yeshua then answered Simon, revealing the depth of this truth:

> *47 For this reason I tell you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven—for she loved much. But the one who is forgiven little, loves little. 48 He then said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven." Luke 7:47-48 TPT*

> But when Jesus overheard their complaint, he said to them, "Who goes to the doctor for a cure? Those who are well or those who are sick? I have not come to call the 'righteous,' but to call those who are sinners and bring them to repentance." Mark 2:17 TPT

The Son of Man came to set the captives free! He came into the world to crush the serpent's head and to restore everything the kingdom of darkness had stolen. When we come into His presence, His light exposes the darkness. When we repent, we too will depart with the peace of Sar-Shalom and live a life of gratitude.

She came as a sinner and left with a heart full of gratitude, undoubtedly following Jesus for the rest of her life.

Pure Nard

Let the reader not be confused by this event in Luke 7 with the account of Mary who anointed the Messiah's head with pure spikenard oil. These are different events involving two different women, each with its own purpose. The woman in Luke 7 was an adulteress (the people called her a sinful woman). But in John 12, we find another story, and the oil symbolized something different. Yet both women gave themselves and everything to demonstrate a lifestyle of gratitude. Notice the detail with which John recorded this event.

> *[1] Six days before the Passover began, Jesus went back to Bethany, the town where he raised Lazarus from the dead. [2] They had prepared a supper for Jesus. Martha served, and Lazarus and Mary were among those at the table. John 12:1-2 TPT*

It was six days before the crucifixion, and John did not neglect the fact that Lazarus was sitting with them (the one Jesus raised from the dead). Put yourself in Martha and Mary's situation: sitting with your own relative already lowered into the ground for four days, with him/her alive because of the miracle Jesus performed. You might also respond the same way.

> *Mary picked up an alabaster jar filled with nearly a liter of extremely rare and costly perfume—the purest extract of nard, and she anointed Jesus' feet. Then she wiped them dry with her long hair. And the fragrance of the costly oil filled the house. John 12:3 TPT*

John focuses on the details and makes sure the reader clearly understands the cost of such an act. One liter of spikenard oil equals an annual salary. Pure nard oil was extremely expensive in the ancient world because it came from a rare alpine plant (Nardostachys jatamansi) that grew only in the remote Himalayas of India, China, and Nepal. Transporting the fragile product thousands of miles via ancient trade routes, combined with low extraction yields from the roots and high demand, drove the price up to roughly a year's wages (300 denarii). Out of curiosity, I asked "Google"

what 300 denarii would be worth in today's currency, and the figure came up between R500 000 and R750 000. That gives us an idea of someone who saw the Messiah at work in her own life and poured out everything she had because she understood how to walk and worship in gratitude. That spikenard oil filled the room; its aroma stayed on Christ's body, removing the smell of death from Lazarus's body. She announced at the tomb: "Lord, his body smelled" (John 11:39). In contrast, Judas did not reach that point of understanding gratitude.

> *4 But Judas the locksmith, Simon's son, the betrayer, spoke up and said, 5 "What a waste! We could have sold this perfume for a fortune and given the money to the poor!" 6 (In fact, Judas had no heart for the poor. He only said this because he was a thief and in charge of the money case. He would steal money whenever he wanted from the funds given to support Jesus' ministry.). 7 Jesus said to Judas,* ***"Leave her alone! She has saved it for the time of my burial****. 8 You'll always have the poor with you; but you won't always have me." John 12:4-8 TPT*

When Judas could not understand Mary's gratitude, the Messiah replied only – "Leave her alone!"

Leave her alone!

As I type these words on my keyboard, they resonate deeply in my spirit – "Leave her alone" – as if the Spirit is softly whispering to those who have not yet reached the place of Mary's gratitude. Sometimes people in the Body of Christ do not understand or are not yet ready for some deep Biblical truths; the only response is to criticize rather than to bow deeply in gratitude with those who express their sincerity to their Bridegroom. But then Jesus speaks of an even deeper mystery. Many scholars hold different opinions on this, but I believe that Mary was performing an act without knowing what Messiah revealed here.

"Leave her alone! She has saved it for the time of my burial."

Before the crucifixion, Mary's act prepared the Messiah's body for His death, burial, and resurrection. What an act of "GRATITUDE." Not only did the spikenard oil remove the stench of Lazarus' death, but it also removed the "sting of death." The fulfillment of Genesis 3:15, that this seed will one day crush the serpent's head, was now realized. Lazarus died again, but the Messiah, the Anointed One, never died again.

Who knows what your act of gratitude might bring in the future, despite critics who might not understand it in the moment.

Conceived Without Human Interference

The Holy Spirit set apart a woman to carry a special seed, the seed Adonai announced back in the Garden of Eden, which would crush the old serpent's head.

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He will bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel. Genesis 3:15 MKJV

This seed (singular, not plural) points to the future Messiah. And out of the blue, an angel stands before Mary, who was engaged to a man named Joseph, a true descendant of King David (Luke 1:26). The angel announces that Mary will become pregnant with a baby boy be named Jesus (Luke 1:31 TPT). This announcement occurs six months after an angel appeared to Zechariah, an elderly man serving in the Temple.

But the angel reassured him, saying, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God is showing grace to you. For I have come to tell you that your prayer for a child has been answered. Your wife, Elizabeth, will bear you a son and you are to name him John. Luke 1:13 TPT

Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth, were already beyond the usual age of childbearing when, after many desperate prayers, he received this astonishing news. God's timing is always perfect, for John the Baptist had to come first to prepare the way for the Messiah, according to the Scriptures. Can you see the pattern throughout Scripture? Again and again, women who were old, barren, or infertile were set apart by the Holy Spirit and received the good news that they would bring a child into the world. But this time would be different. Mary would not conceive through corruptible human seed, but by the Holy Spirit, through incorruptible seed. And the child would be called Yashua.

> *28 Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Grace to you, young woman, for the Lord is with you, and so you are anointed with great favour." 29 Mary was deeply troubled over the words of the angel and bewildered over what this may mean for her. 30 But the angel reassured her, saying, "Do not yield to your fear, Mary, for the Lord has found delight in you and has chosen to surprise you with a wonderful gift. 31 You will become pregnant with a baby boy, and you are to name him Jesus. 32 He will be supreme and will be known as the Son of the Highest. And the Lord God will enthrone him as King on his ancestor David's throne. 33 He will reign as King of Israel forever, and his reign will have no limit." Luke 1:28 TPT*

When the Lord announces something extraordinary, it will always make no sense to the human mind. Mary was no exception when she replied:

> *34 Mary said, "But how could this happen? I am still a virgin!" 35 Gabriel answered, "The Spirit of Holiness will fall upon you and almighty God will spread his shadow of power over you in a cloud of glory! This is why the child born to you will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. Luke 1:34-35 TPT*

Imagine the gratitude Mary felt – a normal, ordinary woman, not even yet married – chosen by the Most High God to bring into the world the seed destined to crush the serpent's head. Wow!

Gabriel Announced

35 Gabriel answered, "The Spirit of Holiness will fall upon you and almighty God will spread his shadow of power over you in a cloud of glory! This is why the child born to you will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. 36 What's more, your aged aunt, Elizabeth, has also become pregnant with a son. The 'barren one' is now in her sixth month. 37 Not one promise from God is empty of power, **for nothing is impossible with God**!" (Luke 1:35-37 TPT).

For nothing is indeed impossible for God!

These are words that most believers, somewhere in their struggle, have heard and even declared over their situation, yet still doubt and walk in unbelief. Mary answered the angel with these profound words.

> *So Miriam said, "Behold, the servant of Adonai. Let it be done to me according to your word." And the angel left her. Luke 1:38 TPT*

A life of gratitude will always respond to God's promises with "Let it be done according to your word."

Mary is a Bible story about gratitude that didn't immediately come to mind, but her beautiful prayer of thanksgiving and gratitude caught our attention. We can stand in awe of Mary's humility and willingness to do God's work. Her words deserve a place among stories of thankfulness. This is her proclamation upon visiting her cousin Elizabeth.

"My soul magnifies the Lord".

And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me

blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation. It was not easy being Mary. She was claiming something impossible—a virgin with child. Seriously, I would not have believed her myself. Yet she praised God with a beautiful prayer of thanksgiving. Have you noticed that the Bible stories about thankfulness end in worshiping God for His goodness? Perhaps that is where we need to start our gratitude journey: By pausing and worshiping our God for His goodness.

This child of Mary—the Son of Man—put down His divinity, left heaven, took human form, humbled Himself to die on a cross, and God the Father raised Him to the highest place with the name above all names! All of this to produce an offspring (this time a seed plural, not singular) that will follow Him. He already bruised the serpent's head; now, as a Corporate Body of Christ (seed plural), He will bruise the serpent's heel.

> Yet it pleased Adonai to bruise Him. He caused Him to suffer. If He makes His soul a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the will of Adonai will succeed by His hand. Isaiah 53:10 TLB

The ultimate example of a life of gratitude ever shown to humanity is that of our Bridegroom. As I meditated on this book, I believe the Holy Spirit led me to investigate the life of Christ, where I found His example for us to live in gratitude.

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The Son of Man

Did you ever wonder why Scripture uses the term "Son of Man" as one of Christ's titles? Even more, why did Christ use this title for himself?

The Son of Man – A Mystery

In the Book of Ezekiel, Adonai addresses Ezekiel throughout the book as the "son of man." Why?

Isn't this a title that the Messiah gave and reserved for Himself?

> *And Jesus said unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head. Matthew 8:20 JUB*

"Between these lines lies the mystery of gratitude"!

Remember our text that it pleases the Father to bruise His Son. Why? Because through His Son's suffering, an offspring would come forth.

> Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. Isaiah 53:10 KJV

This seed and the crushing of the serpent's head could come only through man. This is often overlooked in the Body of Christ. Even Adonai could not overrule satan's kingdom except through man, because all power and authority have been given to man on earth. Therefore, the Father had to send His only begotten Son to earth, incarnated in human flesh, to take back the keys and, as "man," restore authority on earth. This is essential

to understand. After the resurrection, before Christ ascended into heaven, Yeshua came up to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me" (Matthew 28:18 TLV). That authority and power in heaven were given to the Son, and, as an incarnated "man," He now receives that authority and power on earth. Christ came to restore all things to Him.

> *That in the dispensation of the fulfillment of the times he might restore all things by the Christ, both those which are in heaven and those which are on earth, Ephesians 1:10 JUB*

Notice ALL things, both in heaven (because of satan's rebellion) and on earth (where satan deceived man and defiled the earth). Here we discover two profound mysteries, namely,

- To walk in full gratitude, we must first learn to humble ourselves, just as Christ humbled Himself (as we shall discover in this section).
- Second, we must reach a point where we are ready to give away everything we have received and achieved in life (a Biblical principle demonstrated by Christ).

And that is precisely the mystery behind why Christ called Himself the "Son of Man" throughout the Gospel. In the Book of Ezekiel, Adonai told the man of the earth that he was formed from dust and shall return to dust. When the Messiah spoke to the people under the Roman Empire, He deliberately called Himself the "Son of Man," indicating His mortality and avoiding attention under Roman rule.

Humbleness

Let us examine the passage from Philippians, Chapter 2, to discover true, deep humility through Christ's example.

> [3] Be free from pride-filled opinions, for they will only harm your cherished unity. Don't allow self-promotion to hide in your hearts, but in authentic humility put others first and view others as more important than yourselves. [4] Abandon every display of selfishness. Possess a greater concern for what matters to others instead of your own interests. Philippians 2:3-4 TPT

"How truly wonderful and delightful to see brothers and sisters living together in sweet unity" (Psalms 133:1 TPT). Unfortunately, this unity between brothers and sisters is harmed by our selfish, prideful opinions. This, in turn, hinders people from living a lifestyle of gratitude. Now, Paul gives us a hint to put others first and view others as more important than ourselves – that is humility.

The Lamb of God had to be slaughtered before the Lion of Judah could come to deliver Israel. Therefore, if the Son of Man had introduced Himself as the Messiah before sacrificing Himself on the Cross, that would only draw unnecessary attention from the Roman government, and His Ministry would not have reached the Jewish community.

Let us consider the example of Christ – the Anointed One – "The Son of Man." He entered Jerusalem on a donkey, and the people laid palm leaves for the King to enter. Later, when they saw this man's condition, beaten by the Roman soldiers, the very same people cried out – "Crucify Him!". Why? Because they were waiting for their Messiah to rescue them from the Roman Empire. That is exactly what the word Hosanna means when they cried it out as Christ entered Jerusalem on an ass.

"Took branches of palm trees and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord" (John 12:13 KJV). Here is the real reason His own rejected and betrayed Him: they admitted that the only king they (the Jewish people) had was Caesar! We find proof of this in John and the other Gospels.

> *But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate said unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The high priests answered, We have no king but Caesar. John 19:15 JUB*

The Son of Man posed a threat to the Roman Empire. If they had known earlier, they could have arrested Him sooner. Carefully read the following conversation between Pilate and Christ Jesus.

> *33 Upon hearing this, Pilate went back inside his palace and summoned Jesus. Looking him over, Pilate asked him, "Are you really the king of the Jews?" 34 Jesus replied, "Are you asking because you really want to know, or are you only asking this because others have said it about me?" 35 Pilate responded, "Only a Jew would care about this; do I look like a Jew? It's your own people and your religious leaders that have handed you over to me. So tell me, Jesus, what have you done wrong?" John 18:33-35 TPT*

The Romans cared less about this man (The Son of Man), as Pilate indicated that his own people (the Jewish religious leaders) had handed him over. Consider Jesus' response to Pilate's question about whether he is truly a king.

> *36 Jesus looked at Pilate and said, "The royal power of my kingdom realm doesn't come from this world. If it did, then my followers would be fighting to the end to defend me from the Jewish leaders. My kingdom realm authority is not from this realm." 37 Then Pilate responded, "Oh, so then you are a king?" "You are right." Jesus said, **"I was born a King**, and I have come into this world to prove what truth really is. And everyone who loves the truth will receive my words." John 18:36-37 TPT*

A King is born, not elected. This King, the Lamb of God, first had to come to restore all things to Him and to make room for the Gentiles to come to salvation before He could return as the Lion of Judah for judgment. This is a fundamental message throughout Scripture, yet His very own missed it. With this background, we can better understand Paul as he continues his epistle to the Philippians, encouraging us to adopt Christ's mindset.

> [5] And consider the example that Jesus, the Anointed One, has set before us. **Let his mindset become your motivation.** [6] He existed in the form of God, yet he gave no thought to seizing equality with God as his supreme prize. [7] Instead he emptied himself of his outward glory by reducing himself to the form of a lowly servant. **He became human!** [8] He humbled himself and became vulnerable, choosing to be revealed as a man and was obedient. He was a perfect example, even in his death—a criminal's death by crucifixion! Philippians 2:5-8 TPT

The Son of Man is GOD! Yet He, who is the Creator of the universe, humbled Himself, lowered Himself, emptied Himself, and reduced Himself to come to earth as a human in the flesh. One would expect that this child, born as the King of the Jews, would be fully accepted, at least by His own people. Instead, He came as a servant. His own people rejected Him to the point of a criminal's death. He went further, not only to serve but to put the sins and iniquity of the whole world upon Himself in your place and mine, as if He did it all. Who could demonstrate such an act of love?

Rees Howells, born in 1878 in South Wales, served as an evangelist during the Welsh Revival. He led intensive prayer and intercession during World War II and testified that these prayers stopped Hitler's invasion of Russia, among many others. He prayed for the sick when the Holy Spirit approached him and asked Rees if he would be willing to die in the place of the sick woman. That night, Rees could not sleep and wrestled with the

thought. The next morning, the Holy Spirit told Rees that he was offered a special place with the cloud of witnesses for those who were willing to be martyred and die an early death.

> Such a willingness to die in someone else's place cannot be taken lightly and requires a deep surgery of the heart.

You might read this story and think you are willing to pay such a price, but let me share a deep truth with you – even Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane suffered to obey such a command.

> *38 And he said to them, "My heart is overwhelmed and crushed with grief. It feels as though I'm dying. Stay here and keep watch with me."*
> *39 Then he walked a short distance away, and overcome with grief, he threw himself facedown on the ground and prayed,* ***"My Father, if there is any way you can deliver me from this suffering, please take it from me.*** *Yet what I want is not important, for I only desire to fulfill your plan for me." Then an angel from heaven appeared to strengthen him. Matthew 26:38-39 TPT*

Even the Son of Man, predestined for this, cried out at the very moment He had to step into His destiny, which would cost Him everything – "Father, is there not another way?"

> And the Father answered with all love His Son; "My son, you know you are pre-destined for this – slain from the foundation of the world to bring eternal life for humanity."

"And all who dwell on the earth will worship it, those whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb, slain from the world's foundation" (Revelation 13:8 MKJV).

> *18 For you know that your lives were ransomed once and for all from the empty and futile way of life handed down from generation to generation. It was not a ransom payment of silver and gold, which eventually*

perishes, [19] "But the precious blood of Christ—who like a spotless, unblemished lamb was sacrificed for us. [20] ***This was part of God's plan, for he was chosen and destined for this before the foundation of the earth was laid****, but he has been made manifest in these last days for you (1 Peter 1:19-20 TPT).*

Indeed, this was God's plan before He laid the earth's foundation. Yet even the Son of Man struggled . . . and sweated blood! The struggle is never the point – the point is to reach the stage of laying down your own selfish will. This is what the Son of Man demonstrated when He cried out, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me. Yet not as I will, but as You will" (Matthew 26:39 MKJV).

Yet what I want is not important, for I only desire to fulfill your plan for me." Matthew 26:39 TPT

Who can express and demonstrate the same words and actions? What I want is not important at all, for we are all called and predestined to fulfill His plan on earth.

A lifestyle of GRATITUDE will cost you everything!

The Exaltation

Only then, when you lay down everything not by word but by deed, does exaltation follow. Let's continue with our scripture in Philippians to see how the Father rewarded and exalted His Son above all names.

[9] Because of that obedience, God exalted him and multiplied his greatness! He has now been given the greatest of all names! [10] The authority of the name of Jesus causes every knee to bow in reverence! Everything and everyone will one day submit to this name—in the heavenly realm, in the earthly realm, and in the demonic realm. [11] And every tongue will proclaim in every language: "Jesus Christ is Lord

Yahweh," bringing glory and honor to God, his Father! Philippians 2:9-11 TPT

Notice that the Son of Man obeys the Father's command. Without obedience, no exaltation can take place. This act of humility restored such great authority to the Son of Man that every knee shall bow in reverence before Him – in heaven and on the earth. I heard a testimony from one of the pastors at Charis Bible College of Andrew Wommack, who said that the only words he could speak during a demonic manifestation were from Philippians 2:10, that every knee shall bow. He could not speak any other words but these until the demons left. What a marvelous testimony of a King who left heaven (His Throne), took human form, humbled Himself to die on a cross, and was raised by God the Father to the highest place, with the name above all names. Christ remains humble even when He Himself announced that He, the Son of Man, will sit on His Throne of Glory.

Jesus states that when the new world comes and the Son of Man sits on His glorious throne, the disciples who followed Him will also sit on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28).

Jesus explains that when the Son of Man comes in His glory with all the angels, He will sit on His glorious throne for the final judgment (Matthew 25:31).

Jesus promises that those who win the spiritual fight and overcome will sit with Him on His throne, just as He overcame and sat down with His Father on His throne (Revelation 3:21).

The ultimate example of a gratitude lifestyle is walking in total obedience, laying down your own will, and being willing to give up everything, even your life, for those who hated you. Let us pause to meditate on these heavy words and learn to follow this example in our own lives. Here is the promise that when we follow Christ's example and follow Christ, we too are seated in heavenly places with Him. He accomplished this through His humility,

which paves the way for us. As Paul stated, "which He worked in Christ in raising Him from the dead, and He seated Him at His right hand in the heavenlies" (Ephesians 1:20 MKJV).

"He raised us up with Christ, the exalted One, and we ascended with him into the glorious perfection and authority of the heavenly realm, for we are now co-seated with Christ" (Ephesians 2:6 TPT).

The Son of Man shows His great love and mercy by making believers spiritually alive with Christ even when they were dead in sin, placing them in a position to receive His grace.

This is a lifestyle demonstrating gratitude!

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The Promotion

I believe many saints in the Bible experienced their breakthroughs and promotions because they kept trusting the Lord to fulfill His promises. They didn't give up; they continued to live a lifestyle of gratitude, regardless of their circumstances.

From Sackcloth to a Display on a White Horse

After Vashti refused to attend the king's banquet, Esther became the new queen of the palace. Haman received the king's signet ring and planned to kill Mordecai, who refused to bow before him, and to wipe out all the Jews.

> *13-14 Bulletins were sent out by couriers to all the king's provinces with orders to massacre, kill, and eliminate all the Jews—youngsters and old men, women and babies—on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month Adar, and to plunder their goods. Copies of the bulletin were to be posted in each province, publicly available to all peoples, to get them ready for that day. 15 At the king's command, the couriers took off; the order was also posted in the palace complex of Susa. The king and Haman sat back and had a drink while the city of Susa reeled from the news. Esther 3:13-15*

1-3 "When Mordecai learned what had been done, he ripped his clothes to shreds and put on sackcloth and ashes. Then he went out in the streets of the city crying out in loud and bitter cries. He came only as far as the King's Gate, for no one dressed in sackcloth was allowed to enter the King's Gate. As the king's order was posted in every province, there was loud lament among the Jews—fasting, weeping, wailing. And most of them stretched out on sackcloth and ashes" (Esther 4:1-3 MSG).

That night, before Haman planned Mordecai's execution, the King (Ahasuerus) couldn't sleep and read through the archives, only to discover that the person who had saved the King's life (Mordecai) had never been compensated. When Haman entered the courtyard, the king asked what

such compensation should be. Haman (thinking the king admired him and wanted to exalt him) proposed parading such a man through the streets on the King's white stallion. The king approved, and the tables turned – Mordecai, awaiting the death penalty, sat in sackcloth at the gate.

