

FASTING: PRESSING INTO PRAYER

By William Schnoebelen ©2014

Many have responded to WOAM's clarion call to **PRAY** for our nation as never before during this pivotal time in our country's history. Every powerful intercessor – and we know many thank Yahuwah! - MUST gird themselves up with repentance and heartfelt, persistent prayer and fasting. The prayer warrior who wields these spiritual weapons brings heavenly forces into the battle to gain victory and thwart the enemy. How do the Scriptures instruct us to fast? And how are we called to intercede in this dynamic way?

The idea of fasting does not explicitly appear in the Word until **Judges 20:26**:

Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the LORD, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.

The meaning here clearly indicates *repentance*. Israel was being torn apart because no one was taking the commandments of Yahuwah seriously. After this day of fasting and worship, Yahuwah blessed them with victory! In **1 Sam. 7:6** a similar pattern of fasting and repentance is given, as we also see in Nehemiah, Ezra and Esther.

The Hebrew word used in these passages is *TSUWM*. It's derived from a word meaning *to cover over the mouth*. Another term used reflects the **attitude** necessary during the Day of Atonement: ANAH NEPHESH (**Lev. 16:29**). This means *to afflict the soul*. This is an earlier reference in which fasting is implied, but not explicitly referenced.

We also see in **Psalms 69:10** that fasting can be used to **chasten** the soul. The sense here is of disciplining our souls by afflicting them. This is probably where the practice came of "afflicting our souls" by fasting on *Yom Kippur* (the Day of Atonement) comes from (**Lev. 16:28-30**). Because the body is somewhat weakened through fasting (**Ps. 109:24**), the soul's relationship with the Holy Spirit becomes more acute and aware during a fast. Of course, it would be unscriptural to fast to the point of death or anything near it – LET ME SAY THAT AGAIN! - NO ONE should *EVER* fast to the point of death or near death!

In the Bible and in ancient times, we see fasting associated with acts of personal piety, or the acknowledgement of disastrous events. It was done during times of mourning and repentance. Even today in secular society, people who are in mourning often do not eat very much or need to be urged to eat. As Believers, we need to recognize fasting as a critical component of spiritual combat against the forces of darkness. Many are familiar with the passage in **Isaiah 58**, which brings the idea of afflicting the soul AND spiritual warfare into sharp focus:

5 Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? 6 Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?

Helping the oppressed gain liberation is a **major** reason to fast. This is a real POWER tool in our spiritual warfare arsenal! The gospel of **Matthew (17:21)** strongly echoes this when Yahushua

says of fasting and deliverance: “...*this kind cometh not out but by prayer and fasting.*” Many times, folks call us and declare that they have tried to do deliverance on someone and that it wasn’t working. We ask them if they have fasted for the individual and most of the time, it turns out they have not. When they rethink their strategy and do some sort of fasting along with their intercessions, release and deliverance take place.

WARRIOR ALERT: Remember the NIV and other apostate “scriptures” omit the words “*and fasting*” because the devil does not want Believers to know the power of fasting in deliverance. Isn’t that just totally EVIL of a Bible translation committee to leave something like that out?

Back in the late eighties when I was first doing deliverance ministry, I worked with an exceptionally troubled woman who – though a Believer – could not gain victory. I worked with her for weeks on end through a Christian counseling center (they hadn’t been able to assist her and called me). I prayerfully began interceding and counseling her. As it happened, a week before her we were to meet again for prayer, I was flying back from Virginia Beach where I’d appeared on the *700 Club*. I was praying a lot for her on the long flight and the Spirit told me to fast. I was obedient. Between layovers, it was 8-9 hours.

By the time I was home, the Holy Spirit had showed me the solution that set her free. She was concealing the fact that as an adolescent she’d had an abortion. Because she had not confessed it – even to Him - she could not get freedom in Messiah. In one inspiring prayer session with her after Holy Spirit revelations through fasting, she was FREE! I know it was because, in part, I was obedient and fasted.

