

# To Be Noticed - 3 - When you Fast

## Introduction

This is the final example Jesus chose to illustrate the grave danger facing each disciple in service to God. Whenever an act of righteous service offers an opportunity to bring honor to ourselves it must be seen as a temptation and crushed. Just as we must not blow a trumpet when giving alms or pray on the street corners, we must not have a sad countenance when we fast. These three things offer a dangerous fork in the path of serving God. If we act on the temptation to use such acts of service to gain recognition from others “we have no reward from our Father in heaven.”

*Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 17 But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. Mt 6:16-18*

“Fasting” offers an additional challenge for us today. It is so seldom preached on or thought about that many do not even recognize it an important part of our service to God. That being so, there is very little temptation to let others know they are fasting. It is much more likely to raise an eyebrow in surprise than to create admiration or honor. So before we deal with the Lord’s concerns, we must see the history of fasting and then look at Jesus’ expectations of His disciples.

## The Origins of Fasting

Fasting was first described in connection with the day of atonement, in the phrase “afflict/humble your souls.” They were to abstain from any form of food from the evening until evening (sunset to sunset).

*“This shall be a statute forever for you: In the **seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls**, and do no work at all, whether a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells among you. 30 For on that day **the priest shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you**, that you may be **clean from all your sins** before the Lord. 31 It is a **sabbath of solemn rest for you, and you shall afflict your souls**. It is a statute forever. Lev 16:29-32*

*And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 27 “Also the **tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement**. It shall be a holy convocation for you; **you shall afflict your souls**, and offer an offering made by fire to the Lord. 28 And you shall do no work on that same day, for it is the **Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the Lord your God**. 29 For any person who is **not afflicted in soul on that same day shall be cut off from his people**. . . . 32 It shall be to you a sabbath of solemn rest, and **you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall keep your sabbath**.” Lev 23:26-29, 32*

Although “afflict your soul” may be obscure to us, God later revealed that the phrase applied to fasting:

***Why have we fasted,**’ they say, ‘and You have not seen? **Why have we afflicted our souls**, and You take no notice?’ “In fact, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, And exploit all your laborers. 4 Indeed you fast for strife and debate, And to strike with the fist of wickedness. You will not fast as you do this day, To make your voice heard on high. 5 **Is it a fast that I have chosen, A day for a man to afflict his soul?** Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush, And to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Would you call this a fast, And an acceptable day to the Lord? Isa 58:3-5*

*They reward me evil for good, (to) the bereaving of my soul. 13 But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: **I afflicted my soul with fasting**; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. Ps 35:12-13*

*Then **I proclaimed a fast** there at the river of Ahava, **that we might humble (afflict) ourselves** before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions. . . . 23 So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer. Ezra 8:21, 23*

The afflicting of the soul that came through fasting was a means, “to make your voice heard on high,” and to “to seek from Him the right way for us.” During the day of atonement it was a way to bring the heart into conformity with the spirit of the day. Since it was the day of remembrance for their sins and a day in which those sins were removed, their own penitence and sorrow should be great.

*Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. 22 The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness. Lev. 16:21-22*

God wanted them to fast in order to afflict their soul and make their feelings of repentance conform to the activities that were being done in the most holy place of the tabernacle as they released the scapegoat into the wilderness.

## WHAT IS AFFLICTION?

The term *affliction* is defined: “to labor; to suffer, to be afflicted, depressed, oppressed. To oppress, to afflict, to humble.” Certain things naturally cause affliction and suffering. The word was used most

often of natural calamities or the cruelty of men. It was used to describe the Egyptians treatment of Israel while in bondage. Job used it to describe the agony he endured. It was used primarily to describe the affects of unpleasant circumstances on the heart and soul. When these occurred one was often humbled, became depressed as they were brought face to face with human frailty. In Psalms 119 the writer expressed several times the value he personally found in being afflicted.

*67 Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word. ... 71 It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes. ... 75 I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are right, And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me. 76 Let, I pray, Your merciful kindness be for my comfort, According to Your word to Your servant. Ps 119:67*

This is the fundamental idea behind the affliction of the soul. To be humbled by circumstances which lead us to reevaluate our position in God's eyes, then in repentance and prayer seek to draw closer.