> *1-2 That night the king couldn't sleep. He ordered the record book, the day-by-day journal of events, to be brought and read to him. They came across the story there about the time that Mordecai had exposed the plot of Bigthana and Teresh—the two royal eunuchs who guarded the entrance and who had conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. 3 The king asked, "What great honor was given to Mordecai for this?" "Nothing," replied the king's servants who were in attendance. "Nothing has been done for him." 4 The king said, "Is there anybody out in the court?" Now Haman had just come into the outer court of the king's palace to talk to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows he had built for him. 5 The king's servants said, "Haman is out there, waiting in the court." "Bring him in," said the king. Esther 6:1-5 MSG*

"When Haman entered, the king said, "What should be done for the man whom the king desires to honor? Haman thought to himself, "He must be talking about honoring me—who else?" "For a man whom the king desires to honor, 8 let them bring royal robes that the king has worn and a horse on which the king has ridden, with a royal crown placed on its head. 9 Then give the robes and the horse to one of the king's most noble officials. Let them put the robes on the man whom the king desires to honor, and let them put him on the horse in the main square of the city. Then let them announce in front of him, 'This is what is done for the man whom the king desires to honor.'" Esther 6:7-9 MSG

When Esther exposed Haman's plans, the King took the signet ring from Haman's finger, gave it to Mordecai, and gave permission to Esther, his bride, to write down their request and seal it with the King's signet ring. Esther and Mordecai saved the Nation of Israel from Haman's murderous plans.

> *9 Harbona, one of the eunuchs attending the king, spoke up: "Look over there! There's the gallows that Haman had built for Mordecai, who saved the king's life. It's right next to Haman's house—seventy-five feet high!" The king said, "Hang him on it!" 10 So Haman was hanged on the very gallows that he had built for Mordecai. And the king's hot anger cooled. Esther 7:9-10 MSG*

7-8 King Xerxes said to Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew: "I've given Haman's estate to Esther and he's been hanged on the gallows because he attacked the Jews. So go ahead now and write whatever you decide on behalf of the Jews; then seal it with the signet ring." (An order written in the king's name and sealed with his signet ring is irrevocable.) Esther 8:7-8 MSG

God's ways are not our ways, and He is always working behind the scenes. Who could imagine that the night before the execution, the King read through the archives and discovered that the man who had saved his life had never been compensated? Mordecai, sitting in sackcloth, was not even aware of this – suddenly everything changed.

> *15-17 Mordecai walked out of the king's presence wearing a royal robe of violet and white, a huge gold crown, and a purple cape of fine linen. The city of Susa exploded with joy. For Jews it was all good times and laughter: they celebrated, they were honored. It was that way all over the country, in every province, every city when the king's bulletin was posted: the Jews took to the streets in celebration, cheering, and feasting. Not only that, but many non-Jews became Jews—now it was dangerous not to be a Jew! Esther 8:15-17 MSG*

Likewise, we too, as the Bride of Christ, will be given the opportunity to stand against the enemy's plots and take hold of the deliverance prepared for us. What a powerful story and prophetic typology: Esther, representing the Bride of Christ, receives favor from the King, is granted access through the extended scepter, and is entrusted with authority to help save nations, rule, and reign upon the earth.

Esther 1-10

Both Esther and Mordecai remained faithful, continued walking in gratitude, and patiently waited for their promotion to manifest in God's appointed time

From Prison to Prime Minister

Joseph received the revelation of his destiny while still a young boy. But when he shared it with his brothers, jealousy entered their hearts, and they sought to get rid of him. His journey took him from the pit to slavery in Egypt, then to prison, even though he was innocent. Yet through it all, God was preparing him for a greater purpose. Throughout the Psalms, we repeatedly see David pleading with the Lord and trusting Him to come through for the sake of righteousness. In Psalm 105, David reflects on Joseph's life in the same light, showing how God used suffering, waiting, and refinement to prepare Joseph for his appointed time.

> *He said to them, "Don't you dare lay a hand on my anointed ones, and don't do a thing to hurt my prophets!" [16] So God decreed a famine upon Canaan land, cutting off their food supply. [17] But he had already sent a man ahead of his people to Egypt; it was Joseph, who was sold as a slave. [18] His feet were bruised by strong shackles and his soul was held by iron. [19] God's promise to Joseph purged his character until it was time for his dreams to come true. [20] Eventually, the king of Egypt sent for him, setting him free at last. [21] Then Joseph was put in charge of everything under the king; he became the master of the palace over all of the royal possessions. [22] Pharoah gave him authority over all the princes of the land, and Joseph became the teacher of wisdom to the king's advisors. [23] Then Jacob, with all of Joseph's family, came from Canaan to Egypt and settled in Goshen. [24] God made them very fruitful, and they multiplied incredibly until they were greater in number than those who ruled them. Psalms 105:15-24 TPT*

What a journey for Joseph. We see this pattern throughout the Bible: people were raised up to Adonai not for themselves but to save a nation. There, in Goshen, Joseph's brothers settled and became fruitful before God delivered them to return to their promised land.

"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." — 1 Thessalonians 5:18

A Lifestyle of gratitude means giving thanks to YHWH in everything.

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Rebellion of a Nation

Israel is a biblical example of a nation that constantly walks in the opposite of gratitude. The enemy of gratitude is always complaining and self-pity, which keep us from being grateful by making us focus only on the negative. We become so focused on the negative that we forget to look at what is good and beautiful in life. Throughout Scripture, we find many passages that point to Israel's failure, stubbornness, and rebellious ways. Both David in the Psalms and Paul in his epistles wrote about this: "We've heard true stories from our fathers about our rich heritage. The story of Israel is a lesson in God's ways" (Psalms 78:3-5 TPT).

> *By following his ways they will break the past bondage of their fickle fathers, who were a stubborn, rebellious generation and whose spirits strayed from the eternal God. They refused to love him with all their hearts. Psalms 78:8 TPT*

Notice the wisdom of Samuel when he wrote, "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idol-worship. Because you have rejected the Word of Jehovah, He has also rejected you from being king"! (1 Samuel 15:23 MKJV). Modern believers think that when witches throw dolosse or use needles in a doll, that is witchcraft, but Samuel revealed that a person or a nation in rebellion is nothing less than witchcraft. That kind of witchcraft is in our homes and churches.

From Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to his 12 sons (representing the 12 Tribes of Israel), they eventually ended up in Egypt as slaves. These 12 sons of Jacob grew over 430 years into a nation of more than 2 million people. They became so accustomed to bondage and slavery that when Adonai decided to deliver them, they rebelled. They complained for the next 40 years until that generation died in the wilderness. At the Red Sea, the people complained to Moses, "Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!" (Exodus 14:12). Early in the

journey, the community lamented: "If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt there, when we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, because you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death" (Exodus 16:3). They constantly longed for Egypt, their old lifestyle of slavery. Even in the wilderness, when Adonai provided angel's food (food that kept them from sickness and disease, and even their shoes and clothes didn't wear out), they still rebelled. The people wept and craved the food they had in Egypt instead of the manna God provided.

> *"We remember the fish we used to eat in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. Numbers 11:4-6*

This rebellion among Israel grew, and the people openly asked whether it would be better to return to Egypt and proposed choosing a new leader to take them back.

> *And they said to one another, 'Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt. Numbers 14:3-4*

Paul wrote about this when he wrote to the Congregation of Corinth;

> *For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea, [2] and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, [3] and all ate the same spiritual food, [4] and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they were all drinking from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. [5] But God was not pleased with most of them, for they were cut down in the wilderness.* ***[6] These things happened as examples for us, so that we will not crave evil things as they did. [7] So do not be idolaters, as some of them were.*** *As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." [8] And let us not be immoral, as some of them were, and 23,000 died in a single day. [9] And let us not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by snakes. [10] And do not* ***complain****, as some of them did, and were killed by the destroying angel. [11] These things happened to*

them as examples and were written for our instruction, on whom the ends of the ages have come. 1 Corinthians 10:1-11 NET

A people or a nation in rebellion easily falls into adultery. In Numbers 22-25, we find the story of Israel falling into Balaam's error. At Shittim, the men of Israel indulged in sexual immorality with Midianite women who invited them to their gods' sacrifices. They ate the sacrificial meal and bowed down before their gods. Thus, Israel yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor.

And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. [2] And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. [3] And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel. Numbers 25:1-3 KJV

Notice that it began with sacrifices to foreign gods. The Midianite prostitutes led the men of Israel astray to the high mountain at Baal Peor. At that high place, they burned foreign fires (child offerings to the king of Molech, their foreign god). Israel fell into idolatry and ultimately committed adultery with the Midianite prostitutes. Judgment came upon Israel, and God sent a plague among the people.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel. [5] And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baalpeor. Numbers 25:4-5 KJV

When the 12 spies saw the Nephilim there (the sons of Anak are from the Nephilim, the giants), they feared and rebelled against the leaders again.

[2] All Bnei-Yisrael grumbled against Moses and Aaron and the whole community said, "If only we had died in Egypt! If only we had died in this wilderness! [3] Why is Adonai bringing us to this land to fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be like plunder! Wouldn't it be better for us to return to Egypt?" [4] They said to each other, "Let's choose a leader and let's go back to Egypt!" Number 14:2-4 TLV

The leaders knew what was going on here, and they fell and interceded on Israel's behalf.

> *Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before the entire assembly of the community of Bnei-Yisrael. Numbers 14:5 TLV*

6 "Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes. 7 They said to the whole assembly of Bnei-Yisrael, "The land through which we passed is an exceptionally good land! 8 If Adonai is pleased with us, He will lead us into that land and will give it to us—a land flowing with milk and honey. 9 Only don't rebel against Adonai, and don't be afraid of the people of the land. They will be food for us. The protection over them is gone. Adonai is with us! Do not fear them" (Numbers 14:6-9 TLV).

Notice how fear came against the entire assembly.

> *10 But the whole assembly talked about violently stoning them. Then the glory of Adonai appeared at the Tent of Meeting to all Bnei-Yisrael. 11 Adonai said to Moses, "How long will these people treat Me contemptibly? How long will they neglect to trust in Me—in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them? 12 I will strike them with the plague. I will destroy them. But you I will make into a nation greater and stronger than they!" Numbers 14:10-12 TLV*

This is what happens over time if we do not learn to walk in gratitude. Adonai grew so fed up with them that He wanted to destroy them. Paul warned us that we, too, must not harden our hearts like Israel and miss the promised land He wishes to give us.

> *8 Don't make him angry by hardening your hearts, like your ancestors did during the days of their rebellion, when they were tested in the wilderness. 9 There your fathers tested me and tried my patience even though they saw my miracles for forty years they still doubted me! 10 This ignited my anger with that generation and I said about them, 'They wander in their hearts just like they do with their feet, and they refuse*

> *to learn my ways.' [11] My heart grieved over them so I decreed:* ***'They will never enter into the calming rest of my Spirit!'*** *[12] So search your hearts every day, my brothers and sisters, and make sure that none of you has evil or* ***unbelief*** *hiding within you. For it will lead you astray, and make you unresponsive to the living God. [13] This is the time to encourage each other to never be stubborn or hardened by sin's deceitfulness. Hebrews 3:8-13 TPT*

Their fear gave rise to unbelief, hardening their hearts and dulling their response to Adonai's blessings. They wandered in the wilderness, never entering the rest Adonai had prepared for them. Likewise, Paul warned that this remains true for believers today. When we fail to see and acknowledge God's goodness, our hearts can harden, leading us away from His promises and into spiritual death. Israel's unbelief had a devastating consequence: their bodies were scattered throughout the wilderness, and they never entered the land Adonai had promised them.

> *You will die and your corpses will be scattered across this wilderness. Because you have complained against me, none of you over twenty years of age will enter that land. Numbers 14:29 GNB*

Paul continues in Hebrews, Chapter 4, encouraging us today to enter, through faith, the rest Adonai reserved for the believer.

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[1] Now God has offered to us the same promise of entering into his realm of resting in confident faith. So we must be extremely careful to ensure that we all embrace the fullness of that promise and not fail to experience it. [2] For we have heard the good news of deliverance just as they did, yet they didn't join their faith with the Word. Instead, what they heard didn't affect them deeply, for they doubted. [3] For those of us who believe, faith activates the promise and we experience the realm of confident rest! For he has said, "I was grieved with them and made a solemn oath, **'They will never enter into the calming rest of my Spirit.'** " God's works have all been completed from the foundation of the world, [4] for it says in the Scriptures, And on the seventh day God rested from all his works. [5] And

again, as stated before, They will never enter into my calming place of rest. 6 Those who first heard the good news of deliverance failed to enter into that realm of faith's-rest because of their unbelieving hearts. Yet the fact remains that we still have the opportunity to enter into the faith-rest life and experience the fulfillment of the promise! 7 For God still has ordained a day for us to enter into called "Today." For it was long afterwards that God repeated it in David's words, "If only today you would listen to his voice and do not harden your hearts!"

Hebrews 4:1-7 TPT

This is the purpose and motivation of this book – to lead the reader into a lifestyle of gratitude, to cease from our own works and enter into His rest, the rest He called us into. That is the only way to enter the promised land Adonai so eagerly wishes to give us. Unfortunately, because of our unbelief and rebellious lifestyle, we missed the blessing already in store for us.

Israel never learned humility, a reminder that everything we have is a gift. Gratitude teaches surrender, loosening our grip on outcomes we cannot control. It produces joy rooted in Christ rather than in circumstances and cultivates patience, especially in seasons of waiting. Gratitude deepens love, helping us see others through God's eyes. It strengthens perseverance when trials do not quickly pass and draws us back into worship again and again. Gratitude is not merely a response to God's goodness but a path toward becoming more like Christ.

Let us learn the lesson from Israel's failures!

Let us learn from these passages to humble ourselves and to surrender ourselves before Adonai. Patiently waiting upon Him, trusting Him, and learning to let go of everything into His hands. Only then can we enter into His rest with a full assurance that He is indeed in control and He too will bring down the walls of our Jericho (our strongholds) to occupy and to possess our inheritance.

An Act of Righteousness

The Throne of God rests on a foundation of righteousness and justice. Therefore, Adonai will never compromise these two pillars for love. Let me explain: you cannot enter the Throne Room relying on the Father's love to set you free while walking in unrighteous or unjust deeds. His righteousness and justice are above His law of love. David fully understood this and explained that righteousness and justice will come through His love and truth.

> *14 Your glorious throne rests on a foundation of righteousness and just verdicts. Grace and truth are the attendants who go before you. Psalms 89:14 TPT*

His grace will always be available to us, leading us by His divine love to the truth that will set us free from our unrighteousness. That is how it works. The Message Bible says, "The Right and Justice are the roots of your rule; Love and Truth are its fruits. Blessed are the people who know the passwords of praise, who shout on parade in the bright presence of God" (Psalms 89:14).

Proverbs 4 says that wisdom is the most valuable commodity – so buy it! Revelation-knowledge is what you need – so invest in it! (Proverbs 4:7 TPT). Wisdom on its own does not mean much, but when it reveals revelation-knowledge with understanding, it opens the Heavenly Treasuries for a blessed life. I listened to Robert Morris explain how God led him to study Kingdom Financial principles to help the Body of Christ come free from financial slavery and bondage. Then he said, "Trust me in this. I have studied it deeply, and it is the truth." As I already indicated in my opening statement, that has been my lifelong journey: to search out these truths. After many years of deep Biblical study, I can also tell the reader with much confidence that the information in the next section will unlock the flow of heavenly blessings, enabling us to walk in a lifestyle of deep gratitude.

The two examples we discussed in this section will demonstrate that righteousness is indeed our shield of protection.

> *"Righteousness is like a shield of protection, guarding those who keep their integrity, but sin is the downfall of the wicked. Proverbs 13:6 TPT*

In my own journey, I discovered that a true lifestyle of gratitude can only be expressed when we are freed from the spirit of Mammon. Mammon is not money itself, but a spirit of greed, selfishness, and misplaced trust. A selfish lifestyle will always hinder us from walking in true gratitude. This section is not intended to present a full teaching on Kingdom financial principles, but rather to share what Scripture reveals. Those who use Scripture merely to support their preconceived ideas will only create more confusion and may remain trapped in financial bondage.

For a more detailed teaching on this subject, my book, "FirstFruits – A Doctrinal Stone in Your Foundation," is available as a free download from our website.

The Tithe

The principle of the firstfruits offering is also known as the tithe. We must understand what this means, because it goes far beyond merely an Old Testament practice of giving God a tenth of our income. At its heart, the tithe is a firstfruits offering. Just as God the Father gave Jesus as His first and best, so we are called to give our tithe to the Lord. God gave His Son in faith, knowing that through Him many sons and daughters would be brought into His Kingdom. Jesus became the Firstborn among many brethren.

> *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Romans 8:29 KJV*

In this sense, Jesus is God's tithe. God gave Jesus first, in faith, even when we were still sinners who mocked Him and spat in His face. God didn't wait to see whether we would change, repent, or make ourselves worthy. He knew the principle of first things first. God, the Father, offered by faith to redeem the rest, which is us. He paid the price in full. Even so, many do not accept this precious gift of eternal life.

> *All the firstborn of Egypt died in the final plague, as described in Exodus. God had the legal right to take every firstborn, because all firstborn of Egypt and Israel belonged to Him. The firstborn of Israel didn't die that night, however, because a spotless, perfect lamb took their place and was sacrificed to redeem them. God instructed Moses to apply the blood of that sacrificed lamb to the doorposts of each home (Exodus 12:7).*

This is how we were saved. God redeemed us in the same way by offering His Firstborn Son as a sacrifice. The principle of firstfruits is extremely powerful.

Any first thing given is never lost,
and any first thing not given is always lost.

What we give to God we won't lose, because God redeems it for us. But what we withhold from God, we will lose.

> *Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Matthew 16:25 ISV*

Tithing is giving our first to God! We find this principle throughout the Bible. When you tithe, you give God the "first" and trust Him to redeem the rest. This always requires "faith"! Give Him the first of your flock, then trust Him that there will be enough. It means giving to God even before you know whether you will have enough left. By tithing, we say to God, "I recognize You first. I am putting You first, and I trust You to take care of everything else in my life." That's why tithing is so important. It is the primary way we acknowledge God first, above all else. The first portion is the redemptive

portion. When the first portion is given to God, the rest is redeemed. Lay down this biblical foundation and apply it to your modern-day life and finances. You will reap the harvest!

Right living will always accompany right doctrine.

First of the First

Not only does the firstborn belong to God, but the firstfruits do as well.

> *The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the LORD thy God. Exodus 23:19 KJV*

God reveals how His laws of blessing operate. He does not merely ask for the firstfruits; He declares that the first of the firsfruits belongs to Him.

This means that the last portion of your firstfruits is not acceptable. Adonai desires the first portion of your firstfruits, not merely the tenth portion given later as an afterthought. This first portion belongs to the "House of the Lord".

> *Honour the LORD with thy substance and with the **firstfruits of all thine increase**: [10] So shall thy **barns be filled with plenty**, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine. Proverbs 3:9-10 KJV*

When the Lord commanded the Israelites to take over Jericho, He declared that all the spoils from Jericho belonged to Him. All the silver and gold had to be given to the Lord's house because Jericho was the first city conquered in the Promised Land. It took faith to do so, and tithing does too. Jericho was the firstfruits. The spoils of the cities they would still conquer could be kept.

> *There was also a man named Achan who took some of the spoil for himself and became accursed. Joshua 22:20*

We are consecrated or cursed! That's what the tithe principle is about. The tithe is consecrated to the Lord and for the Lord's House, but if we take it for ourselves, as Achan did, it becomes a curse because it is stolen from God. This applies not only to the tithe but also to offerings.

> *Will a man rob God? Yet ye have **robbed** me. But ye say Wherein have we robbed thee? **In tithes and offerings**. 9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Malachi 3:8-9 KJV*

Many people will argue that this is Old Testament Scripture and therefore they don't have to tithe, but in the same chapter God says, "For I am the LORD, I change not" (Malachi 3:6a KJV).

Are we, as New Testament believers, missing something? I think so.

Why didn't God use the word "**steal**" but "**rob**"? "Rob" is used in the sense of 'taken from', often by force. "**Steal**" is used in the sense of 'lift'. This is the fundamental difference between the two words. The word "**rob**" is used for thefts considered high in volume. The loss in a robbery is usually high in monetary value. The word "**steal**" is used for minor thefts of lesser volume. This is another important difference between the two words. When God says we are robbing Him, He means we are taking something of considerable high value and in volume from Him. The Lord clearly states what belongs to Him.

- The ***firstborn*** belongs to Him – Exodus 13:2
- The ***firstfruits*** are His – Exodus 23:19
- The ***tithe*** belongs to Him – Malachi 3:8-9

If God says, "I do not change" (Malachi 3:6), then when did these requirements supposedly change? Are there not many other principles under the Law that remain valid for New Testament believers under grace? Adultery was forbidden under the Law. Does grace now make it acceptable? **Certainly not.** The Word of God contains principles of eternal value, and tithing is one of them. The firstfruits, the firstborn, and the tithe belong to God.

The "***first fruits***", the "***firstborn***" and the "***tithe***" belong to God!

Dr. Henry Wright wrote in his book, "A More Excellent Way – Be in Health," that the 12th of the 33 spiritual blocks to divine health is robbing Adonai of tithes and offerings.

The twelfth step toward healing is found in Malachi 3:8-11 and addresses robbing God in our tithes and offerings.

Henry Wright. A More Excellent Way (Kindle Locations 5040-5041). Kindle Edition.

In a nutshell, we give Adonai the tithe, our firstfruits, the first 10%, so that He, as the King in the order of Melchizedek, may receive it and redeem the remaining 90%. Malachi makes this principle very clear.

[10] Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse. Then there will be food in My House. Now test Me in this"—says Adonai-Tzva'ot—"if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out blessing for you, until no one is without enough. ***[11] I will rebuke the devouring pest for you, so it will not destroy the fruit of your land, nor will your vine be barren in the field****," Adonai-Tzva'ot says. Malachi 3:10-11 TLV*

If you are familiar with this Scripture yet do not believe it, you may consider tearing out this page and so many other pages in the Bible, leaving a watered-down Canon that you believe in.

Alms – The Tzedakah

Unfortunately, Kingdom finances extend beyond the tithe. A fundamental Kingdom financial principle is that God can only multiply what we are willing to give away. I want to share a profound biblical truth I discovered while translating the Jubilee English Bible into Afrikaans (this Afrikaans Jubilee Bible is also

available as a free download from our website). Acts 10 tells the story of Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian Regiment who lived in Caesarea. He was not Jewish, and at that time the gospel had not yet been preached to the Gentiles. Yet Cornelius was devout, feared God, prayed continually, and gave generously to the poor.

A devout man who venerated God and treated Him with reverential obedience, as did all his household; and he gave much alms to the people and prayed continually to God. Acts 10:2 AMPC

Don't miss this. Scripture records that this centurion gave generously to the poor (alms). The TLV Translation renders this verse as:

"He was a devout man, revering God with all his household. He gave tzedakah generously to the people and prayed to God continually" (Acts 10:2 TLV).

Meaning of Tzedakah

Tzedakah is an obligation. It is distinct from charity, which is typically understood as a spontaneous act of goodwill and a sign of generosity.

*Tzedakah is based on the Hebrew word Tzedek, meaning **righteousness**, fairness, or **justice**, and is related to the Hebrew word Tzadik, meaning righteous, as an adjective. In Judaism, tzedakah refers to the religious obligation to do what is right and just, which Judaism emphasizes as an important part of living a spiritual life. Maimonides, a Jewish philosopher, said that while the second-highest form of tzedakah is to give donations anonymously to unknown recipients, the highest form is to give a gift, loan, or partnership that enables the recipient to support himself rather than live off others.*

> **Unlike philanthropy or charity**, while tzedakah is completely voluntary, it is a religious obligation that must be performed regardless of financial standing, even by poor people.
>
> *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tzedakah*

Meditating on the principles of righteousness and justice confirms that a lifestyle of gratitude can be demonstrated only when the Kingdom Laws of the First Fruits and Alms (tzedakah) are observed. Only then will our dreams come true, according to Solomon's Proverbs!

> The lovers of God who chase after righteousness will find all their dreams come true: an abundant life drenched with favor and a fountain that overflows with satisfaction. Proverbs 21:21 TPT

Let's first continue the story so the reader can receive the full story. Cornelius saw a clear vision one day at 3 pm.

> *About the ninth hour (about 3:00 p.m.) of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God entering and saying to him, Cornelius! Acts 10:3 AMPC*

During this vision, an angel of God told Cornelius to send men to Joppa to call for Peter, who was staying with Simon the leatherworker (a tanner).

> *Send men now to Joppa and summon Simon, who is called Peter. [6] He is a guest of Simon, a leatherworker, whose house is by the sea. Acts 10:5-6 KJV*

At the same time Cornelius was having the vision, Peter was staying in Joppa at the house of Simon, the tanner. The day after Cornelius' vision, Peter went up to the roof and fell into a trance while waiting for his lunch to be prepared.

> *He became very hungry and wanted to eat, and while the food was being prepared, he fell into a trance [11] and saw heaven open and*

> *something like a large linen sheet coming down, being lowered by its four corners to the ground. [12] In it were all kinds of* ***four-footed animals, reptiles, and birds of the air****. [13] Then a voice told him, "****Get up, Peter! Kill something and eat it****." [14] But Peter said, "****Absolutely not, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean****!" [15] Again the voice came to him a second time, "You must stop calling unclean what God has made clean." [16] This happened three times. Then the sheet was quickly taken back into heaven. Acts 10:10- 16 ISV*

Peter, the very religious apostle of Jesus, saw unclean animals in a sheet. God instructed him to kill an unclean animal and eat it. Because Jewish tradition forbade the eating of unclean animals, Peter rebelled and said,

"***Absolutely not, Lord. I have never eaten anything that is unclean.***"

God repeated the command three times, and then the sheet quickly moved back into heaven. Peter was still pondering the vision when the Spirit told him that three men were seeking him (Acts 10:19).

> *Get up, go downstairs, and don't hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them. Acts 10:20 ISV*

They told Peter about Cornelius' vision and his respect for the Jewish nation. They invited him to come to Caesarea to preach the good news of the Gospel. The next day, Peter arrived and met Cornelius, who was expecting him. Cornelius and his family were hungry for the Word of God.

> *So Peter went to the men and said, "I'm the man you're looking for. Why are you here?" [22] The men replied, "Cornelius, a centurion and an upright and God-fearing man who is respected by the whole Jewish nation, was instructed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his home to hear what you have to say." [23] So Peter welcomed them as his guests. The next day he got up and went with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa went along with him. [24] The next day they arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called his relatives and close friends together. Acts 10:21-24 KJV*

The Jewish people were not allowed to eat unclean food. They were also not allowed to enter a gentile's house because doing so would make them unclean. But the Holy Spirit came to Peter and told him that whatever God declares clean is clean indeed!

> *Again the voice came to him a second time, "You must stop calling unclean what God has made clean." Acts 10:15 ISV*

Those words prepared Peter's heart to share the Gospel with Cornelius, a Gentile. Isn't this good news?

Because of Cornelius's alms(the tzedakah) the door was opened to bring the Good News of salvation to the Gentiles (you and me) and to make it unto salvation

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The angel said to him, "Your prayers and tzedakah have gone up as a memorial offering before God. Acts 10:4 TLV

Cornelius' acts of giving and sacrifice came before the Lord as a ***fragrant*** aroma, and God said, "***Cornelius, I saw the precious gifts you gave. I saw your pure heart and your longing for Me. Because of your act, I, the Lord, am opening the door to bring the Kingdom of God to you, your family, and all the Gentiles.***"

This is profound!

> *And he, gazing intently at him, became frightened and said, What is it, Lord? And the angel said to him, Your prayers and your [generous] gifts to the poor have come up [as a sacrifice] to God and have been remembered by Him. Acts 10:4 AMPC*

The TLV (Tree of Life) translation uses the word "tzedakah," which offers deeper insight into Cornelius's actions. Cornelius was not a Jew; therefore, he was not bound by Jewish law and traditions. He was a centurion, a

Roman captain. Tzedakah was an obligation to give regardless of one's financial circumstances.

> *He stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" The angel said to him, "Your prayers and **tzedakah** have gone up as a memorial offering before God. Acts 10:4 TLV*

We can assume that Cornelius was tithing! The word "tzedakah" meant an obligation that had to be performed, regardless of financial standing. Poor people even had to perform it, unlike charity, which was a voluntary gift. While Peter was preaching to Cornelius and his household, the Holy Spirit fell on all who were listening. Peter was amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out on GENTILES even before they were baptized in water, and that they all spoke in tongues.

> *While Peter was still making this statement, the Holy Spirit fell on all the people who were listening to his message. [45] Then the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the gentiles, too. [46] For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, [47] "No one can stop us from using water to baptize these people who have received the Holy Spirit in the same way that we did, can they?" Acts 10:44-47 ISV*

Multiplication

Luke 9:16 gives us two important keys. First, Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish, looked up to heaven, and blessed them. He broke them in half, then into smaller pieces, and handed them to the disciples to pass to the crowd. The miracle didn't happen in the Master's hands but in the hands of His disciples! As a result, everyone was fed! There were twelve large baskets of leftovers, and the disciples each received a "doggy bag" to take home!

Principle 1: Something must be blessed before it can multiply.
Principle 2: Only what is given away can multiply.

Before Your Money Can Multiply, It Must Be Blessed

> *For if the **firstfruit be holy**, the **lump is also holy**: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. Romans 11:16 KJV*

The principles of faith and putting God first initiate the blessing. The first portion carries the blessing. When we give our tithe to the Lord, the rest is blessed, and our money can now multiply. Jesus, the One who receives our tithes, is the only One with the power to bless them so they can multiply. That's the first principle of multiplication.

Only What Is Given Away Can Multiply

After Jesus blessed the bread, it could multiply. If, at that point, they had eaten the bread themselves, it would have remained five loaves and two fish. It would never have multiplied. They would have had only a couple of bites each, not 12 baskets of leftovers. They had to give it away for it to multiply.

"If God can get money through you, He'll get it to you."
It won't be long before you will have plenty left over for yourself!

After many years of intensive Bible study on this subject, the statement above (made by Andrew Wommack) completely changed my perspective on Kingdom Finances. From that day on, I considered all my earthly tertiary education as dung (Philippians 3:8).

A true lifestyle of gratitude is demonstrated not in words but in deeds. Show me your bank statement, and I will show you whether you have fully

adopted a lifestyle of gratitude. The very first amount on the bank statement is the tithe. It is the first amount that leaves your bank account, regardless of the amount. The widow who gave her few coins gave all she had, and it was more than all the rest gave. You might think you have tithed for many years, but nothing has happened, and you no longer believe in it, but you could have been mistaken or could have got it wrong. In the case of Abel and Cain, the Lord could not accept Cain's offering as a firstfruit because it was just an offering brought over time. It did not comply with the firstfruit principle. That envy and jealousy, arising because the Lord accepted his brother's offering as a firstfruit, led to the death of Abel.

> We give back to Adonai what belongs to Him - our firstfruits – so that He can receive it and wave it before the Throne Room to redeem the rest in your account!

Only that part we give away can be multiplied. Therefore, in addition to our firstfruits (tithe), the believer walking in gratitude will also, as an act of righteousness, pay alms, the tzedakah. At first, I too believed this was not mandatory, but unfortunately, the tzedakah is an obligation and must be paid to look after the widows and the poor. Whereas the tithe matters where you pay it, the tzedakah can be paid to anyone or anywhere. The tithe goes to the place where you are spiritually fed and nurtured, and our alms are paid monthly as the Holy Spirit leads. Let us consider Paul's guideline in his epistle – 2 Corinthians 9:6

> *(MKJV) But I say this, He who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully.*
>
> *(NET) My point is this: The person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows generously will also reap generously.*
>
> *(TPT) Here's my point. A stingy sower will reap a meager harvest, but the one who sows from a generous spirit will reap an abundant harvest.*

A Biblical Law

I find it interesting how, throughout history, people have decided what information to publish and make available to the public. We live in an information age, and I believe information should be freely available so people can examine it and make their own decisions. The question of why only sixty-six books were included in the traditional Bible canon, while other ancient writings and Scriptures are also available, is not the main issue here. However, I want to share something important with the reader: several apocryphal books were included in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures produced during the third to second centuries B.C. Later, Pope Damasus I commissioned Jerome to translate Scripture into Latin for the Western Roman Church. This translation became known as the Vulgate. Jerome translated the New Testament from Greek, but when he worked on the Old Testament, he made a major shift by translating directly from the Hebrew text rather than relying solely on the Greek Septuagint, although he still consulted it. I believe this process subtly introduced a distortion, contributing to a system in which the Papacy stood between Adonai and the people as a mediator. Yeshua Himself warned us in the Book of Revelation about such practices when He referred to the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. The word "Nicolaitans" comes from Greek roots associated with conquering or ruling over the people. The Papacy strongly opposed translating Scripture into English. Men such as William Tyndale paid with their lives to expose mistranslations and make the Word available to ordinary people. John Wycliffe, though he died in 1384, was later condemned by papal command, and in 1428 his remains were dug up and burned in an attempt to symbolically erase his influence. Somewhere along the line, I believe the so-called "church fathers" misled the people and removed many writings, leaving much of Christianity today with only the sixty-six books of the traditional Canon. Yet the fact that these books were not included does not necessarily mean the information they contain is invalid.

I discuss this subject in much greater detail in my book, "Dispensation," which is available as a free download from the Berashith website.

On 8 August 2026, I believe the Holy Ghost whispered to me the primary reason these books were not included in our Canon. You may see it differently, but after many years of seeking the truth, I am convinced that the Holy Ghost revealed a deep biblical mystery: darkness misled the church and kept it in bondage. My hope is that, in this section, I will answer this question for both myself and the reader. Glory to God!

An angel appeared to Daniel during the Babylonian exile, in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, and another appeared to John on the island of Patmos. Both Daniel and John were instructed to write down the visions they received. In the same way, Raphael, an angel, appeared to Tobit with the instruction to write down what had been revealed. The Book of Tobit, however, is not included in our traditional Bible Canon, though it can be found in the New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised Catholic Edition (NRSV-CE). In that same Bible, we also find the Book of Judith, which tells a magnificent story of how Adonai once again delivered the nation of Israel from the Babylonian Empire during Nebuchadnezzar's time. In both Tobit and Judith, we find confirmation of a biblical truth already deeply embedded in Scripture.

I previously revealed this truth in my book, "FirstFruits," and now I believe the final confirmation is being established for both me and the reader. If you're hungry for truth and serious about living a lifestyle of gratitude, this revelation is for you.

Tobit

Tobit wrote: "Tobit walked in the ways of truth and righteousness all the days of my life. I performed many acts of charity for my kindred and my

people who had gone with me in exile to Nineveh in the land of the Assyrians" (Tobit 1:3 NRSV-CE). Nineveh was the city Adonai sent Jonah to warn of judgment. Few people are aware of Jonah's deep, hidden fear of going to the city, a fear of this Gentile nation that had taken Israel into captivity and of its people's barbaric acts. Some examples of these barbaric acts are;

- **Flaying Alive**: Skinning prisoners alive was a common practice. The removed skins were draped over the city walls of conquered towns or over Nineveh itself as a visual warning.

- **Mass Impalement**: Living captives were routinely driven through with large wooden stakes and left to die in public view outside the city gates.

- **Dismemberment and Maiming**: Soldiers routinely amputated captives' hands, feet, fingers, noses, and ears, or tore out their tongues.

- **Blinding**: Kings and soldiers frequently gouged out the eyes of captured leaders and soldiers with spears or daggers.

- **Decapitation Pillars**: Mass decapitations were celebrated. The severed heads were stacked into massive pillars at city entrances or used to line public roads. Captive nobles were sometimes forced to wear the rotting heads of their executed kings as necklaces.

- **Leading Captives by Hooks**: High-ranking prisoners were bound and dragged by ropes attached to metal hooks driven directly through their noses or lower lips.

This was the main reason Jonah fled: he would rather face death than see Nineveh saved. When Jonah saw that Adonai spared the city, he became very angry because he understood the possible consequences for Israel. These very Assyrians could one day become the instrument through which Israel would be taken into exile. From this perspective, we gain a deeper understanding of Tobit's opening statement: *he was living in exile in Nineveh, the city once known for darkness, cruelty, and violence.* Let us now read how Tobit described his own lifestyle while living in that city of darkness. I only fully grasped the depth of these words after finishing the Book of Tobit, and the revelation finally settled in my heart when I completed the Book of Judith.

> *5 All my kindred and our ancestral house of Naphtali sacrificed to the calf that King Jeroboam of Israel had erected in Dan and on all the mountains of Galilee. 6 But I alone went often to Jerusalem for the festivals, as it is prescribed for all Israel by an everlasting decree. I would hurry off to Jerusalem with the* ***first fruits*** *of the crops and the firstlings of the flock, the tithes of the cattle, and the first shearings of the sheep. 7 I would give these to the priests, the sons of Aaron, at the altar; likewise the tenth of the grain, wine, olive oil, pomegranates, figs, and the rest of the fruits to the sons of Levi who ministered at Jerusalem. Also, for six years I would save up a* ***second tenth*** *in money and go and distribute it in Jerusalem. 8 A* ***third tenth*** *I would give to the orphans and widows and to the converts who had attached themselves to Israel. I would bring it and give it to them in the third year, and we would eat it according to the ordinance decreed concerning it in the law of Moses and according to the instructions of Deborah, the mother of my father Tobiel, for my father had died and left me an orphan. 9 When I became a man I married a woman, a member of our own family, and by her I became the father of a son whom I named Tobias. Tobit 1:5-9 NRSV-CE*

We need to understand what is happening here and why Tobit records these details for his readers. After Solomon's reign, the kingdom was divided, and Jeroboam became king over the northern tribes of Israel. Jeroboam did evil

in the sight of the Lord. To keep the people from traveling to Jerusalem to worship and observe the appointed feasts, he made two golden calves and placed them in Bethel and Dan.

> *27 If this people keep going up to offer sacrifices in the House of Adonai at Jerusalem, then the heart of these people will turn back to their lord— to King Rehoboam of Judah. Then they will kill me and return to King Rehoboam of Judah." 28 So the king sought counsel and made two golden calves. He said to them, "You have been going up to Jerusalem long enough! Here are your gods O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt." 29 Then he set up one in Bethel and the other he put in Dan. 30 Now this thing became a sin for the people went to worship before the one even up in Dan. 1 Kings 12:27-30 TLV*

When Tobit wrote these details down, he made a profound statement: We (Israel) were prevented from participating in the feast, which kept us from bringing our firstfruits. He also mentioned a second and a third tenth, as required by the law of Moses. The third tenth, also known as the alms (tzedakah), went to the poor and the widows.

> 16 Tobit continues that in the days of the king of Nineveh, Shalmaneser, "I performed many acts of charity to my kindred, those of my tribe. 17 I would give my food to the hungry and my clothing to the naked; and if I saw the dead body of any of my people thrown out behind the wall of Nineveh, I would bury it. 18 I also buried any whom King Sennacherib put to death when he came fleeing from Judea in those days of judgement that the king of heaven executed upon him because of his blasphemies. For in his anger he put to death many Israelites; but I would secretly remove the bodies and bury them. So when Sennacherib looked for them he could not find them. 19 Then one of the Ninevites went and informed the king about me, that I was burying them; so I hid myself. But when I realized that the king knew about me and that I was being searched for to be put to death, I was afraid and ran away. 20 Then all my property was confiscated; nothing was left to me that was not taken into the royal treasury, except my wife Anna and my son Tobias (Tobit 1:16-20 NRSV-CE).

In the events that followed, Tobit became blind. He sought help from physicians, but the more they treated him with ointments, the more white films obscured his sight until he was completely blind (Tobit 2:10 NRSV-CE). Elsewhere in the story, Tobit writes about his relative Raguel and Raguel's wife, Edna, who lived in Ecbatana in Media. They had a daughter named Sarah, a beautiful young woman who had already been given in marriage to seven men. Yet each time a man entered the marriage chamber, *Asmodeus*, the demon of lust, killed him. Overwhelmed by her suffering, Sarah decided to hang herself, but she was restrained from carrying out this act (Tobit 3:7–9 NRSV-CE).

> ***17*** *So* ***Raphael*** *was sent to heal both of them: Tobit, by removing the white films from his eyes, so that he might see God's light with his eyes; and Sarah daughter of Raguel, by giving her in marriage to Tobias son of Tobit, and by setting her free from the wicked demon Asmodeus. For Tobias was entitled to have her before all others who had desired to marry her. At the same time that Tobit returned from the courtyard into his house, Sarah daughter of Raguel came down from her upper room. Tobit 3:17 NRSV-CE*

Isn't this amazing? While Sarah came down, having regained her composure, Tobit returned from a deep prayer, filled with great grief and anguish of heart before the Lord!

Tobit's Prayer

3 Then with much grief and anguish of heart I wept, and with groaning
began to pray:
2 'You are righteous, O Lord,
and all your deeds are just;
all your ways are mercy and truth;
you judge the world.
3 And now, O Lord, remember me
and look favourably upon me.
Do not punish me for my sins
and for my unwitting offences
and those that my ancestors committed before you.

They sinned against you,
4 and disobeyed your commandments.
So you gave us over to plunder, exile, and death,
to become the talk, the byword, and an object of reproach,
among all the nations among whom you have dispersed us.
5 And now your many judgements are true
in exacting penalty from me for my sins.
For we have not kept your commandments
and have not walked in accordance with truth before you.
6 So now deal with me as you will;
command my spirit to be taken from me,
so that I may be released from the face of the earth and become dust.
For it is better for me to die than to live,
because I have had to listen to undeserved insults,
and great is the sorrow within me.
Command, O Lord, that I be released from this distress;
release me to go to the eternal home,
and do not, O Lord, turn your face away from me.
For it is better for me to die
than to see so much distress in my life
and to listen to insults.'
Tobit 3:1-6 NRSV-CE

We find many examples in the Bible of prophets who fell into such deep distress that they asked for death rather than to live any longer. Remember Elijah under the bush, just after the prophets of Baal were killed, when Jezebel sent him a message threatening to kill him? Remember Job; remember Jonah . . . ?

Tobit Gives Instructions to His Son

After his prayer, Tobit remembered the money he had left in trust with Gabael at Rages inMedia. Tobit decided to give his son instructions before he died.

> *4 That same day Tobit remembered the money that he had left in trust with Gabael at Rages in Media, 2 and he said to himself, 'Now I have asked for death. Why do I not call my son Tobias and explain to him about the money before I die?' 3 Then he called his son Tobias, and when he came to him he said, 'My son, when I die, give me a proper burial. Honour your mother and do not abandon her all the days of her life. Do whatever pleases her, and do not grieve her in anything. 4 Remember her, my son, because she faced many dangers for you while you were in her womb. And when she dies, bury her beside me in the same grave. Tobit 4:1-4 NRSV-CE*

20 'And now, my son, let me explain to you that I left ten talents of silver in trust with Gabael son of Gabrias, at Rages in Media. 21 Do not be afraid, my son, because we have become poor. You have great wealth if you fear God and flee from every sin and do what is good in the sight of the Lord your God' (Tobit 4:20 NRSV-CE). Tobit asked his son Tobias to go and find a man who knew the way to Media. Tobias went out and found the angel Raphael standing before him. Instead of revealing his identity, however, Raphael introduced himself to Tobias and later to Tobit as Azariah. Tobit was pleased and welcomed Azariah into his house.