*And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to **humble/afflict** you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. 3 So He **humbled/afflicted** you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. Deut. 8:2-4.*

God used hunger as an affliction to train them. Fasting on the day of atonement was a way to voluntarily bring affliction upon themselves. This affliction was based first on their hunger and second on their confession that they were sinners. For a twenty-four hour period they were to abstain from food. During this abstinence they were to force into their consciousness feelings of anguish and agony which normally would come only from some dire calamity coming upon them. This brought glory to God, and remission of sins to those who practiced it.

Even Jesus revealed that fasting and mourning must go together, giving this as the reason his own disciples would not be fasting while He was present with them.

*Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?" 15 And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast." Mt 9:14-15*

Fasting and mourning go together. It was so under the Old covenant and continues to be so today. During times of severe affliction or great anguish, fasting is a powerful source of spiritual strength. Jesus made it clear that after He was taken away from them, His disciples would fast.

## **Specific Uses for Fasting**

Israel found other uses for fasting throughout their history and every one of them was brought about because of some terrible affliction that had come upon them. As we witness how they responded to these afflictions and how God blessed them after them we can clearly see the power it had with God.

### **1. ISRAEL AGAINST BENJAMIN Judges 19-20**

The things done in these chapters are among the basest Israel ever did. Some in Benjamin had descended to the level of Sodom and Gomorrah. When the other tribes assembled to discuss the matter, they decided to punish those who practiced this evil. But Benjamin would not deliver them up for punishment and decided to fight to protect them. The other tribes go to Bethel to seek counsel from the Lord and were told to send Judah into battle. In the first battle Benjamin killed 22,000 men. The rest of Israel return weeping to seek the Lord's counsel after this affliction. They were again told to fight and another 18,000 men perished. They returned again to Bethel weeping and mourning, but finally their hearts were changed. The affliction has led them to understand that God had used Benjamin to punish them for their own sins. They fasted until the evening, then offered sacrifices. They afflicted their souls and offered sacrifices of repentance for forgiveness and restoration to favor.

After their fast was completed they again asked God if they should go up. God answered:

*"...And Jehovah said go up; for tomorrow I will deliver him into thy hand". Judges 20:26-28*

The battle began as the others, but soon God's hand becomes obvious as 25,100 of Benjamin fell in the battle. The fasting along with the weeping, the offerings, and the obvious signs of penitence turned God's wrath away from them and moved Him to act for them.

### **2. ISRAEL AGAINST THE PHILISTINES. I Sam 4:1 - 7:6**

In I Samuel 4, Israel was smitten by the Philistines and lost about 4,000 men. Instead of realizing this affliction should have brought repentance, they sought to force God to act by taking the ark with them. When the Philistines saw the ark they began to tremble, thinking the ark would bring some kind of magical power. But they decided to fight to the death. 30,000 Israelites were killed, Eli's two sons Hophni and Phinehas were also killed and the ark of God was taken captive. Later, God sent Samuel to reveal that if they sought God's help only one means was available to them.

*If you do return unto Jehovah with all your heart, then put away the foreign god's and the Ashtaroth from among you, and direct your hearts unto Jehovah, and serve him only; and he will deliver you out of the*

*hand of the Philistines" 1 Sam 7:3.*

When Samuel called an assembly and offered to pray for them, Israel gathered fasting and confessing.

*So they gathered together at Mizpah, drew water, and poured it out before the Lord. And they fasted that day, and said there, "We have sinned against the Lord." 1 Sam 7:6*

The Philistines determined to go up and fight them. This frightened Israel and they begged Samuel to pray for them. Samuel offered the burnt offering and cried out to God. God answered, but as he offered the sacrifice the mighty host of the Philistines approached.

*"Jehovah thundered with a great thunder upon the Philistines and discomfited them; and they were smitten down of Israel." 1 Sam 7:10.*

What the ark of God could not do for the children of Israel as a magical charm, their penitent attitude coupled with fasting did. Samuel then set up a stone where the battle occurred. The stone is called Ebenezer which is translated "*the stone of help*" to remind them of what taking the proper steps can do. We too should not forget the Ebenezer stone.