> *13 He replied, 'I am Azariah, the son of the great Hananiah, one of your relatives.' 14 Then Tobit said to him, 'Welcome! God save you, brother. Do not feel bitter towards me, brother, because I wanted to be sure about your ancestry. It turns out that you are a kinsman, and of good and noble lineage. For I knew Hananiah and Nathan, the two sons of Shemeliah, and they used to go with me to Jerusalem and worshipped with me there, and were not led astray. Your kindred are good people; you come of good stock. Hearty welcome!' Tobit 5:13:14 NRSV-CE*

They set off on their journey, and when Tobias went to wash his feet in the Tigris River, a large fish leaped from the water and tried to swallow his foot, prompting him to cry out. Raphael came to his aid, instructing Tobias to cut open the fish and keep the gall, heart, and liver.

> *5b 'Cut open the fish and take out its gall, heart, and liver. Keep them with you, but throw away the intestines. For its gall, heart, and liver are useful as medicine.' 6 So after cutting open the fish the young man gathered together the gall, heart, and liver; then he roasted and ate some of the fish, and kept some to be salted. Tobit 6:5b-6 NRSV-CE*

"The two continued on their way together until they were near Media. 7 Then the young man questioned the angel and said to him, 'Brother Azariah, what medicinal value is there in the fish's heart and liver, and in the gall?' 8 He replied, 'As for the fish's heart and liver, you must burn them to make a smoke in the presence of a man or woman afflicted by a demon or evil spirit, and every affliction will flee away and never remain with that person any longer. 9 And as for the gall, anoint a person's eyes where white films have appeared on them; blow upon them, upon the white films, and the eyes will be healed'." Tobit 6:6b-9 NRSV-CE

Marriage of Tobias and Sarah

There was great joy when Tobias, led by the angel Raphael, came to the house of Raguel and Edna.

> *6 At that Raguel jumped up and kissed him and wept. 7 He also spoke to him as follows, 'Blessings on you, my child, son of a good and noble father! O most miserable of calamities that such an upright and beneficent man has become blind!' He then embraced his kinsman Tobias and wept. 8 His wife Edna also wept for him, and their daughter Sarah likewise wept. 9 Then Raguel slaughtered a ram from the flock and received them very warmly. Tobit 7:6-9 NRSV-CE*

Raguel gave his daughter Sarah to Tobias as his kinswoman. He wrote the marriage contract, stating that he gave her to Tobias as his wife in accordance with the decree of the law of Moses. They began to eat and drink, celebrating the marriage covenant. (Tobit 7 NRSV-CE).

> *Tobias remembered the words of Raphael, and he took the fish's liver and heart out of the bag where he had them and put them on the embers of the incense. 3 The odour of the fish so repelled the demon*

that he fled to the remotest parts of Egypt. But Raphael followed him, and at once bound him there hand and foot" (Tobit 8:1-2 NRSV-CE).

After this, they recovered his father's money and returned home with half of everything Raguel owned: cattle, sheep, donkeys, and slaves. Meanwhile, Tobit and his wife Anna worried about what had happened to their son. Anna watched the road her son would return on. When Tobias came near to Kaserin, which is opposite Nineveh, Raphael said, 'You are aware of how we left your father. [3] Let us run ahead of your wife and prepare the house while they are still on the way. [4] Raphael said to him, "Have the gall ready" (Tobit 11:1-5 NRSV-CE).

Tobit's Sight Restored

[7] "Raphael said to Tobias, before he had approached his father, 'I know that his eyes will be opened. [8] Smear the gall of the fish on his eyes; the medicine will make the white films shrink and peel off from his eyes, and your father will regain his sight and see the light.'

[9] "Then Anna ran up to her son and threw her arms around him, saying, 'Now that I have seen you, my child, I am ready to die.' And she wept. [10] Then Tobit got up and came stumbling out through the courtyard door. Tobias went up to him, [11] with the gall of the fish in his hand, and holding him firmly, he blew into his eyes, saying, 'Take courage, father.' With this he applied the medicine on his eyes, [12] and it made them smart. [13] Next, with both his hands he peeled off the white films from the corners of his eyes. Then Tobit saw his son and threw his arms around him, [14] and he wept and said to him, 'I see you, my son, the light of my eyes!' Then he said,

'Blessed be God,
and blessed be his great name,
and blessed be all his holy angels.
May his holy name be blessed
throughout all the ages.

[15] Though he afflicted me,
he has had mercy upon me.
Now I see my son Tobias!'

So, Tobit went in, rejoicing and praising God at the top of his voice. Tobias reported to his father that his journey had been successful, that he had brought the money, that he had married Raguel's daughter Sarah, and that she was indeed on her way there, very near the gate of Nineveh (Tobit 11:7-15 NRSV-CE). I strongly sensed that the Holy Spirit prompted me to provide this background and detail so that the reader could share in the joy of Tobit and his family's restoration. As I write this and read through this Scripture for the second time, a deep spiritual emotion rises within me again:

"Lord, today I have shared in the joy of Tobit and his family, knowing this one truth: a righteous man will always be fully restored."

[16] Then Tobit, rejoicing and praising God, went out to meet his daughter-in-law at the gate of Nineveh. When the people of Nineveh saw him coming, walking along in full vigour and with no one leading him, they were amazed. [17] Before them all, Tobit acknowledged that God had been merciful to him and had restored his sight. When Tobit met Sarah the wife of his son Tobias, he blessed her saying, 'Come in, my daughter, and welcome. Blessed be your God who has brought you to us, my daughter. Blessed be your father and your mother, blessed be my son Tobias, and blessed be you, my daughter. Come in now to your home, and welcome, with blessing and joy. Come in, my daughter.' So on that day there was rejoicing among all the Jews who were in Nineveh. [18] Ahikar and his nephew Nadab were also present to share Tobit's joy. With merriment they celebrated Tobias's wedding feast for seven days, and many gifts were given to him. Tobit 11:16-18 NRSV-CE

Sela! – Pause for a moment and let this story deeply penetrate your soul. Picture a righteous man who reached a point in life when he wanted to give up, as many others in the Bible did, e.g., Job, Elijah, most of the prophets in the Old Testament, and so many martyrs who followed them without knowing them. Maybe you have also wanted to give up? I myself was at rock bottom – I cried out – Lord, I should be with you rather than muddling along here without any purpose or direction.

Now comes the exhortation of Raphael!

Raphael's Exhortation

6 "Then Raphael called the two of them privately and said to them, 'Bless God and acknowledge him in the presence of all the living for the good things he has done for you. Bless and sing praise to his name. With fitting honour declare to all people the deeds of God. Do not be slow to acknowledge him. 7 It is good to conceal the secret of a king, but to acknowledge and reveal the works of God, and with fitting honour to acknowledge him. Do good, and evil will not overtake you. 8 Prayer with fasting is good, but better than both is almsgiving with righteousness. A little with righteousness is better than wealth with wrongdoing. It is better to give alms than to lay up gold. 9 For almsgiving saves from death and purges away every sin. Those who give alms will enjoy a full life, 10 but those who commit sin and do wrong are their own worst enemies. Tobit 12:6-10 NRSV-CE

How much more proof do you need? Announced from heaven.

Prayer with fasting is good, but better than both is almsgiving with righteousness. A little with righteousness is better than wealth with wrongdoing.

It is better to give alms than to lay up gold.

> For almsgiving saves from death and purges away every sin. Those who give alms will enjoy a full life.

At the very end, Azariah reveals his identity;

> 12 "So now, when you and Sarah prayed, it was I who brought and read the record of your prayer before the glory of the Lord, and likewise whenever you buried the dead. 13 And that time when you did not hesitate to get up and leave your dinner to go and bury the dead, 14 I was sent to you to test you. And at the same time God sent me to heal you and Sarah your daughter-in-law.
>
> 15 I am Raphael, one of the seven angels who stand ready and enter before the glory of the Lord". 16 The two of them were shaken; they fell face down, for they were afraid. 17 But he said to them, 'Do not be afraid; peace be with you. Bless God for evermore. 18 As for me, when I was with you, I was not acting on my own will, but by the will of God. Bless him each and every day; sing his praises. 19 Although you were watching me, I really did not eat or drink anything—**but what you saw was a vision.** 20 So now get up from the ground, and acknowledge God. See, I am ascending to him who sent me. **Write down all these things that have happened to you.**' And he ascended. 21 Then they stood up, and could see him no more. 22 They kept blessing God and singing his praises, and they acknowledged God for these marvellous deeds of his, when an angel of God had appeared to them (Tobit 12:12-22 NRSV-CE).

What a vision! Daniel prayed, and Adonai immediately answered him by sending Gabriel to bring understanding and reveal the vision. Likewise, John, the beloved disciple, received a vision on the island of Patmos and was instructed to write it down. Joseph, Zechariah, Cornelius, Jacob, and Tobit also experienced divine encounters that brought purpose, instruction, and revelation.

When Moses crossed the Red Sea on dry ground, he wrote a song of victory in Exodus 15. What an amazing testimony that John later announced in the Book of Revelation: we too will one day sing the song of Moses on the sea of glass mixed with fire (Revelation 15).

> And they are singing the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and wonderful are Your deeds, Adonai Elohei-Tzva'ot! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the nations! Revelation 15:3 TLV

So did Tobit also write his song of victory!

Then Tobit said:
[1] 'Blessed be God who lives for ever,
because his kingdom lasts throughout all ages.
[2] For he afflicts, and he shows mercy;
he leads down to Hades in the lowest regions of the earth,
and he brings up from the great abyss,
and there is nothing that can escape his hand.
[3] Acknowledge him before the nations, O children of Israel;
for he has scattered you among them.
[4] He has shown you his greatness even there.
Exalt him in the presence of every living being,
because he is our Lord and he is our God;
he is our Father and he is God for ever.
[5] He will afflict you for your iniquities,
but he will again show mercy on all of you.
He will gather you from all the nations
among whom you have been scattered.
[6] If you turn to him with all your heart and with all your soul,
to do what is true before him,
then he will turn to you
and will no longer hide his face from you.
So now see what he has done for you;

acknowledge him at the top of your voice.
Bless the Lord of righteousness,
and exalt the King of the ages.
In the land of my exile I acknowledge him,
and show his power and majesty to a nation of sinners:
"Turn back, you sinners, and do what is right before him;
perhaps he may look with favour upon you and show you mercy."
[7] As for me, I exalt my God,
and my soul rejoices in the King of heaven.
[8] Let all people speak of his majesty,
and acknowledge him in Jerusalem.
[9] O Jerusalem, the holy city,
he afflicted you for the deeds of your hands,
but will again have mercy on the children of the righteous.
[10] Acknowledge the Lord, for he is good,
and bless the King of the ages,
so that his tent may be rebuilt in you in joy.
May he cheer all those within you who are captives,
and love all those within you who are distressed,
to all generations for ever.
[11] A bright light will shine to all the ends of the earth;
many nations will come to you from far away,
the inhabitants of the remotest parts of the earth to your holy name,
bearing gifts in their hands for the King of heaven.
Generation after generation will give joyful praise in you;
the name of the chosen city will endure for ever.
[12] Cursed are all who speak a harsh word against you;
cursed are all who conquer you
and pull down your walls,
all who overthrow your towers
and set your homes on fire.
But blessed for ever will be all who revere you.
[13] Go, then, and rejoice over the children of the righteous,
for they will be gathered together
and will praise the Lord of the ages.
[14] Happy are those who love you,

and happy are those who rejoice in your prosperity.
Happy also are all people who grieve with you
because of your afflictions;
for they will rejoice with you
and witness all your glory for ever.
15 My soul blesses the Lord, the great King!
16 For Jerusalem will be built as his house for all ages.
How happy I will be if a remnant of my descendants should survive
to see your glory and acknowledge the King of heaven.
The gates of Jerusalem will be built with sapphire and emerald,
and all your walls with precious stones.
The towers of Jerusalem will be built with gold,
and their battlements with pure gold.
The streets of Jerusalem will be paved
with ruby and with stones of Ophir.
17 The gates of Jerusalem will sing hymns of joy,
and all her houses will cry, "Hallelujah!
Blessed be the God of Israel!"
and the blessed will bless the holy name for ever and ever.'
Tobit 13:1-17 NRSV-CE

Tobit died in peace at the age of one hundred and twelve and was buried with great honor in Nineveh. He was sixty-two when he lost his sight, and after his vision was restored, he lived in prosperity, gave alms, continually blessed God, and acknowledged His majesty (Tobit 14:1–2 NRSV-CE). What an amazing testimony of a righteous man who consistently walked in obedience to the law of *firstfruits* and practiced *almsgiving*, or *tzedakah*.

When the Bible speaks of the righteous, what does that mean for living a life of gratitude? Proverbs 8:20 declares, "I lead you into the ways of righteousness to discover the paths of true justice" (TPT).

> *When Judgment Day comes, all the wealth of the world won't help you one bit. So you'd better be rich in* ***righteousness****, for that's the only thing that can save you in death. Proverbs 11:4 TPT*

Notice that only being rich in righteousness will save us from death. That is precisely what Tobit experienced, and I believe it is why the angel told him to write it down. It is for us, the believers, to be encouraged by how Adonai saved this man, rich in righteousness, from death!

> *7 To all those who practise righteousness 7 give **alms** from your possessions, and do not let your eye begrudge the gift when you make it. Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor, and the face of God will not be turned away from you. Tobit 4:7 NRSV-CE*
>
> *16 Give some of your food to the hungry, and some of your clothing to the naked. Give all your surplus as **alms**, and do not let your eye begrudge your giving of alms. Tobit 4:16 NRSV-CE*
>
> *8 Prayer with fasting is good, but better than both is almsgiving with righteousness. A little with righteousness is better than wealth with wrongdoing. It is better to give **alms** than to lay up gold. 9 For almsgiving saves from death and purges away every sin. Those who give alms will enjoy a full life, 10 but those who commit sin and do wrong are their own worst enemies. Tobit 12:8-10 NRSV-CE*
>
> *8-9 So now, my children, I command you, serve God faithfully and do what is pleasing in his sight. Your children are also to be commanded to do what is right and to give **alms**, and to be mindful of God and to bless his name at all times with sincerity and with all their strength. So now, my son, leave Nineveh; do not remain here.*
>
> *10b Ahikar came out into the light, but Nadab went into the eternal darkness, because he tried to kill Ahikar. Because he gave **alms**, Ahikar escaped the fatal trap that Nadab had set for him, but Nadab fell into it himself, and was destroyed. Tobit 14:8-10 NRSV-CE*

Without a doubt, Tobit understood that a lifestyle of gratitude is expressed through walking in righteousness, and that one of the clearest ways to demonstrate righteousness is by giving alms. When you experience this truth for yourself, no one can convince you otherwise.

> The clearest way to demonstrate a lifestyle of gratitude is through righteous and just deeds. One of the most powerful expressions of this is giving alms, that is, faithfully releasing tzedakah.

Just as Raphael announced this truth to Tobit, an angel later announced it to Cornelius, a New Testament believer. Cornelius was a Roman soldier and a Gentile, not naturally bound by the traditions of Israel. Yet he gave alms faithfully, and his generosity was remembered before God.

> [2] He was a devout man, revering God with all his household. He gave tzedakah generously to the people and prayed to God continually. [3] About the ninth hour of the day, he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming and saying to him, "Cornelius!" [4] He stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" The angel said to him, "Your prayers and tzedakah have gone up as a memorial offering before God. Act 10:2-4 TLV

Same story, same announcement, maybe the same angel. It cannot be denied that giving alms brings a sweet aroma before the throne of Adonai because it is a righteous deed.

As if this were not enough proof, let's go even deeper. Immediately after the story of Tobit, the Book of Judith introduces us to a widow who reveals a deep biblical mystery, one that Israel understood and lived by.

Judith

We are all familiar with the story of Nebuchadnezzar, the great and arrogant king of Babylon. Daniel warned him to repent of his pride and turn to righteousness. When the king refused to heed this warning, Adonai struck him with madness, causing him to live like a wild animal for seven years until he finally acknowledged God's supreme rule (Daniel 4).

So, "[1] it was the twelfth year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled over the Assyrians in the great city of Nineveh. In those days Arphaxad ruled over the Medes in Ecbatana. [7] Then Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Assyrians, sent messengers to all who lived in Persia and to all who lived in the west, those who lived in Cilicia and Damascus, Lebanon and Antilebanon, and all who lived along the sea coast, [8] and those among the nations of Carmel and Gilead, and Upper Galilee and the great plain of Esdraelon, [9] and all who were in Samaria and its towns, and beyond the Jordan as far as Jerusalem and Bethany and Chelous and Kadesh and the river of Egypt, and Tahpanhes and Raamses and the whole land of Goshen, [10] even beyond Tanis and Memphis, and all who lived in Egypt as far as the borders of Ethiopia. [11] But all who lived in the whole region disregarded the summons of Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Assyrians, and refused to join him in the war; for they were not afraid of him, but regarded him as only one man. So they sent back his messengers empty-handed and in disgrace" (Judith 1:1, 7-11 NRSV-CE).

> *[13] In the seventeenth year he led his forces against King Arphaxad and defeated him in battle, overthrowing the whole army of Arphaxad and all his cavalry and all his chariots. [14] Thus he took possession of his towns and came to Ecbatana, captured its towers, plundered its markets, and turned its glory into disgrace. [15] He captured Arphaxad in the mountains of Ragau and struck him down with his spears, thus destroying him once and for all. [16] Then he returned to Nineveh, he and all his combined forces, a vast body of troops; and there he and his forces rested and feasted for one hundred and twenty days. Judith 1:13-16 NRSV-CE*

King Nebuchadnezzar planned to exact revenge on the whole region. He summoned all his ministers and nobles, set his secret plan before them, and recounted, with his own lips, all the region's wickedness. They decided that everyone who had not obeyed his command should be destroyed (Judith 2:1-3 NRSV-CE). Notice King Nebuchadnezzar's arrogance when he proclaimed himself the king of the whole earth.

> [4] When he had completed his plan, Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Assyrians, called Holofernes, the chief general of his army, second only to himself, and said to him, 5 'Thus says the Great King, the lord of the whole earth: Leave my presence and take with you men confident in their strength, one hundred and twenty thousand foot-soldiers and twelve thousand cavalry. [6] March out against all the land to the west, because they disobeyed my orders. [7] Tell them to prepare earth and water, for I am coming against them in my anger, and will cover the whole face of the earth with the feet of my troops, to whom I will hand them over to be plundered. [8] Their wounded shall fill their ravines and gullies, and the swelling river shall be filled with their dead. [9] I will lead them away captive to the ends of the whole earth. [10] You shall go and seize all their territory for me in advance. They must yield themselves to you, and you shall hold them for me until the day of their punishment. [11] But to those who resist show no mercy, but hand them over to slaughter and plunder throughout your whole region. [12] For as I live, and by the power of my kingdom, what I have spoken I will accomplish by my own hand. [13] And you—take care not to transgress any of your lord's commands, but carry them out exactly as I have ordered you; do it without delay.' Judith 2:4-13 NRSV-CE

So, Holofernes took off and destroyed all the cities that resisted the command of Nebuchadnezzar. "[17] He took along a vast number of camels and donkeys and mules for transport, and innumerable sheep and oxen and goats for food; 18 also ample rations for everyone, and a huge amount of gold and silver from the royal palace. [19] Then he set out with his whole army, to go ahead of King Nebuchadnezzar and to cover the whole face of the earth to the west with their chariots and cavalry and picked foot-soldiers. [20] Along with them went a mixed crowd like a swarm of locusts, like the dust of the earth—a multitude that could not be counted (Judith 2:17-29 NRSV-CE).

> *[4] When the Israelites living in Judea heard of everything that Holofernes, the general of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the Assyrians, had done to the nations, and how he had plundered and destroyed all their temples,*
> *[2] they were therefore greatly terrified at his approach; they were*

alarmed both for Jerusalem and for the temple of the Lord their God. [3] For they had only recently returned from exile, and all the people of Judea had just now gathered together, and the sacred vessels and the altar and the temple had been consecrated after their profanation. [4] So they sent word to every district of Samaria, and to Kona, Beth-horon, Belmain, and Jericho, and to Choba and Aesora, and the valley of Salem. [5] They immediately seized all the high hilltops and fortified the villages on them and stored up food in preparation for war—since their fields had recently been harvested. Judith 4:1-5 NRSV-CE

Please pause for a moment and picture this. These people had just come out of exile. They had restored the temple, and now the news came again: "Nebuchadnezzar is coming to take you all back into captivity." When I read this, that same memory stirred within me, as though I too had just emerged from many trials and persecutions, only to receive the same WhatsApp messages and threatening emails once again. Maybe you can identify with this, too. I deeply feel for these people and for the circumstances they faced. All the men in Israel cried out to God with great fervency, humbling themselves before Him with much fasting.

[10] They and their wives and their children and their cattle and every resident alien and hired labourer and purchased slave—they all put sackcloth around their waists. [11] And all the Israelite men, women, and children living at Jerusalem prostrated themselves before the temple and put ashes on their heads and spread out their sackcloth before the Lord. [12] They even draped the altar with sackcloth and cried out in unison, praying fervently to the God of Israel not to allow their infants to be carried off and their wives to be taken as booty, and the towns they had inherited to be destroyed, and the sanctuary to be profaned and desecrated to the malicious joy of the Gentiles. Judith 4:10-12 NRSV-CE

"[13] The Lord heard their prayers and had regard for their distress; for the people fasted for many days throughout Judea and in Jerusalem before the sanctuary of the Lord Almighty. [14] The high priest Joakim and all the priests who stood before the Lord and ministered to the Lord, with sackcloth

around their loins, offered the daily burnt-offerings, the votive offerings, and freewill-offerings of the people. 15 With ashes on their turbans, they cried out to the Lord with all their might to look with favour on the whole house of Israel". Judith 4:13-15 NRSV-CE

> "5 It was reported to Holofernes, the general of the Assyrian army, that the people of Israel had prepared for war and had closed the mountain passes and fortified all the high hilltops and set up barricades in the plains. 2 In great anger he called together all the princes of Moab and the commanders of Ammon and all the governors of the coastland, 3 and said to them, 'Tell me, you Canaanites, what people is this that lives in the hill country? What towns do they inhabit? How large is their army, and in what does their power and strength consist? Who rules over them as king and leads their army? 4 And why have they alone, of all who live in the west, refused to come out and meet me?' Judith 5:1-4 NRSV-CE

Achior's Report

5 "Then Achior, the leader of all the Ammonites, said to him, 'May my lord please listen to a report from the mouth of your servant, and I will tell you the truth about this people that lives in the mountain district near you. No falsehood shall come from your servant's mouth. 6 These people are descended from the Chaldeans. 7 At one time they lived in Mesopotamia, because they did not wish to follow the gods of their ancestors who were in Chaldea. 8 Since they had abandoned the ways of their ancestors, and worshipped the God of heaven, the God they had come to know, their ancestors drove them out from the presence of their gods. So they fled to Mesopotamia, and lived there for a long time. 9 Then their God commanded them to leave the place where they were living and go to the land of Canaan. There they settled, and grew very prosperous in gold and silver and very much livestock. 10 When a famine spread over the land of Canaan they went down to Egypt and lived there as long as they had food. There they became so great a multitude that their race could not be counted. 11 So the king of Egypt became hostile to them; he exploited them and

forced them to make bricks. [12] They cried out to their God, and he afflicted the whole land of Egypt with incurable plagues. So the Egyptians drove them out of their sight. [13] Then God dried up the Red Sea before them, [14] and he led them by the way of Sinai and Kadesh-barnea. They drove out all the people of the desert, [15] and took up residence in the land of the Amorites, and by their might destroyed all the inhabitants of Heshbon; and crossing over the Jordan they took possession of all the hill country. [16] They drove out before them the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Shechemites, and all the Gergesites, and lived there a long time". Judith 5:5-16 NRSV-CE

Here we find the mystery announced by Achior and later revealed by Judith in her epistle. Carefully read his announcement.

> [17] 'As long as they did not sin against their God they prospered, for the God who hates iniquity is with them. [18] But when they departed from the way he had prescribed for them, they were utterly defeated in many battles and were led away captive to a foreign land. The temple of their God was razed to the ground, and their towns were occupied by their enemies. [19] But now they have returned to their God, and have come back from the places where they were scattered, and have occupied Jerusalem, where their sanctuary is, and have settled in the hill country, because it was uninhabited. Judith 5:17-19 NRSV-CE

As long as they did not sin against Adonai, these people prospered, but when they departed from His ways, they were utterly defeated in many battles. Let the reader take note that the Old Testament wars are all typologies, that is, foreshadowing the New Testament believer's spiritual battles. When we obey, walking in Adonai's statutes and precepts and in His righteousness, we can expect His blessings. Disobedience lifts the hedge of protection, moving us out of the blessing. Saints, it is like any law. You cannot decide to drive 200 km per hour in a 120 km per hour

zone expecting nothing to happen to you. There are law enforcement officers out there to enforce the speeding laws. Likewise, are we also under spiritual laws? Disobeying these laws will have consequences for the believer. Achior explained this honestly to Holofernes.

> ***20 'So now, my master and lord, if there is any oversight in this people and they sin against their God and we find out their offence, then we can go up and defeat them. 21 But if they are not a guilty nation, then let my lord pass them by; for their Lord and God will defend them, and we shall become the laughing-stock of the whole world.'*** *Judith 5:5-16 NRSV-CE*

22 "When Achior had finished saying these things, all the people standing around the tent began to complain; Holofernes' officers and all the inhabitants of the sea coast and Moab insisted that he should be cut to pieces. 23 They said, 'We are not afraid of the Israelites; they are a people with no strength or power for making war. 24 Therefore let us go ahead, Lord Holofernes, and your vast army will swallow them up." Judith 5:22-24 NRSV-CE

The world has become so arrogant today, following in the footsteps of Nebuchadnezzar and his people, not recognizing that they came head-on-head with the King of Kings, the Creator of the Universe, Adonai Tzavot, the military commander of the Heavenly Host. He always came through for the right, and so shall He do forever.

> The key is: We have to live a lifestyle of righteousness, demonstrating it in our generosity.

4 "When the Israelites saw their vast numbers, they were greatly terrified and said to one another, 'They will now strip clean the whole land; neither the high mountains nor the valleys nor the hills will bear their weight.' 5 Yet they all seized their weapons, and when they had kindled fires on their towers, they remained on guard all that night (Judith 7:4-5 NRSV-CE).

It reminded me of the same situation involving Jehoshaphat during the battle against the Moabites and the Ammonites in the Book of Chronicles.

> *1 It came to pass after this also that the sons of Moab and the sons of Ammon and with them others besides the Ammonites came against Jehoshaphat to battle. 2 Then some came and told Jehoshaphat, saying, There comes a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea, and from Syria; and, behold, they are in Hazazontamar, which is Engedi. 3 Then Jehoshaphat feared and set himself to seek the LORD and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. 2 Chronicles 20:1-3 JUB*

Fear is not the problem. The problem is staying in that fear instead of allowing it to push us toward Adonai, to pray and cry out to Him, and to trust and obey His commandments. We knew the outcome in the case of Jehoshaphat when the Lord Himself announced that this battle is not yours.

> *15 And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's. 2 Chronicles 20:15 KJV*

But in the case of Holofernes, we are not familiar with the story. While I was reading it, I anticipated the outcome (to be honest, with a little anxiety deep inside me, as I felt deeply in my spirit for these people constantly under attack by the enemy, maybe because of my own 60-year journey of experiencing the same constant, prolonged battles). And the outcome was not quite what I anticipated. God Almighty always came through, pulling another rabbit out of the hat.

Back to the story of Judith, the chieftains of the Edomites, all the leaders of the Moabites, and the commanders of the coastland came to Holofernes with a plan to overcome Israel.

> *10 This people, the Israelites, do not rely on their spears but on the height of the mountains where they live, for it is not easy to reach the tops of their mountains. 11 Therefore, my lord, do not fight against them in regular formation, and not a man of your army will fall. 12 Remain in your camp, and keep all the men in your forces with you; let your servants take possession of the spring of water that flows from the foot of the mountain, 13 for this is where all the people of Bethulia get their water. So thirst will destroy them, and they will surrender their town. Meanwhile, we and our people will go up to the tops of the nearby mountains and camp there to keep watch to see that no one gets out of the town. 14 They and their wives and children will waste away with famine, and before the sword reaches them they will be strewn about in the streets where they live. 15 Thus you will pay them back with evil, because they rebelled and did not receive you peaceably.' Judith 7:10-15 NRSV-CE*

These words pleased Holofernes and all his attendants, and he ordered that they be carried out as they had said. As is typical of Israel, when God did not come through as they had hoped, they began to murmur and complain.

> *23 Then all the people, the young men, the women, and the children, gathered around Uzziah and the rulers of the town and cried out with a loud voice, and said before all the elders, 24 'Let God judge between you and us! You have done us a great injury in not making peace with the Assyrians. 25 For now we have no one to help us; God has sold us into their hands, to be strewn before them in thirst and exhaustion. 26 Now summon them and surrender the whole town as booty to the army of Holofernes and to all his forces. 27 For it would be better for us to be captured by them. We shall indeed become slaves, but our lives will be spared, and we shall not witness our little ones dying before our eyes, and our wives and children drawing their last breath. 28 We call to witness against you heaven and earth and our God, the Lord of our*

ancestors, who punishes us for our sins and the sins of our ancestors; do today the things that we have described!' Judith 7:23-28 NRSV-CE

It sounds like the same voice at Kadesh Barnea, when Israel rebelled against Adonai by refusing to enter the Promised Land after the spies returned from Canaan, resulting in a 40-year penalty of wandering in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 9:23; Numbers 13-14).

[29] Then great and general lamentation arose throughout the assembly, and they cried out to the Lord God with a loud voice. [30] But Uzziah said to them, 'Courage, my brothers and sisters! Let us hold out for five days more; by that time the Lord our God will turn his mercy to us again, for he will not forsake us utterly. [31] But if these days pass by, and no help comes for us, I will do as you say.' Judith 7:29-31 NRSV-CE

A Widow: Judith

At first, Uzziah's request sounded noble, but it soon became clear that his counsel was unwise. In the village of Bethulia, a man named Manasseh once lived. He died in a fire, leaving his wife, Judith, a widow. Judith, still in sackcloth and widow's garments, summoned the spiritual leaders to her tent. I have always found it remarkable that an ordinary person can summon a king and still be obeyed, as Elijah once summoned Ahab, the king of Israel, even though Ahab sought to kill him. Nevertheless, when Uzziah and the elders arrived, Judith addressed them with boldness.

'Listen to me, rulers of the people of Bethulia! What you have said to the people today is not right; you have even sworn and pronounced this oath between God and you, promising to surrender the town to our enemies unless the Lord turns and helps us within so many days. [12] Who are you to put God to the test today, and to set yourselves up in the place of God in human affairs? [13] You are putting the Lord Almighty to the test, but you will never learn anything! [14] You cannot plumb the depths of the human heart or understand the workings of the human mind; how do you expect to search out God, who made all these things, and find out his mind or comprehend his thought? No, my brothers, do

> *not anger the Lord our God. [15] For if he does not choose to help us within these five days, he has power to protect us within any time he pleases, or even to destroy us in the presence of our enemies. [16] Do not try to bind the purposes of the Lord our God; for God is not like a human being, to be threatened, or like a mere mortal, to be won over by pleading. [17] Therefore, while we wait for his deliverance, let us call upon him to help us, and he will hear our voice if it pleases him. Judith 8:11-17 NRSV-CE*

Just an ordinary woman, a widow who was minding her own business, who arose among the masses to correct King Uzziah and the spiritual leaders. Judith continues:

> *[25] In spite of everything let us give thanks to the Lord our God, who is putting us to the test as he did our ancestors. [26] Remember what he did with Abraham, and how he tested Isaac, and what happened to Jacob in Syrian Mesopotamia, while he was tending the sheep of Laban, his mother's brother. [27] For he has not tried us with fire, as he did them, to search their hearts, nor has he taken vengeance on us; but the Lord scourges those who are close to him in order to admonish them.' Judith 8:25-27 NRSV-CE*

Notice that the king acknowledged Judith's wisdom and her pure heart. [28] "Then Uzziah said to her, 'All that you have said was spoken out of a true heart, and there is no one who can deny your words. [29] Today is not the first time your wisdom has been shown, but from the beginning of your life all the people have recognized your understanding, for your heart's disposition is right. [30] But the people were so thirsty that they compelled us to do for them what we have promised, and made us take an oath that we cannot break. [31] Now since you are a God-fearing woman, pray for us, so that the Lord may send us rain to fill our cisterns. Then we will no longer feel faint from thirst' (Judith 8:28-31 NRSV-CE).

> *[32] Then Judith said to them, 'Listen to me. I am about to do something that will go down through all generations of our descendants. [33] Stand at the town gate tonight so that I may go out with my maid; and within*

> *the days after which you have promised to surrender the town to our enemies, the Lord will deliver Israel by my hand. [34] Only, do not try to find out what I am doing; for I will not tell you until I have finished what I am about to do.' Judith 8:32-34 NRSV-CE*

It must be that during her own time of prayer, fasting, and sackcloth, the Lord spoke to her and revealed to her what to do.

> *[35] Uzziah and the rulers said to her, 'Go in peace, and may the Lord God go before you, to take vengeance on our enemies.' [36] So they returned from the tent and went to their posts. Judith 8:35-36 NRSV-CE*

Judith's Prayer

We might think Judith already knew what to do, but instead she uncovered her sackcloth and widow's garments and prayed to Adonai.

> *[9] Then Judith prostrated herself, put ashes on her head, and uncovered the sackcloth she was wearing. At the very time when the evening incense was being offered in the house of God in Jerusalem, Judith cried out to the Lord with a loud voice, and said: Judith 9:1 NRSV-CE*

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[2] 'O Lord God of my ancestor Simeon, to whom you gave a sword to take revenge on those strangers who had torn off a virgin's clothing to defile her, and exposed her thighs to put her to shame, and polluted her womb to disgrace her; for you said, "It shall not be done"—yet they did it; [3] so you gave up their rulers to be killed, and their bed, which was ashamed of the deceit they had practised, was stained with blood, and you struck down slaves along with princes, and princes on their thrones. [4] You gave up their wives for booty and their daughters to captivity, and all their booty to be divided among your beloved children who burned with zeal for you and abhorred the pollution of their blood and called on you for help. O God, my God, hear me also, a widow.

[5] 'For you have done these things and those that went before and those that followed. You have designed the things that are now, and those that are to come. What you had in mind has happened; [6] the things you

decided on presented themselves and said, "Here we are!" For all your ways are prepared in advance, and your judgement is with foreknowledge.

7 'Here now are the Assyrians, a greatly increased force, priding themselves on their horses and riders, boasting in the strength of their foot-soldiers, and trusting in shield and spear, in bow and sling. They do not know that you are the Lord who crushes wars; the Lord is your name.

8 Break their strength by your might, and bring down their power in your anger; for they intend to defile your sanctuary, and to pollute the tabernacle where your glorious name resides, and to break off the horns of your altar with the sword. 9 Look at their pride, and send your wrath upon their heads. Give to me, a widow, the strong hand to do what I plan. 10 By the deceit of my lips strike down the slave with the prince and the prince with his servant; crush their arrogance by the hand of a woman.

11 'For your strength does not depend on numbers, nor your might on the powerful. But you are the God of the lowly, helper of the oppressed, upholder of the weak, protector of the forsaken, saviour of those without hope.

12 Please, please, God of my father, God of the heritage of Israel, Lord of heaven and earth, Creator of the waters, King of all your creation, hear my prayer! 13 Make my deceitful words bring wound and bruise on those who have planned cruel things against your covenant, and against your sacred house, and against Mount Zion, and against the house your children possess. 14 Let your whole nation and every tribe know and understand that you are God, the God of all power and might, and that there is no other who protects the people of Israel but you alone!'

I have shared these prayers with the reader not merely for information but as an invitation to bow before our God in sackcloth and humility. We must cry out to Him about the destruction our enemies plan, who come like a flood, proud and arrogant, to kill, steal, and destroy. There comes a time when we must cry out to the Lord and declare, "Enough!" Yet sometimes

we cry out to the Lord without obeying His instructions afterward. Notice that when Judith finished crying out to the God of Israel, she rose from where she had been lying prostrate. She rose to action. May your tears, your cries before the Lord, and your prostration before Him propel you into obedience. Perhaps your willingness to act will also help save a nation.

Judith removed her sackcloth and took off her widow's garments. She bathed her body with water and anointed herself with precious ointments. She combed her hair, placed a tiara on her head, and dressed in the festive garments she had worn while her husband Manasseh was alive. She put sandals on her feet and adorned herself with anklets, bracelets, rings, earrings, and all her other jewelry. This act reminds us of Esther's purification and sanctification before she entered the palace, became queen, and was positioned to save the nation of Israel.

> *4 Thus she made herself very beautiful, to entice they eyes of all the men who might see her. 5 She gave her maid a skin of win and a flask of oil, and filled a bag with roasted grain, dried fig cakes, and fine bread; then she wrapped up all her dishes and gave them to her to carry. Judith 10:1- 5 NRSV-CE*

As I read this passage, a strong smell of ointments filled the room. I could smell it - the presence of the Lord announcing that the time of sackcloth is over. The time of living in widow's garments is over. It is time for our new garments.

It's time for you to come out of sackcloth and take off your widow's garment. The time of lamentation is over!

It's Time to Arise, My Bride!

It's time to close the door of the past. It's time to bathe and to put on the new garment of praise.

Sela – Let us pause and take a deep breath. Let the Holy Ghost minister to us all.

Let us indeed put on our new garments of praise.

In this moment of PAUSE - - the Holy Spirit ministered to me - - and I became so aware of His presence when the prophet announced the Year of the Lord's Favor in Isaiah 61!

The Year of the Lord's Favor

> The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. Isaiah 61:1 KJV

Isaiah 61 calls us to set the captives free, but I did not announce the fullness of this passage until today. I believe this is a prophetic word from the Lord, as He is leading us now into this season of living a life of gratitude, because He is proclaiming the ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD!

> 2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; 3 To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified. Isaiah 61:2-3 KJV

Notice that Isaiah 61:2 mentions the day of vengeance of our God. In the New Testament, when Yashuah entered the synagogue in His hometown, they brought Him the scrolls of Isaiah, and He read this very passage.

> *16 And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And, as His custom was, He went in to the synagogue on the Sabbath day and*

stood up to read. [17] And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And unrolling the book, He found the place where it was written, [18] "The Spirit of the Lord is on Me; because of this He has anointed Me to proclaim the Gospel to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim deliverance to the captives, and new sight to the blind, to set at liberty those having been crushed, [19] to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." [20] And rolling up the book, returning it to the attendant, He sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on Him. [21] And He began to say to them, Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your ears. Luke 4:16-21 MKJV

When Yashuah read from Isaiah 61, He deliberately omitted the year of vengeance and proclaimed only the acceptable year of the Lord, because He did not come the first time for vengeance but for liberty. Let this truth be fulfilled in your hearing today and set you free. Vengeance is still coming – also referred to in Scripture as "that day." That day of the Lord is about Jacob's trouble, the seven-year tribulation. This is a Rhema word for the Body of Christ!

- The acceptable year of the Lord is now.
- The Father saw your tears and mourning.
- Your tears are all stored in a bottle, and each tear is a liquid word, and He understands each word.
- He is standing ready to give us beauty for ashes.
- The oil of joy for your mourning.
- Let us exchange our spirit of heaviness now for a new garment – the garment of praise.
- He is standing ready to plant His Bride now as trees of righteousness.
- All and all for His Glory.

Judith is brought before Holofernes

So, Judith and her maid went out through the Gates of the City, straight downhill through the valley. The Assyrian patrol intercepted them and took them into custody.

> *12 They asked her, 'To what people do you belong, and where are you coming from, and where are you going?' She replied, 'I am a daughter of the Hebrews, but I am fleeing from them, for they are about to be handed over to you to be devoured. 13 I am on my way to see Holofernes the commander of your army, to give him a true report; I will show him a way by which he can go and capture all the hill country without losing one of his men, captured or slain.' Judith 10:12-13 NRSV-CE*

14 "When the men heard her words, and observed her face—she was in their eyes marvellously beautiful—they said to her, 15 'You have saved your life by hurrying down to see our lord. Go at once to his tent; some of us will escort you and hand you over to him. 16 When you stand before him, have no fear in your heart, but tell him what you have just said, and he will treat you well.' Judith 10:14-16 NRSV-CE

> *17 They chose from their number a hundred men to accompany her and her maid, and they brought them to the tent of Holofernes. 18 There was great excitement in the whole camp, for her arrival was reported from tent to tent. They came and gathered around her as she stood outside the tent of Holofernes, waiting until they told him about her. 19 They marvelled at her beauty and admired the Israelites, judging them by her. They said to one another, 'Who can despise these people, who have women like this among them? It is not wise to leave one of their men alive, for if we let them go they will be able to beguile the whole world!' Judith 10:17-19 NRSV-CE*

The Real Truth about Adonai Tzavot

When Judith entered the tent of Holofernes, all marveled at her beauty. She prostrated herself and paid him obeisance, but his slaves raised her up (Judith 10:23 NRSV-CE). I encourage the reader to read slowly with me the

words of Judith as she addressed Holofernes, the General of Nebuchadnezzar's army.

> *9 'Now as for Achior's speech in your council, we have heard his words, for the people of Bethulia spared him and he told them all he had said to you. 10 Therefore, lord and master, do not disregard what he said, but keep it in your mind, for it is true. Indeed our nation cannot be punished, nor can the sword prevail against them, unless they sin against their God. Judith 11:9-10 NRSV-CE*

She referred back to Achior's words, yet she did not believe them. Likewise, many believers today struggle to believe this truth. Judith now confirmed it again, declaring that Israel could not be punished while they walked in righteousness. Saints, the Lord is showing us the same principle today: when we obey His commandments and walk in His righteousness, the enemy cannot prevail against us.

> *11 'But now, in order that my lord may not be defeated and his purpose frustrated, death will fall upon them, for a sin has overtaken them by which they are about to provoke their God to anger when they do what is wrong. 12 Since their food supply is exhausted and their water has almost given out, they have planned to kill their livestock and have determined to use all that God by his laws has forbidden them to eat. 13 They have decided to consume the first fruits of the grain and the tithes of the wine and oil, which they had consecrated and set aside for the priests who minister in the presence of our God in Jerusalem—things it is not lawful for any of the people even to touch with their hands. 14 Since even the people in Jerusalem have been doing this, they have sent messengers there in order to bring back permission from the council of the elders. 15 When the response reaches them and they act upon it, on that very day they will be handed over to you to be destroyed. Judith 11:11-15 NRSV-CE*

Judith announced and confirmed the Law of Heaven – the moment the people consume the first fruits, the tithe that is supposed to be set aside for the priests who minister in the Body of Christ, the hedge of protection is lifted, and you are handed over to destruction.

Consuming the first fruits – that is, not paying the tithe – automatically removes the hedge of protection.

It is a law.

With the hedge of protection lifted, you are delivered into the hands of destruction.

She just revealed the truth! She was honest. And these words found favor with Holofernes. But it is more than this . . . we will come back to this mystery!