### **3. DAVID 2Sam 12**

After David's sin with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah, Nathan was sent to rebuke him and reveal that a part of the punishment would be the death of the child. David sought to move God to relent.

*And the Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and it became ill. 16 David therefore pleaded with God for the child, and David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. 2Sam 12:15-16*

On the seventh day, the child died and the true importance of fasting as David used it was revealed.

*Then on the seventh day it came to pass that the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead. For they said, "Indeed, while the child was alive, we spoke to him, and he would not heed our voice. How can we tell him that the child is dead? He may do some harm!" 19 When David saw that his servants were whispering, David perceived that the child was dead. Therefore David said to his servants, "Is the child dead?" And they said, "He is dead." 20 So David arose from the ground, washed and anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. Then he went to his own house; and when he requested, they set food before him, and he ate. 21 Then his servants said to him, "What is this that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive, but when the child died, you arose and ate food." 22 And he said, "While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who can tell whether the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child may live?' 23 But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." 2 Sam 12:18-23*

The contrast between how the world saw fasting and how the godly saw it is set forth. The servants thought it was a sign of deep mourning for the child. David saw fasting as only a the means to move God to act in his behalf. David used fasting to afflict his soul. He fasted and wept hoping that the Lord would be gracious to him. After the child died and it became evident that God would not relent, David saw no further need to fast. Fasting was used to move God, and not simply as a means to mourn.

### **4. AHAB 1 Kings 16-21:28**

Of all the kings of Israel few were more wicked and corrupt than was king Ahab. If fasting could help him it must be powerful indeed.

*And Ahab the son of Omri did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah above all that were before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshiped him. 1Kings 16:30-31*

Ahab was a wicked king. All Elijah's efforts could not bring him to remorse or repentance. After Jezebel had Naboth killed for his vineyard and Ahab took possession, God sent Elijah:

*'Behold, I will bring calamity on you. I will take away your posterity, and will cut off from Ahab every male in Israel, both bond and free. 22 I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam 1Kings 21:21-22*

Ahab's response again revealed the power of fasting to change God's heart.

*So it was, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his body, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning. 28 And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 29 "See how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the calamity in his days. In the days of his son I will bring the calamity on his house." 1 Kings 21:27-29*

Here Ahab humbled himself by every means available to him and God was impressed. Not only was He impressed, but he showed His favor by relenting of the evil He had purposed to do. Ahab wore the clothing that signified mourning and sorrow. He fasted to afflict his soul, and he walked softly, being careful with his actions and words. God again revealed the power of humbling ourselves before Him by afflicting our souls had great power and fasting played a role in this power.

### **5. JEHOSAPHAT 2Chrn. 20:1-30**

Jehosaphat's father Asa began his reign fully trusting God and was rewarded with twenty years of

peace, but late in life he sought additional help from the king of Syria. When God sent a prophet to reveal that this lack of faith would bring the war he feared, he put the prophet in jail. After his death, Jehoshaphat began to reign, but he learned from the mistakes of his father. He chose to rely completely upon God. After many years of peace, a great multitude of Moabites and Ammonites came to fight against them. He continued to rely completely upon God, and did what he considered to be the most important action to seek God's favor. He proclaimed a fast to afflict their souls and seek the favor and help of Jehovah.

*And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek unto Jehovah; and he proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together, to seek help of Jehovah: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek Jehovah.*

After the fast God sent a prophet to reveal the affects of their actions.

*Fear not ye, neither be dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's..... ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of Jehovah with you, O Judah and Jerusalem; fear not, nor be dismayed tomorrow go out against them; for Jehovah is with you. 20:15,17*

Once again fasting played an important role in the humbling of the people and the entreatment of Jehovah. God acted mightily in their behalf, and they found only dead bodies as God had so confused their enemies that they had fought and destroyed each other.

## **6. NINEVEH Jonah 4**

Maybe part of Jonah's preaching was a demand to fast, or perhaps they had heard all the way in Nineveh of the power of fasting to move God. But with the "sign of Jonah" and the preaching of Jonah touched their hearts, they turned to fasting to move God to relent.