> *16 'So when I, your slave, learned all this, I fled from them. God has sent me to accomplish with you things that will astonish the whole world wherever people shall hear about them. 17 Your servant is indeed God-fearing and serves the God of heaven night and day. So, my lord, I will remain with you; but every night your servant will go out into the valley and pray to God. He will tell me when they have committed their sins. 18 Then I will come and tell you, so that you may go out with your whole army, and not one of them will be able to withstand you. 19 Then I will lead you through Judea, until you come to Jerusalem; there I will set your throne. You will drive them like sheep that have no shepherd, and no dog will so much as growl at you. For this was told me to give me foreknowledge; it was announced to me, and I was sent to tell you.' Judith 11:16-19 NRSV-CE*

Notice that Judith highlighted only the importance of the first fruits. When people are starving, they will eat the first fruits. From the beginning, Adonai established his laws and statutes, and they cannot be changed. It is like standing under an umbrella to avoid getting wet in the rain. The moment you step out from under the umbrella, you get wet. The same

happens when we do not honor the Lord with our tithe (first fruits) and our giving (alms or tzedakah). Scripture is clear that we need to honor our Lord with all our increase and with our first fruits.

> *9 Glorify God with all your wealth, honoring him with your **firstfruits**, with **every increase** that comes to you. 10 Then every dimension of your life will overflow with blessings from an uncontainable source of inner joy! 11 My child, when the Lord God speaks to you, never take his words lightly, and never be upset when he corrects you. 12 For the Father's discipline comes only from his passionate love and pleasure for you. Even when it seems like his correction is harsh, it's still better than any father on earth gives to his child. Proverbs 3:9- 12 TPT*
>
> *9 Honor Jehovah with your **substance**, and with the **firstfruits** of all your increase; 10 and your barns shall be filled with plenty, and your presses shall burst with new wine. 11 My son, do not despise the chastening of Jehovah; nor be weary with His correction; 12 for whom Jehovah loves He corrects, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights. Proverbs 3:9-12 MKJV*

When we desire wealth, we put Mammon first and should call it what it is—idolatry! No congregation will tolerate members living in sexual sin and impurity, yet they tolerate members who desire wealth! We are deceived by this spirit of greed—Mammon.

Back to Judith.

> *20 Her words pleased Holofernes and all his servants. They marvelled at her wisdom and said, 21 'No other woman from one end of the earth to the other looks so beautiful or speaks so wisely!' 22 Then Holofernes said to her, 'God has done well to send you ahead of the people, to strengthen our hands and bring destruction on those who have despised my lord. 23 You are not only beautiful in appearance, but wise in speech. If you do as you have said, your God shall be my God, and you shall live in the palace of King Nebuchadnezzar and be renowned throughout the whole world.' Judith 11:9:23 NRSV-CE*

Stay Holy and Consecrated

There is another Biblical truth that we, as Gentiles, so easily overlook. I am becoming increasingly aware of it. Maybe the Holy Spirit wants to lead us into deeper holiness so we can consecrate ourselves to the Lord. That is the principle of abstaining from the delicacies of this world. Holofernes invited Judith to join him at his table; Judith immediately replied that she could not partake of them.

> *[1] Then he commanded them to bring her in where his silver dinnerware was kept, and ordered them to set a table for her with some of his own delicacies, and with some of his own wine to drink. [2] But Judith said, 'I cannot partake of them, or it will be an offence; but I will have enough with the things I brought with me.' [3] Holofernes said to her, 'If your supply runs out, where can we get you more of the same? For none of your people are here with us.' [4] Judith replied, 'As surely as you live, my lord, your servant will not use up the supplies I have with me before the Lord carries out by my hand what he has determined.' Judith 12:1-4 NRSV-CE*

She prepared herself to remain pure and consecrated herself before the Lord to bring her own food. We find the same attitude in the Book of Daniel, when he and his friends were in exile in Babylon at King Nebuchadnezzar's palace. They refused to partake of the king's delicacies.

> *But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the king's delicacies or with the wine he was drinking, so he entreated the chief official for permission not to defile himself. Daniel 1:8 TLV*

Today, we no longer see this same level of separation. The world and many believers now look alike. Other religions, such as Islam, have preserved distinct systems for banking, slaughtering, and food preparation, yet many believers have lost their sense of consecration. For the people of Israel, refusing to partake in the delicacies of the world was not negotiable, because they understood the consequences of defilement. On the fourth day, Holofernes held a banquet for his personal attendants only and did not invite any of his officers. He then ordered his eunuch, Bagoas, to persuade

the Hebrew woman under his care to join them for food and drink. But the king had a hidden agenda, and Bagoas knew it very well.

> *12 For it would be a disgrace if we let such a woman go without having intercourse with her. If we do not seduce her, she will laugh at us.' 13 So Bagoas left the presence of Holofernes, and approached her and said, 'Let this pretty girl not hesitate to come to my lord to be honoured in his presence, and to enjoy drinking wine with us, and to become today like one of the Assyrian women who serve in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar.' 14 Judith replied, 'Who am I to refuse my lord? Whatever pleases him I will do at once, and it will be a joy to me until the day of my death.' 15 So she proceeded to dress herself in all her woman's finery. Her maid went ahead and spread for her on the ground before Holofernes the lambskins she had received from Bagoas for her daily use in reclining. Judith 12:12-15 NRSV-CE*

When I read about the strategic moves of spiritual leaders in the Bible, I always ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom. Consider Jehu's actions after he killed Jezebel. He called for a massive, mandatory assembly and sacrifice to Baal, threatening death to any priest who did not attend. Jehu ensured that no worshippers of the Lord God were inside the temple when he signaled eighty armed guards stationed outside to go in and kill everyone with the sword (2 Kings 10:18-28).

A Strategic Move

Judith had to wait patiently for the right moment to execute this strategic move.

> 16 Then Judith came in and lay down. Holofernes' heart was ravished with her and his passion was aroused, for he had been waiting for an opportunity to seduce her from the day he first saw her. 17 So Holofernes said to her, 'Have a drink and be merry with us!' 18 Judith said, 'I will gladly drink, my lord, because today is the greatest day in my whole life.' 19 Then she took what her maid had prepared and ate and drank before him.

> [20] Holofernes was greatly pleased with her, and drank a great quantity of wine, much more than he had ever drunk in any one day since he was born. Judith 12:16-20 NRSV-CE

Judith remained faithful and ate and drank what her maid had prepared for her, but she did not partake of Holofernes' delicacies.

> *[1] When evening came, his slaves quickly withdrew. Bagoas closed the tent from outside and shut out the attendants from his master's presence. They went to bed, for they all were weary because the banquet had lasted so long. [2] But Judith was left alone in the tent, with Holofernes stretched out on his bed, for he was dead drunk. Judith 13:1-2 NRSV-CE*

[3] "Now Judith had told her maid to stand outside the bedchamber and to wait for her to come out, as she did on the other days; for she said she would be going out for her prayers. She had said the same thing to Bagoas. [4] So everyone went out, and no one, either small or great, was left in the bedchamber.

> Then Judith, standing beside his bed, said in her heart, 'O Lord God of all might, look in this hour on the work of my hands for the exaltation of Jerusalem. [5] Now indeed is the time to help your heritage and to carry out my design to destroy the enemies who have risen up against us.'

[6] She went up to the bedpost near Holofernes' head, and took down his sword that hung there. [7] She came close to his bed, took hold of the hair of his head, and said, '**Give me strength today, O Lord God of Israel!**' [8] Then she struck his neck twice with all her might, and cut off his head. [9] Next she rolled his body off the bed and pulled down the canopy from the posts. Soon afterwards she went out and gave Holofernes' head to her maid, [10] who placed it in her food bag. Judith 13:3-10 NRSV-CE

With Holofernes's head in the bag, Judith and her maid ordered the people to open the way, for they were going to pray as usual. They passed through the camp and went up the mountain to Bethulia.

> *15 Then she pulled the head out of the bag and showed it to them, and said, 'See here, the head of Holofernes, the commander of the Assyrian army, and here is the canopy beneath which he lay in his drunken stupor. The Lord has struck him down by the hand of a woman. 16 As the Lord lives, who has protected me on the way I went, I swear that it was my face that seduced him to his destruction, and that he committed no sin with me, to defile and shame me.'*

17 All the people were greatly astonished. They bowed down and worshipped God, and said with one accord, 'Blessed are you our God, who have this day humiliated the enemies of your people.' 18 Then Uzziah said to her, 'O daughter, you are blessed by the Most High God above all other women on earth; and blessed be the Lord God, who created the heavens and the earth, who has guided you to cut off the head of the leader of our enemies. 19 Your praise will never depart from the hearts of those who remember the power of God. 20 May God grant this to be a perpetual honour to you, and may he reward you with blessings, because you risked your own life when our nation was brought low, and you averted our ruin, walking in the straight path before our God.' And all the people said, 'Amen. Amen.' Judith 13:15-20 NRSV-CE

Judith then commanded the people to take Holofernes's head and hang it on the wall, and to take their weapons and go out in companies to the mountain passes. When the Assyrians saw them, they sent word to their commanders, who then went to the generals, the captains, and all their other officers. When they came to Holofernes's tent and saw that his head was missing, chaos broke out in the Assyrian camp. Left without a leader, the Assyrians were given over to Israel, and for thirty days Israel plundered the Assyrian camp. They gave Judith Holofernes's tent and all his silver dinnerware, his beds, his bowls, and all his furniture. She took them,

loaded her mules, hitched up her carts, and piled the things on them (Judith 14:11 NRSV-CE). There was great joy and victory throughout Israel, even in Jerusalem. Notice now that as soon as the people were purified, they offered their burnt offerings, freewill offerings, and gifts. The people of Israel learned the law of purification and giving. Judith 16:18 NRSV-CE

> [19] Judith also dedicated to God all the possessions of Holofernes, which the people had given her; and the canopy that she had taken for herself from his bedchamber she gave as a votive offering. [20] For three months the people continued feasting in Jerusalem before the sanctuary, and Judith remained with them. Judith 18:9-20 NRSV-CE

The people of Israel, well acquainted with the law of firstfruits, the giving of alms, and the payment of tzedakah, as well as with caring for the poor and widows, always gave back what they received. Judith returned to Bethulia and was honored throughout the country for the rest of her life. Many desired to marry her, but after her husband Manasseh died, she gave herself to no man for the rest of her life. She became increasingly famous and grew old in her husband's house, reaching the age of one hundred and five (Judith 18:21-22 NRSV-CE).

And Judith sang a song to Adonai:

[1] And Judith said,
Begin a song to my God with tambourines,
sing to my Lord with cymbals.
Raise to him a new psalm
exalt him, and call upon his name.
[2] For the Lord is a God who crushes wars;
he sets up his camp among his people;
he delivered me from the hands of my pursuers.
[3] The Assyrian came down from the mountains of the north;
he came with myriads of his warriors;

their numbers blocked up the wadis,
and their cavalry covered the hills.
4 He boasted that he would burn up my territory,
and kill my young men with the sword,
and dash my infants to the ground,
and seize my children as booty,
and take my virgins as spoil.
5 But the Lord Almighty has foiled them
by the hand of a woman.
6 For their mighty one did not fall by the hands of the young men,
nor did the sons of the Titans strike him down,
nor did tall giants set upon him;
but Judith daughter of Merari
with the beauty of her countenance undid him.
7 For she put away her widow's clothing
to exalt the oppressed in Israel.
She anointed her face with perfume;
8 she fastened her hair with a tiara
and put on a linen gown to beguile him.
9 Her sandal ravished his eyes,
her beauty captivated his mind,
and the sword severed his neck!
10 The Persians trembled at her boldness,
the Medes were daunted at her daring.
11 Then my oppressed people shouted;
my weak people cried out, and the enemy trembled;
they lifted up their voices, and the enemy were turned back.
12 Sons of slave-girls pierced them through
and wounded them like the children of fugitives;
they perished before the army of my Lord.
13 I will sing to my God a new song:
O Lord, you are great and glorious,
wonderful in strength, invincible.
14 Let all your creatures serve you,
for you spoke, and they were made.

You sent forth your spirit, and it formed them;
there is none that can resist your voice.
15 For the mountains shall be shaken to their foundations with the waters;
before your glance the rocks shall melt like wax.
But to those who fear you
you show mercy.
16 For every sacrifice as a fragrant offering is a small thing,
and the fat of all whole burnt-offerings to you is a very little thing;
but whoever fears the Lord is great for ever.
17 Woe to the nations that rise up against my people!
The Lord Almighty will take vengeance on them in the day of judgement;
he will send fire and worms into their flesh;
they shall weep in pain for ever.
Judith 1:1-17 NRSV-CE

A song of gratitude, all of which started with obedience to the Law of Prosperity.

Honor thy Lord with thy first fruit and all thy increase. The tithe does not belong to you, and you cannot eat it. Alms (tzedakah) belong to the poor and the widows.

And when you honor thy Lord with thy tithe and thy alms, you walk and demonstrate a lifestyle of gratitude.

You prove your deeds of righteousness and justice, and the Lord will rebuke the devourer and multiply the portion you give away.

Another victory in the hands of a woman

Remember Deborah, the judge and prophetess who announced to the king Barak that victory in a battle would come into a woman's hands.

> *And she said, I will surely go with you. But the journey that you take shall not be for your honor, for Jehovah shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh. Judges 4:9 MKJV*

When the king, Sisera, fled from the battle, he came to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite. Instead of water, she gave him milk and covered him. Then Jael, Heber's wife, took a tent peg and a hammer, crept softly to him, struck the peg into his temple, and drove it into the ground. For he was fast asleep and weary. So he died. (Judges 4:17-21 MKJV).

> *And behold, as Barak followed Sisera, Jael came out to meet him and said to him, Come and I will show you the man whom you seek. And when he came into her tent, behold, Sisera lay dead, and the peg was in his temple. Judges 4:22 MKJV*

Nebuchadnezzar Stole the Tithe

After this, in the Books of Tobit and Judith, one might wonder whether this information somehow reached Nebuchadnezzar. The information is that when Israel sinned, the canopy of protection would lift, opening the door to destruction. It is mentioned here because we learned from the Bible that Nebuchadnezzar stole the tithe.

Why?

Could it be that news reached Nebuchadnezzar about what Judith had told Holofernes: that Israel had reached such severe hunger that they were beginning to eat the firstfruits? I believe this is a strong possibility. Why would Nebuchadnezzar try to steal the tithe? Because he understood that when Israel failed to obey Adonai's spiritual laws, they became vulnerable to destruction. In the area of Kingdom finances, I strongly believe the Body

of Christ has been blinded and misled, and that our understanding has been darkened by Satan.

> *Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart. Ephesians 4:18 KJV*

Satan steals the tithe and the next generation, keeping us in bondage. He teaches us to speak Babylon's language. He influences God's people in every way *to withhold what belongs to God* and to neglect the Word of God.

> You are enslaved when you heed the worthless deceit of human wisdom and teachings from human beings and from ruling spirits.

> *See to it, then, that no one enslaves you by means of the worthless deceit of human wisdom, which comes from the teachings handed down by human beings and from the ruling spirits of the universe, and not from Christ. Colossians 2:8 GNB*

These words are profound! The enemy puts us in bondage by implanting deceitful ideas into our minds and bodies!

> *For all that is in the **world**, the **lust of the flesh**, and the **lust of the eyes**, and the **pride of life**, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 1 John 2:16 KJV*

> ***Lust of the flesh:*** What you offer your body to fulfill its selfish needs. What you do with your body.

> ***Lust of the eyes***: What you look at is what enters your mind and controls it.

Pride of life: When you do not tithe, you steal from God and are arrogant and full of pride. You believe you can make it on your own.

When you do not tithe, you open a door for demons to enter!

Satan is a thief! You allow him to steal when you don't tithe. He will try to influence you to steal from God what belongs to Him! These serious words are not meant to condemn you but to help you close the door to demons in your life! Many believers seek money first and then the Kingdom. We put our jobs and businesses before God. When we first seek the Kingdom rather than pursuing money, money will pursue us. Andrew Wommack has a saying that will stay with me forever.

"If God can bring money through you, He will get money to you, and there will be sufficient left over for you to prosper!"

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. Matthew 6:33 ESV

Let us therefore not pursue money but the Kingdom of God! Let us put God first, and then money will pursue us!

Glorify God with all your wealth, honoring him with your firstfruits, with every increase that comes to you. ***10*** *Then every dimension of your life will overflow with blessings from an uncontainable source of inner joy!* *11*My child, when the Lord God speaks to you, never take his words lightly, and never be upset when he corrects you. *12* For the Father's discipline comes only from his passionate love and pleasure for you. Even when it seems like his correction is harsh, it's still better than any father on earth gives to his child. Proverbs 3:9- 12 TPT*

With our money, we either honor or dishonor God. God does not want our leftovers. That is an insult to Him. Prioritizing our money over God is idolatry.

> *Live as one who has died to every form of sexual sin and impurity. Live as one who has died to the desires for forbidden things, [magic]* ***including the desire for wealth, which is the essence of idol worship.*** *[6] When you live in these vices you ignite the anger of God against these acts of disobedience. [The Greek states "the sons of disobedience," but it is the "deeds" which are punished as seen in verses 7-9.] Colossians 3:5-6 TPT*

When you seek money first, money becomes your "god," which is idolatry, according to this Scripture. No congregation will approve or tolerate the sin of fornication and sexual immorality, yet we tolerate the idolatry of covetousness.

> *Therefore, put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness****, which is idolatry.*** *Colossians 3:5 NKJV*
>
> *But those who crave the wealth of this world slip into spiritual snares. They become trapped by the troubles that come through their foolish and harmful desires, driven by greed and drowning in their own sinful pleasures. And they take others down with them into their corruption and eventual destruction. [10] Loving money ["insatiable greed for money."] is a root of all evils. Some people run after it so much that they have given up their faith. Craving more money pushes them away from the faith into error, compounding misery in their lives! 1 Timothy 6:9-10 TPT*

When Nebuchadnezzar took Israel into exile, he also removed the gold and silver vessels from God's temple and placed them in his own pagan temple. After him, King Belshazzar held a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles. He ordered the sacred gold and silver vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem to be brought out so he and his guests could drink from them. As they drank, they praised idols of gold,

silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. Suddenly, the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plastered wall near the lampstand: "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Uparsin."

> God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting. Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

That same night, Belshazzar died, and the Medes and Persians took over his kingdom. Today, satan tricks the Body of Christ into not obeying the Kingdom Financial Laws that govern our prosperity and blessings. Let me speak directly to the reader. The river of supply always flows in abundance. The supply side is never the problem, and there is no shortage or delay. The problem, the lack, and the so-called delay are on the receiving end. When we do not meet the requirements of spiritual laws, the river's flow gets clogged in the channels and pipes that receive it. It is like water from a main river that must be distributed into smaller channels and irrigation pipes to the land. Blockages hinder sufficient flow to the land. This section provides information and evidence to help the Body of Christ demonstrate a lifestyle of gratitude. Let us become doers of the Word rather than listeners.

> *Don't just listen to the Word of Truth and not respond to it, for that is the essence of self-deception. So always let his Word become like poetry written and fulfilled by your life! James 1:22 TPT*

The Jubilee Translation says: "but be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

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Bara: Create in me a Clean Heart

I want to close this book with something the Holy Spirit has led me through for almost forty years. As a young student, the first mystery I wrestled with was the one Paul addressed in Romans 7, and I continued wrestling with it for the next thirty-five years. At that stage, I did not read the English Scriptures, nor was I familiar with Strong's Dictionary. What I did have was a deep hunger for the Lord and for truth. Over time, I came to realize that through wisdom, knowledge, and understanding gained by studying the Bible, the answers to my questions would eventually come. To be honest, that was not how I understood it forty years ago. Back then, I was simply hungry. In Romans 7, Paul describes a deep inner dilemma: the very things he wants to do, he does not do, and the things he does not want to do, he finds himself doing.

> **For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Romans 7:19 ESV**

I struggled with this in my personal life for thirty-five years. Only when I began reading various English translations did the Holy Spirit slowly reveal to me what Paul was communicating to his audience. To receive this revelation, let the reader study Romans 5–8 carefully and see how Paul describes the man dominated by the flesh, and how the mind is eventually renewed to be governed by the Spirit. In this one truth, we find the answer to the riddle: nothing good lives in the old Adam nature of man who is still ruled by the flesh, as Paul revealed.

> *18 For I know that nothing good lives within the flesh of my fallen humanity. The longings to do what is right are within me, but will-power is not enough to accomplish it. 19 My lofty desires to do what is good are dashed when I do the things I want to avoid. 20 So if my behavior contradicts my desires to do good, I must conclude that it's not my true identity doing it, but the unwelcome intruder of sin hindering me from*

> *being who I really am. [21] Through my experience of this principle, I discover that even when I want to do good, evil is ready to sabotage me. [22] Truly, deep within my true identity, I love to do what pleases God. [23] But I discern another power operating in my humanity, waging a war against the moral principles of my conscience and bringing me into captivity as a prisoner to the "law" of sin—this unwelcome intruder in my humanity. [24] What an agonizing situation I am in! So who has the power to rescue this miserable man from the unwelcome intruder of sin and death? Romans 7:18-24 TPT*

My struggle was exactly what Paul described in verse 20: my behavior contradicted my desire to do good. Immediately afterward, Paul revealed the answer: it was the unwelcome intruder of sin at work within me, hindering me from becoming who I truly was in Christ. Oh, how I wish my theology professor had received this revelation forty years ago. At the time, he only quoted Scripture and pointed me to the final verse, where Paul declares that our help comes through Christ. But before Paul reached that conclusion, he exposed another power operating within humanity, warring against the spirit man. Before we can fully appreciate the final verse of this chapter, we must hear Paul's desperate cry: Who has the power to rescue me from this miserable intruder?