*So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. 6 Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. 7 And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. 8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. 9 Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish? 10 Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it. Jonah 3:5-10*

Though God had sent Jonah to proclaim their doom in forty days, the fasting, and obvious signs of repentance moved God to relent of the evil He said He would do.

## **7. EZRA Ez. 8:21**

After King Artaxerxes gave permission to return to Israel, Ezra gathered the Israelites who were willing to return to their land. Although they were carrying a large sum of silver and gold, Ezra was ashamed to ask for a guard, because he had told the king God would protect them. In order to do all that was possible to seek God's favor, he asked all of them to fast and pray.

*Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions. 22 For I was ashamed to request of the king an escort of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy on the road, because we had spoken to the king, saying, "The hand of our God is upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him." 23 So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer. Ezra 8:21-23*

Clearly Ezra had been convinced by all that we have just read. He knew fasting had power in the eyes of God and used it in conjunction with prayer to move God to help in them in their difficult situation. Ezra was convince that fasting would help and it did.

## **8. ESTHER EST 4**

Esther was married to the King of the Medo-Persians. His servant Haaman had deviously persuaded the king to have all the Jews killed. When Israel heard of it their first response was to use every tool God had given them. They mourned, fasted, wept, laid in sackcloth and ashes.

*And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.*

Mordacai came to Esther to ask her to speak to the king, but she was afraid. Their was some disagreement between them and Esther was not in favor. If she entered his presence and he refused to speak to her she would die. Mordacai persuaded her that she must go, but she too sought help from God through fasting.

*Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast in like manner; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law, and if I perish, I perish. Est 4:16*

In the end Esther received honor from the king and the Jews escaped. Haaman was hanged on the

gallows he had prepared for Mordacai and Mordacai was promoted to great influence. Esther understood the power of fasting in the sight of God. She was convinced and asked all Jews to fast for her, and God moved in her behalf.

Clearly, fasting had great power with God. When faced with afflictions and tribulations, His people turned to Him by afflicting their souls in fasting.

## **This is the Foundation Jesus Built Upon**

Jesus knew all of this as He discussed these things in the Sermon on The Mount. He had only recently completed such a fast Himself.

*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Matt 4:1-3*

With this background, Jesus advice on how to fast in the Sermon on the Mount holds great significance to us. It takes the power that fasting held under the Old Covenant and revealed that it holds a similar power today.

*Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 17 But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. Mt 6:16-18*

Christians who fast must do so in secret. They were not to put on a gloomy face that might motivate others to ask about their welfare so they can proudly inform them they were fasting! No one is to neglect their appearance by not shaving, combing the hair or putting on makeup. Under no circumstances should a disciple seek to gain the notice of men while they fast. Those who fast to gain spiritual benefits fast only to be seen by “*your Father in secret.*” When God sees us fasting only to Him and only for those things He revealed fasting would do then Jesus promised that “*your Father who sees in secret will repay you.*” This is an impressive promise! One that disciples would be foolish to overlook. Jesus promised God will repay those who fast properly.

## **A Powerful Tool for Special Circumstances**

Often hidden away in the bottom of a tool chest are those special but seldom needed tools used only when a very unique set of circumstances arise. They make impossible jobs easy. Those who own and know how to use such tools are often viewed as experts who are sought out and paid a premium to solve difficult problems. Trouble is if those skills are not passed on to others, their use can be forgotten and they sit idle when they could be doing great things. In a sense this has happened to fasting. Think of how many sermons you have heard on this subject.

Although Jesus spoke of fasting as a special tool left for His disciples and gave specific guidelines to make it most beneficial, and revealed God will reward us openly if done in this way, many have never fasted. When the right circumstances arise, there is nothing like fasting to accomplish great things! Like the special tools of an expert, these things make impossible things easy. They spiritually and emotionally strengthen those who learn to use them at the right time. They also bring favor from God.

## **Why Jesus and His Disciples did not Fast**

While Jesus was on earth, both John’s disciples (Mt 9:14) and the scribes and Pharisees (Lk. 5:30-33) noticed that Jesus’ disciples never fasted. They came and asked him why and he gave a very interesting and instructive answer.