> I give all my thanks to God, for his mighty power has finally provided a way out through our Lord Jesus, the Anointed One! So if left to myself, the flesh is aligned with the law of sin, but now my renewed mind is fixed on and submitted to God's righteous principles. Romans 7:25 TPT

Today, by the mercy and grace of the Holy Spirit, I believe I can help both myself and the reader go deeper in this process of rescue. We often fail because we try so hard in our own strength, and the harder we try, the less progress we seem to make. In the Book of Samuel, we find King David, who saw Bathsheba bathing. This was not necessarily a single, isolated

moment but may have become a repeated temptation. David then went astray through adultery. When Bathsheba became pregnant, he tried to cover his sin by calling her husband, Uriah the Hittite, back from war, hoping he would sleep with his wife so the child would be presumed to be his. But Uriah refused to go home because of his loyalty to his fellow soldiers still in battle. David tried everything, yet Uriah remained faithful. So, David arranged for Uriah to be placed on the front lines, where his death would appear to be the result of war. Later, the prophet Nathan confronted David about his sin. David recognized the truth, acknowledged his wrongdoing, and publicly poured out his repentance in Psalm 51.

> [1] To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.
>
> [2] Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.
>
> [3] For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.
>
> [4] Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.
>
> [5] Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Psalms 51:1-5 KJV

Long before Paul struggled with it and finally revealed the mystery to the Gentiles in his epistle to the Romans, David cried out from his innermost being.

> `I was shaped in iniquity, in sin did my mother conceive me'

Then David gave us the answer: "**Create [H1254] in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me**" (Psalms 51:10 KJV). The

word "**create**" in this passage is the Hebrew word "**bârâ",** the very same word Adonai used in Genesis 1:1 when He created the heavens and the earth.

H1254 (Strong)

בָּרָא

bârâ'

baw-raw'

A primitive root; (absolutely) to *create*; (qualified) to *cut* down (a wood), *select*, *feed* (as formative processes): - choose, create (creator), cut down, dispatch, do, make (fat).

Only Adonai can "bârâ"; no other person can create. I received this revelation only recently while writing this Book, and it resolves a deep mystery for me personally. This answers many believers' struggles. We, as humans, struggle, and it brings us nowhere.

We try to do what only Adonai can do!

We can build, make, shape, and assemble, but we cannot bârâ. To bârâ is to bring something into existence that never existed before, creating it out of nothing. Only the Holy Spirit could have revealed this to David, and this truth remained hidden for millennia until it was time to be discovered. David did not ask God merely to fix his heart, help him do better next time, or give him more willpower to overcome. Instead, he revealed the very same struggle Paul later described to his readers: "I have the desire to do good, but I find myself restrained by another power that keeps me from doing what is right." Paul discovered that willpower alone is not enough to produce anything truly good. David also understood that what had happened within him could not simply be repaired. It had to be replaced. Likewise, Paul was not teaching believers how to repair the sinful nature but how to live as a new creation in Christ Jesus. In essence, David was saying, "Lord, start over with my heart. Just as in the beginning, when

there was nothing, You bârâ the heavens and the earth, so now I need You to bârâ a new heart within me."

David asked for an act of CREATION!

This prayer was not random but was created by the Holy Spirit so that Adonai could announce it:

"David, a man according to my own heart"

In the second part of verse 10, David also asked for the renewal of a right spirit. The Hebrew word for renew is "chadash," which points to rebuilding, repairing, renewing, and restoring. Notice the difference here: to restore rather than to replace.

> ***"Create*** *H1254 in me a clean heart, O God; and* ***renew*** *H2318 a right spirit within me" (Psalms 51:10 KJV).*

H2318 (Strong)

חָדַשׁ

chaḏash

khaw-dash'

A primitive root; to *be new*; causatively to *rebuild:* - renew, repair.

The first request is for a new heart; the old heart is already beyond repair. The second request is that the spirit already within him be renewed.

Behold I make all things new – Revelation 21:5

In the same verse, David also used the word '*tahor'*, translated in English as "clean." In Hebrew, this word denotes ceremonial and moral purity, the cleansing required to stand before the Lord. David was not asking merely for outward improvement. He was asking for a pure and clean heart, one

that could stand in the holiness of the Lord Almighty. When David referred to his heart, he meant the whole inner man: the will, the actions, the desires, and the place of decision-making. The heart is the center of self-control in humanity. Yet that center had become so corrupted that it was beyond repair. Paul later described this as the old Adam nature. It cannot be repaired; it must be replaced.

H2889 (Strong)

טָהוֹר טָהֹר

ṭâhôr ṭâhôr

haw-hore', taw-hore'

From H2891; *pure* (in a physical, chemical, ceremonial or moral sense): - clean, fair, pure (-ness).

This is the place where satan has kept believers in captivity. Man's self-efforts, such as trying harder, exercising more discipline, engaging in more activities, and praying longer, only reveal how wretched we are. Our self-efforts will only leave us exhausted. Only when we come to the end of ourselves, hand over all things to Adonai, come to Him with a pure heart, and let Him replace what is beyond repair:

Can we let go and start living our lives of gratitude?

YHWH's Warning

I was unaware of what the Holy Spirit had in mind when YHWH dropped the title of this book into my spirit. Only after I finished it and began revisiting everything from the beginning did I realize that the Holy Spirit had started the opening statement with a warning from my own court case and was now ending it with this principle of the heart! Guard your heart and keep it clean! Why? Because from the heart flow the springs of living water.

Above everything else guard your heart, because from it flow the springs of life. Proverbs 4:23 ISV

The TPT Bible translates this verse as

"So above all, guard the affections of your heart, for they affect all that you are. Pay attention to the welfare of your innermost being, for from there flows the wellspring of life"
(Proverbs 4:23 TPT).

It was the Messiah who gave serious warnings to the Pharisees in Matthew 23 and said:

You are blind and deaf to your evil. Shouldn't the one who cleans the outside also be concerned with cleaning the inside? You need to have more than clean dishes; you need clean hearts! Matthew 23:26 TPT

It is obvious that we can outwardly do the right thing while having a completely wrong heart attitude. Might this be the main reason so many saints gave up doing righteous deeds, only to discover that nothing worked out and then give up? Many experienced that God did not come through for them when they fasted, so they gave up. They also saw no breakthroughs after many years of fasting, so they tried to turn this into an Old Testament law they would no longer obey. I met many believers who had bad experiences trusting the Lord to heal their loved ones, and when their loved ones died without receiving healing, they no longer believed in healing. It all comes down to the condition of our hearts. The best Scripture that ties this together is in Matthew 23, where Yashuah gave seven woes to the Pharisees. He said:

"Woe to you, Torah scholars and Pharisees, hypocrites! You tithe mint and dill and cumin, yet you have neglected the weightier matters of Torah—justice and mercy and faithfulness. It is necessary to do these things without neglecting the others. Matthew 23:23 TLV

They insisted on the smallest tithes, but, with impure hearts, neglected the more important matters of the law, such as walking in love with the

Messiah, showing mercy to people (in the law there is no place for love and mercy – the letter kills), and bringing true justice. The TPT Bible translates this verse.

> "Great sorrow awaits you religious scholars and Pharisees—frauds and pretenders! For you are obsessed with peripheral issues, like insisting on paying meticulous tithes on the smallest herbs that grow in your gardens. These matters are fine, yet you ignore the most important duty of all: to walk in the love of God, to display mercy to others, and to live with integrity. Readjust your values and place first things first.

Such actions are like whitewashed tombs: they look good on the outside but are rotten within.

> *"Woe to you, Torah scholars and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean". Matthew 23:27 TLV*

We can do the right things but with the wrong motives. Only YHWH knows the condition of the heart.

> *4 They tie on your backs an oppressive burden of religious obligations and insist that you carry it, but will never lift a finger to help ease your load. 5 Everything they do is done for show and to be noticed by others. They want to be seen as holy, so they wear oversized prayer boxes on their arms and foreheads with Scriptures inside, and wear extra-long tassels on their outer garments. Matthew 23:4-5 TPT*

Let us join David and cry out with all our hearts: "Create (bârâ) in me a clean heart, O Lord, for my own corruptible heart is beyond repair."

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My Everlasting Covenant

This morning, 13 August 2026, when I woke up, the Holy Spirit impressed upon me that a foundational key to helping believers walk in gratitude in all circumstances is rooted in Adonai's everlasting covenant with humanity. The Holy Spirit then guided me to share what I believe to be two of the most important everlasting covenants of YHWH. The Lord recently revealed the depth of these two covenants to me, so they are still fresh in my heart and mind. He also gave them to me personally as anchors to hold on to in my journey of learning to be content in all circumstances and to walk in a lifestyle of gratitude. The more we become aware of these covenant promises, the more peace and joy can return to our hearts, helping us trust God and wait patiently for His promises to come to pass. A covenant is not merely a promise, nor is it simply a contract that man can draw up. Only God can cut a covenant with man, because a true covenant lasts forever and cannot be broken. God's covenants with humanity are central to His redemptive plan to restore mankind to its divinely intended calling. The first covenant whose depth I only recently discovered is the Sar-Shalom Covenant.

In Hebrew, *sar* means "Prince," and shalom means "peace." But when we examine the Prince of Peace as a covenant through its original Hebrew meaning, we discover something far deeper. This revelation opens the way for us to step into a true lifestyle of gratitude.

Let us investigate.

Sar-Shalom

As an opening statement, Adonai announced this Covenant in the Book of Isaiah and said:

> For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee. Isaiah 54:10 KJV

This peace, as a Covenant, is far more than what human flesh experiences as peace. This Heavenly peace is not merely the absence of a storm but an everlasting assurance of restoration, a full restitution of everything lost, inner completeness, wholeness, and a right relationship with Adonai. A worldly peace disappears the moment trouble or stress arises. It breaks down when external safety or comfort is lost. In contrast, this Sar-Shalom Covenant reassures me in the midst of the storm that I, the Prince of Peace, will bring everything back to its right place. Indeed, God is busy transforming all things back to Him. Paul explains;

17 "He existed before anything was made, and now everything finds completion in him.

> *18 He is the Head of his body, which is the church. And since he is the beginning and the firstborn heir in resurrection, he is the most exalted One, holding first place in everything. 19 For God is satisfied to have all his fullness dwelling in Christ. 20 And by the blood of his cross, everything in heaven and earth is brought back to himself—back to its original intent, restored to innocence again! 21-22 Even though you were once distant from him, living in the shadows of your evil thoughts and actions, he reconnected you back to himself. He released his supernatural peace to you through the sacrifice of his own body as the sin-payment on your behalf so that you would dwell in his presence.*

And now there is nothing between you and Father God, for he sees you as holy, flawless, and restored". Colossians 1:17-22 TPT

God is restoring everything humanity lost in the Garden of Eden. He is bringing back all that was lost and reconciling creation to Himself. No wonder Yeshua released supernatural peace over His disciples after His resurrection. He had returned from the Father's throne, where the Son's blood sacrifice had been fully accepted as the peace offering for all humanity. Glory to God.

Yeshua said to them again, "Shalom Aleichem! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." John 20:21 TLV

Shalom Aleichem – "Peace be Upon You"!

In Scripture, the word shalom carries rich meaning. It can serve as a greeting, a blessing, a revelation of Adonai's nature, a title associated with the Messiah, and a prophetic vision for the future. In the Old Testament, when someone's property was damaged or destroyed, as in Exodus 21–22, the principle of shalom required full restoration of everything lost, broken, or taken. Wow! In this light, the well-known passage in Proverbs that says the thief must repay sevenfold when caught takes on a much deeper meaning.

But if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house. Proverbs 6:31 KJV

This is not merely a promise that can be broken; it is a covenant established by the Creator Himself and, by the authority of the heavenly courts, must be enforced. This brings us to the next powerful truth: shalom comes from the heavenly courtroom. The damage has been assessed, and the verdict is restoration. Saints, these are among the deepest and most beautiful words we could ever hear from our Bridegroom.

I, the Messiah, am restoring all things to their original state. The damage has been assessed, and the case has been brought before the Courts of Heaven for full recompense and restoration. Yet the restoration will not merely return what was lost to its original state; it will be restored sevenfold."

Everything our generation has lost is now being brought before the Courts of Righteousness. It is time for divine repayment, according to the Sar-Shalom Covenant.

What an awesome announcement to hear, one that encourages the reader to immediately start walking in gratitude, with the expectation of receiving such a promise. In the context of what we had discussed so far, Scripture will never be the same. Yashuah announced;

Give generously and generous gifts will be given back to you, shaken down to make room for more. Abundant gifts will pour out upon you with such an overflowing measure that it will run over the top! Your measurement of generosity becomes the measurement of your return." Luke 6:38 TPT

(KJV) Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

That is what He meant when we pray the Aaronic blessing over people – Numbers 6:24-26

24 Jehovah bless you and keep you.
25 Jehovah make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you.
26 Jehovah lift up His face to you and give you peace.

When Yashuah lifts you up before His face, the peace you receive overflows, pressed down until it runs over. Notice in Luke 6 that the measure of peace you receive is tied to the measure of your generosity.

Abraham

The account of Adonai cutting covenant with Abraham begins in Genesis 12:1–3, where God promises to make him a great nation, bless him, and cause all the families of the earth to be blessed through him. Genesis 15:18 reveals the formal covenant and its ratification, while Genesis 17:7 expands this covenant further, establishing circumcision as its sign.

> *5 And He brought him outside and said, Look now toward the heavens and count the stars, if you are able to count them. And He said to him, So shall your seed be. 6 And he believed in Jehovah. And He counted it to him for righteousness. Genesis 15:5-6 MKJV*

Through faith, Abraham believed, and righteousness was imputed to him. Through faith, we too became heirs of Abraham. What a wonderful thought that Adonai's Covenant promise is available to all. Unfortunately, only those who accept it by faith will receive the benefits of the promise. What the Holy Spirit just ministered to us here is beyond words.

> The promises of His Covenant stand forever – they can never be broken. We need to wait patiently in our own lives for their manifestation through faith. Without faith, we can never please God. Therefore, saints, our unbelief (as in the case of Israel we discussed earlier) can cause us to lose these promises and never see them fulfilled in our lives.

This Sar-Shalom covenant includes occupying and possessing land. It took me almost a lifetime to grasp this. It can only come true in your lives through faith.

> *In the same day Jehovah made a covenant with Abram, saying, I have given this land to your seed. Genesis 15:18 MKJV*

6 "As Adonai promises Abraham land, it is given to his offspring and we are, through faith, heirs of Abraham. Even as Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. 7 Therefore know that those of faith, these are the sons of Abraham" (Galatians 3:6-7 MKJV).

How do we become heirs of Abraham?

Through our water baptism into Christ, we put on Christ and become one with Him. That oneness with Christ, received automatically through faith, qualifies us to receive all the promises because we become heirs of Abraham's seed (according to the promise made to Abraham).

> *27 For as many as were baptized into Christ, you put on Christ. 28 There cannot be Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is no male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. Galatians 3:27-29 MKJV*

Only after circumcision did Sarah conceive Isaac. For the New Testament believer, heart circumcision is necessary before we can conceive as well. When we fully understand this, we can cry out like David – "bârâ in me a new heart, O Lord"!

Broken Relationships

Because of their hatred, Joseph's brothers could not speak a word of peace to him.

> *When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak to him in shalom. Genesis 37:4 TLV*

Not even in a greeting could they speak a word of wholeness. In today's society, this is also true within the Body of Christ. This is not the absence of calm but the absence of relationship. Our families are fractured, and nothing is in its right place anymore. Notice how this "Covenantal Peace"

broke through for Joseph and his family when his brothers returned to Egypt, and their relationships were fully restored.

Now we too must hold firmly to this promise: the Sar-Shalom Covenant of the Most High God will also break through on our behalf.

His Name

When Adonai called Gideon, God told him not to fear because His Shalom was with him. Then he built an altar for Adonai and named it "Adonai-Shalom."

> *[23] But Adonai said to him, "Shalom to you. Fear not, you will not die."*
> *[24] So Gideon built an altar there to Adonai and called it "Adonai-shalom."*
> *To this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. Judges 6:23-24 TLV*

Adonai not only promised Gideon a military victory but also a full restoration of everything the enemy had stolen. Even in His name, this promise awaits the believer.

Shelamim

The peace offering in the Old Testament, also known as shelamim, was shared in the presence of Adonai. The burnt offering was consumed on the altar as God's portion, while the priests received their portion, and the worshippers and their families received the rest of the shelamim as a communion meal. It was a meal shared between Adonai and His people. This offering was not primarily about atonement but about fellowship and the restoration of relationship. It was shalom in its fullness: wholeness that could be tasted. Wow!

Let us receive, by faith, the taste of restored relationship today — both within the Body of Christ and in our own families.

Military Commander

When the prophet Isaiah announced that a child would be born and a son will be given to us, he called Him Counselor, Mighty, our Father of Eternity, but he put Sar-Shalom on top of it all.

> *5 For to us a child is born, a son will be given to us, and the government will be upon His shoulder. His Name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God My Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace. 6 Of the increase of His government and shalom there will be no end—on the throne of David and over His kingdom—to establish it and uphold it through justice and righteousness from now until forevermore. The zeal of Adonai-Tzva'ot will accomplish this. Isaiah 9:5-6 TLV*

Isaiah prophesied and revealed that the Messiah's title carries a government that will continually increase on earth through His covenant of peace. This government is not passive. It is a Kingdom authority enforced by Adonai-Tzva'ot through righteousness and justice. I declared this very truth in my personal court case, which I shared at the beginning of this book. Even when the accuser spoke in the Courts, the precious Blood of the Messiah prevailed. Through our Advocate and military Commander, Adonai-Tzva'ot enforced the verdict, restoring what had been lost for generations. Glory to God. Now we receive what remains by faith.

Support System

Perfect peace comes to believers when their minds are stayed on Him!

> *You keep in perfect peace one whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. Isaiah 26:3 TLV*

In Hebrew, we find the word *samak*, which primarily means to support, sustain, uphold, or lean upon. It can describe physical leaning, such as resting a hand against a wall, as well as emotional or divine support, such as God sustaining a person's soul. I found this deeply meaningful, especially since we recently released a prophetic word in 2026 declaring that, by the end of 2025, the Body of Christ had come close to collapse. It was as though

the enemy had come in like a flood to kill, steal, and destroy. Yet God sometimes allows trials and persecution so that we learn to let go of our own strength and lean fully upon Him. He is our Sar-Shalom, our true support system.

We reach a place where we have nothing left and nothing else to rely on. Only then do we truly learn to live a lifestyle of gratitude, as we lean with our full weight upon Him.

Healed

The chastisement for our "shalom" fell upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed. This is much more than a promise, saints. This is a Covenant. He went through it all, just as Isaiah prophesied here. How sad it is that so many have lost their healing because of unbelief.

> *But he was wounded for our rebellions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and by his stripes healing was provided for us. Isaiah 53:5 JUB*

Even our rebellion has been broken on the Cross, and the Blood from His wounds has provided healing. The ESV translates rebellion as transgressions and records that we are healed – past tense. It is already done.

> *(ESV) But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.*

I deeply sympathise with those who believe in healing, yet have friends or family members who did recover and passed away. In such moments, it is human to walk away with more questions than answers. Yet regardless of our circumstances, God's covenant promises remain intact. Having served in healing and deliverance ministry for more than twelve years, I can testify that we still have much to learn about healing. Without going down a rabbit trail, it is worth remembering that we still live in a corruptible world, in

corruptible bodies, with an enemy who prowls like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. James 3:16 teaches that where envy and strife exist, there is confusion and every evil work. How many of us still walk with strife, envy, unforgiveness, or resentment, to name only a few?

> *For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. James 3:16 KJV*
>
> *(JUB) For where there is envy and contention, there is confusion and every perverse work.*
>
> *(ESV) For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.*

The Cross

This now brings us to the Cross, where all things come together. What humanity lost in the Garden of Eden, shalom cries out to restore. This was foreshadowed in the Old Testament peace offering and fulfilled in the New Testament through the finished work of the Cross. How wonderful it is to know that the Blood of the Messiah speaks of a better covenant than the blood of Abel. Abel's blood cried out for justice and revenge, but the Blood of the Messiah, through forgiveness, silences that cry and releases restoration, reconciliation, and peace.

> *And we have come to Jesus who established a new covenant with his blood sprinkled upon the mercy seat; blood that continues to speak from heaven, "forgiveness," a better message than Abel's blood that cries from the earth, "justice." Hebrews 12:24 TPT*

Real shalom requires real restoration. When words are spoken without the complete healing of wounds, they resemble the empty promises of false prophets. God does not restore with duct tape. Words alone cannot bring true restoration. We must allow Him to place the clay back on the Potter's wheel and begin again until He can bârâ — create something new within us.

A Kiss

I am in awe of how the Holy Spirit is bringing all things together, precept upon precept, little by little, over time. Please do not rush through this revelation. Allow it to settle deeply until it brings understanding to your spirit and enables you to minister truth to the human mind. When the mind of Christ (the spirit man), and the human mind (the soul man), come into agreement, the salvation of the soul begins to break through. As both Peter and Paul reveal, a full salvation awaits the believer.

David wrote in the Psalms, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

> Your mercy and your truth have married each other. Your righteousness and peace have kissed. Psalms 85:10 TPT

These are the pillars of Adonai's throne. Mercy flows only through truth, and the two are joined in covenant, just as a husband and wife are joined as one. Likewise, peace manifests through righteousness. What a beautiful image David gives us: '*righteousness and peace kissing one another'*. The result of this divine kiss is shalom. Let us now delve deeper into this mystery of the kiss, as the prophet Isaiah reveals.

> The result of righteousness [H6666] will be shalom and the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever. Isaiah 32:17 TLV

The Hebrew word for righteousness in this passage (H6666) is "tsedeq," and we are now well acquainted with the concept of tzedakah. This covenant teaches that shalom and righteousness are inseparable.

- Shalom brings full restoration, wholeness, and completeness;
- It can only come through righteousness, the tsedeq;
- Wholeness cannot come without making things right.

Therefore, we cannot have true shalom while injustice remains, nor can we experience full restoration while relationships remain broken. This kiss brings the covenant promise to full manifestation, where righteousness and wholeness embrace one another. Behind the curtain, often without our noticing, the Messiah is at work. He enforces peace through justice and establishes justice through restoration.

That is what the Messiah came to do:

- Not to bring peace without justice; and
- Not to enforce justice without restoration.