*The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were fasting. Then they came and said to Him, “Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?” 19 And Jesus said to them, “Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. 20 But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days. Mk 2:18-20*

Jesus revealed that it takes a very specific set of circumstances for fasting to be appropriate and fulfill its function. In Luke He was even more specific: “*You cannot make the attendants of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them*” but “*when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days.*” (Lk 5:34-35) Fasting was out of place in times of joy, prosperity or ease. While Jesus was with them, the disciples were blessed because Jesus was fulfilling every need they had. Fasting did not fit then, but Jesus was clear in all three accounts: “*when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days.*” Their fasting began after he was taken from them.

The first use of fasting recorded in the Scriptures described the work of the prophets and teachers in Antioch

*And as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. 3 Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. Acts 13:2-3*

It is evident from this verse that the early church used fasting as a part of their service to the Lord as

well as something that accompanied their prayers. The next use further solidifies this conclusion. Where Luke makes it clear that as they appointed elders in all the churches they also prayed and fasted.

*And when they had appointed for them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they had believed. Acts 14:23*

This is the last reference to fasting in the NT. It was used in the churches just as Jesus said that it would. But since there are no references to it as commands or instructions on when it is to be used in the NT many have rightfully concluded that it is within the discretion of each disciple to use it or not as he chooses. It is a powerful tool left for us to use in times of great and important needs, but to fully understand fasting we must go back to the Old Testament and see its use and significance.

## **Your Father, who sees in Secret, shall Reward you**

What are the rewards? The answer is found in Isaiah 58 where God commanded Isaiah to instruct Israel regarding their complaint. They were fasting, but felt that God was not “rewarding them.” *Why have we fasted,’ they say, ‘and You have not seen? Why have we afflicted our souls, and You take no notice?’ (Isa 58:3)* God answered them as Jesus did here. They were not fasting with sincere motives and actions: *“In fact, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, And exploit all your laborers. 4 Indeed you fast for strife and debate, And to strike with the fist of wickedness. You will not fast as you do this day, To make your voice heard on high” (Isa. 58:3-4).*

Disciples can fast when circumstances arise where they want their voice to be heard on high. Fasting is a means to amplify the power of prayer and the power of repentance. It is a means to “afflict the soul” and “make your voice heard on high.” When a situation arises where we feel a strong need to do more than just pray, we can pray **and fast**.

- 1 How does a hypocrite fast?
- 2 How will a genuine disciple who wants a reward fast?
- 3 Where are all the “treasures of wisdom” hidden?
- 4 Is fasting one of the hidden treasures of wisdom?
- 5 Why didn’t Jesus and his disciples fast?
- 6 What special set of circumstances is necessary for one to fast?
- 7 Did the early Christians fast after Jesus left?
- 8 What did they fast for?
- 9 How did those in Israel “afflict their soul?”
- 10 What feast day was celebrated with a fast to afflict the soul?
- 11 Are there many examples of the power of fasting in the Old Testament?
- 12 Does Jesus promise that the power of fasting will also hold true in the NT?
- 13 Will God recompense us if we fast properly?
- 14 What does Isaiah say is the main purpose of true fasting?
- 15 What two things will fasting amplify?
- 16 How did fasting help Ezra?
- 17 How did fasting help Ahab?
- 18 How did fasting help Jehosaphat?
- 19 How did fasting help Ninevah?
- 20 Will fasting still help us in the same way today?

*“Now, therefore,” says the Lord, “Turn to Me with all your heart, With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.” 13 So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm. 14 Who knows if He will turn and relent, And leave a blessing behind Him — A grain offering and a drink offering For the Lord your God? 15 Blow the trumpet in Zion, Consecrate a fast, Call a sacred assembly; 16 Gather the people, Sanctify the congregation, Assemble the elders, Gather the children and nursing babes; Let the bridegroom go out from his chamber, And the bride from her dressing room. 17 Let the priests, who minister to the Lord, Weep between the porch and the altar; Let them say, “Spare Your people, O Lord, And do not give Your heritage to reproach, That the nations should rule over them. Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’” 18 Then the Lord will be zealous for His land, And pity His people. 19 The Lord will answer and say to His people, “Behold, I will send you grain and new wine and oil, And you will be satisfied by them; I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations. Joel 2:12-19*