It can no longer be denied that heaven's laws concerning our firstfruits (the tithe) and our alms (the tzedakah) set in motion the manifestation of the Sar-Shalom Covenant: justice and full restoration.

Indeed, for Paul recorded that He Himself is our peace.

> *For he is our peace, who of both has made one, breaking down. Ephesians 2:14 JUB*

A reconciling *peace*!

> *Our reconciling "Peace" is Jesus! He has made Jew and non-Jew one in Christ. By dying as our sacrifice, he has broken down every wall of prejudice that separated us and has now made us equal through our union with Christ. Ephesians 2:14 TPT*

The *Sar-Shalom Covenant*

For He is our shalom, the One who made the two into one and broke down the middle wall of separation. Within His flesh He made powerless the hostility— Ephesians 2:14 TLV

For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.
Ephesians 2:14 ESV

As our Sar-Shalom, He alone is worthy to stand among His disciples after the resurrection and to declare, "Peace be unto you" — Shalom Aleichem!

While they were speaking of these things, Yeshua Himself stood in the midst of them and said, "Shalom Aleichem!"
Luke 24:36 TLV

36-37 "While they were still discussing all of this, Jesus suddenly manifested right in front of their eyes! Startled and terrified, the disciples were convinced they were seeing a ghost. Standing there among them he said, "Be at peace. I am the living God. Don't be afraid". Luke 24:36-37 TPT

Don't be afraid – look, I was dead – but I was raised and am alive. I am back to reconcile you all to Me; I am back to restore and to give you everything that is outstanding, missing, and incomplete – Receive it now!

Shalom Aleichem

A new reality has manifested—the tomb is empty, and shalom is now a person, no longer just a promise announced by the Prophet Isaiah.

When we receive and embrace Him, our Sar-Shalom, the work of full restoration and restitution begins in our lives, empowering us to live a life of true gratitude.

Under Construction

"And now, because we are united to Christ, we both have equal and direct access in the realm of the Holy Spirit to come before the Father"! (Ephesians 2:18 TPT). Few believers are acquainted with this invitation to come now with boldness to the Father, to the Throne of grace! We are no longer guests or foreigners – we are heirs!

> *19 So, you are not foreigners or guests, but rather you are the children of the city of the holy ones, with all the rights as family members of the household of God. Ephesians 2:19 TPT*

Approaching the Throne of Grace with boldness allows the Holy Spirit to perform a marvelous work of restoration within us. Indeed, we are a building under construction until His fullness, His image and likeness, is fully manifested within us. We are His temple, His dwelling place.

> *20 You are rising like the perfectly fitted stones of the temple; and your lives are being built up together upon the ideal foundation laid by the apostles and prophets, and best of all, you are connected to the Head Cornerstone of the building, the Anointed One, Jesus Christ himself! 21 This entire building is under construction and is continually growing under his supervision until it rises up completed as the holy temple of the Lord himself. 22 This means that God is transforming each one of you into the Holy of Holies, his dwelling place, through the power of the Holy Spirit living in you! Ephesians 2:20-22 TPT*

We know that the end result of the Covenant promised—Sar-Shalom—will come and dwell with us in the fullness of time. He shall wipe away our tears; death will be defeated, and we shall sit with our Bridegroom around His table, feasting with Him and with one another. Yes, Sar-Shalom will, in its fullness, culminate in a meal!

> *[3] I also heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is among men, and He shall tabernacle among them. They shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them and be their God. [4] He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more. Nor shall there be mourning or crying or pain any longer, for the former things have passed away." Revelation 21:3-4 TPT*

Everything lost in the Garden of Eden, where shalom was lost, will now come to completion, culminating in a city, the New Jerusalem. And here is the good news for those who feel so unworthy, even to approach the Throne of Grace, because of their brokenness.

Your brokenness qualifies you for this restoration.

Our Bridegroom is such a Gentleman that He will not force Himself upon you. His invitation is already out;

> *Therefore let us draw near to the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace for help in time of need. Hebrews 4:16 TLV*

He is waiting for you... How beautifully the Passion Bible translated this passage into poetic language.

So now we come freely and boldly to where love is enthroned, to receive mercy's kiss and discover the grace we urgently need to strengthen us in our time of weakness. Hebrews 4:16 TPT

Love is awaiting you – let His mercy kiss you – allowing Him to bârâ!

Sar-Shalom!
I am your wholeness!
I am what has been missing!
And I am here!
Let me in!

This entire building under construction is the New Jerusalem John saw in his vision on the Island of Patmos. This building is the temple (naos), His dwelling place. Sar-Shalom, our Bridegroom, is preparing His Bride for her wedding!

> *I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, descending out of the heavenly realm from the presence of God, like a pleasing bride that had been prepared for her husband, adorned for her wedding. Revelation 21:2 TPT*

Even then, when the temple, the New Jerusalem, came down, it is not a city in the absence of something wrong, but in the presence of everything right. Outside the city's gates are those who refuse His invitation and reject His correction.

> *Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the sexually immoral and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. Revelation 22:15 TLV*

Footnote:

For clarity, it may be helpful to note that when Jesus cleansed the temple in Jerusalem with a whip, the Greek word used is hieron, which refers to the physical temple structure and its courts. However, when He declared that the temple would be destroyed and raised again, another Greek word is used: naos. This word points to the inner sanctuary, the dwelling place of God. Paul uses this same word when he writes, "Do you not know that you are the temple (naos) of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16).

In the Book of Revelation, chapters 4–22, the word "church" no longer appears. Instead, we find the word temple, naos. This points us to the New Jerusalem, His dwelling place, descending from heaven, where He, our Bridegroom, will tabernacle and dwell among His people.

Kinsman Redeemer

Our Kinsman Redeemer is another covenant that Yashuah fulfills as our Sar-Shalom. This part is especially personal to me because in the first half of 2026, the Holy Spirit led me to release a YouTube teaching on Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz. Although I was familiar with the story, I did not yet have deep revelation knowledge or understanding of its significance. After the Holy Spirit opened my understanding of this story, Yashuah prepared my court case and emphasized that He cannot lie. What He declares and promises to restore will surely come to pass. He even took off His sandal in the Courts, waved it before the Father, and said, "Let this be true, just as in the case of Boaz, who sat with the elders at the gate as the kinsman redeemer for Ruth."

We are familiar with the story. Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died after they left Bethlehem to live in Moab. Her two sons, Mahlon and Kilion, married Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth. They lived in Moab for ten years, and then both sons died without leaving children. After the drought ended, Naomi decided to return to Judah. On the road, she urged her two daughters-in-law to return to Moab and continue their lives there. But Ruth refused to let go.

> *16-17 But Ruth said, "Don't force me to leave you; don't make me go home. Where you go, I go; and where you live, I'll live. Your people are my people, your God is my god; where you die, I'll die, and that's where I'll be buried, so help me God—not even death itself is going to come between us!" Ruth 1:16-17 MSG*

Because Ruth refused to let go and chose to follow Naomi and her God, they received not only the promised restoration through Sar-Shalom but also the manifestation of Sar-Shalom in human form through this act of kinsman redemption. Naomi, no different from any other story we have read so far, declared rather to be called 'bitter' because my life is ruined.

> *[20-21] But she said, "Don't call me Naomi; call me Bitter. The Strong One has dealt me a bitter blow. I left here full of life, and God has brought me back with nothing but the clothes on my back. Why would you call me Naomi? God certainly doesn't. The Strong One ruined me." Ruth 1:20-21 MSG*

They return to Bethlehem at the beginning of the Barley Harvest - Ruth 1:22

Let this small detail not escape the reader's notice, namely that they return at the beginning of the barley harvest. Why is this so important?

In biblical, agricultural, and spiritual contexts, the **barley harvest** primarily represents the firstfruits of God's provision, new beginnings, and redemption. Occurring in early spring, it symbolizes the initial, often unexpected, supply of sustenance, highlighting God's faithfulness and the hope of restoration.

Key themes associated with the barley harvest include:

Firstfruits and Resurrection: As the first grain to ripen, the barley harvest symbolizes the "firstfruits" (an offering of the first and best of the crop) to God. In Christian theology, this points directly to Jesus' resurrection, with Christ being the "firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20).

Divine Provision and Humility: Often associated with the poor, barley represents God's provision and sustenance, as seen in the feeding of the five thousand with barley loaves.

New Beginnings and Redemption: In the book of Ruth, the barley harvest marks her return to Bethlehem and the start of her redemption by Boaz, representing a turning point from famine and loss to hope and abundance.

Symbol of Speed and Abundance: The barley harvest represents a swift end to famine or lack, often symbolizing a sudden, miraculous turnaround.

Historically, it was a time of communal celebration and hard work, signifying the beginning of the agricultural year in Israel.

This is significant because the Lord indicated that in the spring of 2026 we will witness the beginning of the new season. In my spirit, I am alert to the redemptive work of Sar-Shalom, including the end of spiritual famine and lack, a sudden breakthrough and turnaround in His provision, and a life of abundance. What has been lost over generations, especially land, will be restored. We will see and experience supernatural debt cancellation.

Let the reader not confuse these promises of YHWH with prosperity theology. What I am sharing here is for those who walk by faith, not by sight, who hold firmly to the promises of the Sar-Shalom Covenant and trust Yashuah as our Kinsman Redeemer.

In the Kingdom of God, there is no such thing as coincidence – but what a coincidence that Naomi had a relative by marriage, a prominent and wealthy man connected to her husband's family, Elimelech – Boaz. So Ruth ended up working in his field, gleaning the corners of the barley harvest. When Boaz saw her, he encouraged her with his words, "Don't worry about a thing."

"Don't worry about a thing" - feel free to go and drink from the water buckets that the servants have filled! Ruth 2:8-9 MSG

Look at the reaction of a lifestyle of gratitude: "[10] She dropped to her knees, then bowed her face to the ground. "How does this happen that you should pick me out and treat me so kindly—me, a foreigner?" (Ruth 2:10 MSG).

The Kinsman Redeemer says to you today: Don't worry about anything – I am about to work wonders in your life.

Will you also fall to your knees, overwhelmed by the awareness of His kindness in your life?

I know everything about you, says the Lord!

> *[11-12] Boaz answered her, "I've heard all about you—heard about the way you treated your mother-in-law after the death of her husband, and how you left your father and mother and the land of your birth and have come to live among a bunch of total strangers. Ruth 2:11-12 MSG*

A true lifestyle of gratitude will quickly recognize that we, too, do not deserve such kindness.

> *[13] She said, "Oh sir, such grace, such kindness—I don't deserve it. You've touched my heart, treated me like one of your own. And I don't even belong here!"*

Such kindness invites us to the table for communion, to break bread and drink wine with our Bridegroom. As we experience His goodness and loving-kindness, we receive His overflow, shaken, pressed down, and spilling over.

> *[14] At the lunch break, Boaz said to her, "Come over here; eat some bread. Dip it in the wine." [15-16] When she got up to go back to work, Boaz ordered his servants: "Let her glean where there's still plenty of grain on the ground—make it easy for her. Better yet, pull some of the good stuff out and leave it for her to glean. Give her special treatment." Ruth 2:14-16 MSG*

Such kindness from our Bridegroom only confirms that He is indeed our Prince of Peace! He is, after all, the one who gives life in abundance, in good times and in bad! It is only the lies of satan that lead believers to hold the distorted idea that God withholds things, delays them, or is the author of sickness and disease.

> *A thief has only one thing in mind—he wants to steal, slaughter, and destroy. But I have come to give you everything in abundance, more than you expect—life in its fullness until you overflow! John 10:10 TPT*

> [20] Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "Why, God bless that man! God hasn't quite walked out on us after all! He still loves us, in bad times as well as good!" Naomi went on, "That man, Ruth, is one of our circle of covenant redeemers, a close relative of ours!" Ruth 2:20 MSG

Like Esther and Judith, Ruth bathed, applied perfume, and dressed elegantly. This highlights a biblical principle often overlooked in the Body of Christ: the importance of consecration and purification for members before appearing before the King. Yet spiritual leaders do not always emphasize this practice. After this purification, Naomi advised Ruth to prepare herself for marriage.

> *Lie at his feet to let him know that you are available to him for marriage. Then wait and see what he says. He'll tell you what to do." Ruth 3:3-4 MSG*

A lifestyle of gratitude waits patiently for the marriage, walking in purity and clothed in white garments. While we wait, we must allow Him, through the power of the Holy Spirit already within us, to cleanse even the smallest impurities from our lives. In this way, we are prepared to become a spotless Bride, without wrinkle or blemish.
After Ruth lay down at his feet again, Boaz announced that there was nothing to worry about!

> *And now, my dear daughter, don't you worry about a thing; I'll do all you could want or ask. Ruth 3:13 MSG*

Likewise, our Bridegroom assures us that once we accept His invitation to the marriage, we need not worry about anything. Worry often creeps in when we have not fully embraced a lifestyle of gratitude. Before we realize it, fear, stress, and anxiety begin to take over, pulling us into a cycle of discouragement and even depression. For the sake of this story, let us view Naomi as a picture of the Holy Spirit's voice in what follows.

Naomi said, "Sit back and relax, my dear daughter, until we find out how things turn out; this man isn't going to waste any time. Mark my words, he's going to get everything wrapped up today." Ruth 3:18 MSG

Sit back and relax – Sar-Shalom will wrap up everything for you!

Such words of encouragement should be received with gratitude and with faith in Him alone, the One able to accomplish the work of redemption. As promised, the next morning Boaz went straight to the public square to speak with Naomi's closer relative about redeeming the land. Here we find the story's turning point. When Boaz explained that the land also carried the responsibility of marrying Ruth, the Moabite widow, and raising children so the family inheritance could continue, the man declined. He could not bear such a responsibility (Ruth 4:10). Let the reader take note: being a true Kinsman Redeemer requires an additional responsibility, one only the Prince of Peace, our Sar-Shalom, is worthy and able to bear. This single truth brings us into a deeper level of freedom. No other person, system, or institution can carry this responsibility or rescue us as He can. Only our Kinsman Redeemer can accomplish land restitution for generational losses and cancel debt. It shall come to pass through faith, because it is established in a covenant that no man can cancel.

Having this assurance from our Kinsman Redeemer enables us to walk in and demonstrate a true lifestyle of gratitude.

Redemption

To bring this part of the covenant teaching to a close, it may be helpful to clarify several key concepts related to redemption. In biblical usage, redemption means regaining, restoring, or buying back what was lost. It overlaps with ideas such as rescue, recovery, deliverance, and atonement. In its deepest sense, redemption is God's act of freeing His people from bondage, whether to slavery, sin, or death, through a costly act of love. Redemption is not merely a doctrine. It is the heartbeat and economy of

the gospel. When we grasp the biblical meaning of redemption, our faith is strengthened, and we are better equipped to enjoy and share the good news with clarity and conviction. As followers of Messiah, we must understand what redemption truly means so we can point others to the ultimate Redeemer. This understanding enables both us, as well as those to whom we minister, to live a life of gratitude.

Hebrew in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, we find three key Hebrew words to describe redemption.

- **Pada** – Legal substitution or ransom. It involves paying a price to free someone or something (e.g., Exodus 13:13). Redemption is costly here, and a sacrifice is required.
- **Gaal** – Kinship redemption. This is the language of a family member who buys back a relative or that relative's land (Exodus 6:6, Ruth 3:13). God is not merely a rescuer—He's a close relative who claims us as His own.
- **Kapar** – To cover or atone. This term is closely tied to sacrifice, in which substitution removes guilt (e.g., Exodus 29:36).

The New Testament uses several forms derived from Greek root:

- Lytron, Lytrōsis, or Apolytrōsis – These refer to the monetary price paid to buy back or to ransom, or to the experience of being liberated from an oppressive situation (e.g., Hebrews 9:12). Like pada, they imply a significant transaction.

Together, these words paint a complete picture of God's redemptive work (Lytrōsis – the transaction): He substitutes Himself for our penalty (pada), reclaims us as His own (gaal), and covers our guilt (kapar).

This is why He is often called Israel's "Redeemer," especially in the book of Isaiah. The Exodus offers the first major biblical picture of redemption, in which the sacrifice of lambs enabled the Israelites to escape judgment and enter freedom. The prophets continued this theme, foretelling Israel's deliverance from Babylon and, ultimately, the Messiah's redemptive mission. Redemption, however, also stands apart from several other powerful biblical and theological concepts. Let us briefly consider how it differs from them:

Restoration

Restoration focuses on returning something to its former condition. It doesn't necessarily involve a transaction and typically implies the result is "as good as new."

In contrast, redemption involves a transaction, often resulting in something better than what was lost. In legal contexts, restoration aligns with restitution, while redemption aligns with debt settlement (e.g., foreclosure or repossession).

In the Bible, Jesus redeems us not merely to what was lost in Eden, but to something even greater—eternal fellowship with God.

Retribution

Retribution is about vengeance and punishment.
Redemption, however, is about settlement through payment. Where retribution demands suffering, redemption provides satisfaction.

Scripture moves us away from personal vengeance, such as "an eye for an eye," and calls us to forgiveness, while reserving both vengeance and redemption for the Lord. However, forgiveness, rightly understood, is not the same as restored fellowship. Forgiveness releases the right to retaliate, but redemption through Christ goes much further. It includes the full payment of our penalty and the complete restoration of fellowship with the Father.

Vindication

Vindication corrects a lie or clears someone of blame.

In redemption, vindication is part of the result of the price paid. We are no longer guilty because our debt is settled. Christ is not our vindicator because we were falsely accused—He vindicates us because He has fully satisfied the just penalty for our guilt.

Rescue

Rescue focuses on deliverance from harm.

While redemption includes rescue, it also implies cost—the price paid. Jesus doesn't just snatch us from danger—He pays the ultimate price to bring us to safety.

Justification and Absolution

Justification refers to the declaration of righteousness.

Absolution is a declaration of forgiveness.

Both are part of redemption, but they make full sense only in that context. Without the transactional context of Christ's sacrifice, these terms lack the context needed to convey the full meaning. (See Mark 2:7.)

Fulfilled Promise

Redemption is also an act that fulfills the Lord's promises—such as the promise that the seed of Eve would crush the serpent and end the curse of sin. In secular terms, redeeming a promissory note fulfills a legal obligation. In Scripture, Christ's redemptive work fulfills every divine promise made for our salvation and restoration.

Why Redemption Changes Everything

Understanding redemption is not just a theological exercise—it changes how we see the world, ourselves, and others.

You may encounter explanations of redemption that emphasize the high cost of what is given to redeem something else. While something of great value can indeed be offered in redemption, the focus should be on the even greater value of what is being redeemed.

After all, who would willingly trade something of greater value for something of lesser value? This truth becomes deeply humbling when we consider that God loved us so much that He did not spare His own Son but allowed Him to suffer and die for us (John 3:16). Redemption not only reveals how we are saved; it also demonstrates the astonishing depth of His love for us (1 John 4:7–8). When you understand what Christ has done to redeem you, it reshapes your identity. You are no longer merely a sinner. You are restored, reclaimed, beloved, and a child of God. This transformation also shapes how you treat others (with grace, humility, and compassion.

My prayer is that this information transforms you with a renewed mind, reshaping your identity in Christ Jesus so you can walk daily in gratitude.

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Closing Remarks

As I reach the end of this message and share these final thoughts with the reader, I find myself asking: What is our testimony?

As I lingered on this question, I thought of how Paul encouraged his readers from prison. God has His own way of using our circumstances for His purpose and glory. I am convinced that Paul did not fully know, when he wrote his epistles, the impact they would have thousands of years later. Then I realized that we are all waiting for breakthroughs in different areas of our lives. Some wait for healing, others for financial provision, and many for the restoration of relationships, to name a few. In one way or another, we are all waiting upon YHWH. David wrote in Psalm 25:5, "On Thee do I wait all the day." This kind of waiting on God has hardly been recognized as the very essence of true Christianity. In this regard, Andrew Murray wrote in his book, "*Waiting on God"*:

> "The waiting is to teach us our absolute dependence upon God's mighty working, and to make us in perfect patience place ourselves at His disposal. They that wait on the Lord shall inherit the land; the promised land and its blessing. The heirs must wait; they can afford to wait.
>
> But when the thought came of God doing something new, they limited Him; their expectation could not rise beyond their past experience, or their own thoughts of what was possible. Even so we may be limiting God by our conceptions of what He has promised or is able to do. Do let us beware of limiting the Holy One of Israel in our very prayer. Let us believe that the very promises of God we plead have a divine meaning, infinitely beyond our thoughts of them. Let us believe that His fulfilment of them can be, in a power and an abundance of grace, beyond our largest grasp of thought. And let us therefore cultivate the habit of waiting on God, not only for what we think we need, but for all His grace and power are ready to do for us.

> If we but saw our God in His love, if we but believed that He waits to be gracious, that He waits to be our life and to work all in us, - how this waiting on God would become our highest joy, the natural and spontaneous response of our hearts to His great love and glory! "My soul, wait thou only upon God!"
>
> Murray, Andrew. Waiting on God (p. 21, 25). Kindle Edition.

Sometimes we might even wonder, "What am I waiting for?" In those moments, we can only echo David: "My hope is in Thee."

> *"And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in Thee. Deliver me from all my transgressions." Psalms 39:7, 8*

So let us not limit Adonai in our waiting by growing impatient for our breakthrough. Let us not allow past experiences of our Bridegroom, who sees far beyond our human understanding. Instead, let us trust in Him and declare with confidence:

"Truly, my hope is in Thee."

Regardless of our situation, we are called to live a lifestyle of gratitude as we wait. Along the way, as many believers in Scripture have shown us, we learn to be content in all circumstances. We now have the assurance that His promises extend far beyond words. Our firm confidence rests on YHWH's covenant, His Sar-Shalom Covenant, which will ultimately culminate in the New Jerusalem for all of us. There, gathered around His table as His family we will share communion: nothing broken, nothing missing, nothing incomplete, but fully restored.

Amen!