Another encounter in 2003 required a spiritual warfare fast when I was forced to confront the angel of death. Recounted in my book *ROMANCING DEATH*, just let me say here that a very palpable and evil presence had settled on my apartment. No amount of prayer or warfare made the darkness lift, even after several days. Finally, I was led to fast and continued praying for hours at a time. THEN, the power of death and evil was broken!

Fasting can also be used to open our spiritual eyes to deeper truths. This is what Cornelius did in **Acts 10:30**. As a result he had a great angelic visitation that led to his family’s salvation and catalyzed the spread of the Gospel to the Gentiles! Other examples include fasting before important spiritual decisions. The apostles did this before they called and commissioned Barnabas and Saul (**Acts 13:2-4**).

This happened to me as well. When I was new in the ministry, colleagues told me to use Bible versions other than the King James. They touted, “*better translation, closer to the Greek,*” etc. These men were experienced ministers and I was still a newcomer. I listened to them and bought an ASV. But when I used it to minister deliverance to people, the demons literally **laughed** at it. That disturbed me and I fasted and prayed for an answer. Literally, within the day, I received confirmation that the Authorized Version was (and is) the inerrant Word of Yahuwah! Since then, we have taken this stand and taught the spiritual warfare power and reliability of the King James text! Countless prayer sessions and deliverances of victory have supported this decision.

How exactly does fasting *work*? The Bible doesn’t say how it works, *it just says do it*. Let me suggest some ideas to encourage you in practicing this powerful modality of spiritual warfare.

The most practical part of fasting is that it frees up time. Preparing meals or even going out to eat at a restaurant takes up time and energy several times a day. Instead of preparing meals,

eating (and cleaning up) or rushing to get a meal, that time can be used for studying the Bible, prayer or worship. Lunchtime can be used for prayer walking in a park, intercession or reading the Bible or other devotional literature.

Secondly, fasting brings you closer to heaven: it *PURIFIES* you. Many report feeling spiritually **lighter** or more attuned to the voice of the Holy Spirit during and after a fast. It seems to quiet mind chatter so a person is better able to listen to that still, small voice of the Father inside.

Thirdly, and VERY important, no matter what type of fast you partake of – or how *long* you fast – one thing is certain: Your body will be **burning some fat**. Why is that so important?

If you do a deeper study of the Torah, you will discern some interesting things about fat. Fat is part of the choicest offerings. It's why Yahuwah approved Abel's offering (**Gen. 4:4**). That is the *first* mention of fat in the Scriptures! As you may know from the **Law of First Mention**, that makes it **highly** significant in defining the word's deeper meaning. Fat – for some reason - is important in the Divine economy of heaven.

From the Scriptures we see that the fat of an offering is used in the most sacred rites of the ancient priesthood, such as the consecration of Aaron as High Priest (**Ex. 29:13, 22**) and the peace offering (**Lev. 3:3**), as well as the atonement for sin offering of a priest (**Lev. 4:1-9**) to name just a few. But, you may ask, how does this concern Believers today?

Remember, we – if we are Believers in Yahushua – *are temples of the Holy Spirit!* When we eat, we “burn” the calories of our food to keep our bodies running. **A calorie is even a unit of heat, scientifically.** But when we fast we are burning our fat (a most pleasing offering) on the “altar” of our temple! This is a powerful symbol – and yet something so much MORE than symbolic.

Speaking scientifically for a moment, fat is the most dense form of food energy – the most calories per bite. When we “burn fat” by fasting on the altar of our Temples and PRAY, we release enormous amounts of focused, spiritual energy to the Almighty for souls to be saved and set free. How does that work?

You see, all the emotions we have are *essentially* stored in our bodies as chemicals. These emotions are part spiritual and part physical. Anger and fear, for example, are related to stress hormones like adrenalin and cortisol. Love is related to Phenylethylamine, a natural amphetamine, as well as dopamine and norepinephrine.

These chemicals circulate through us and if we do not work them off through exercise they keep cycling through our liver. It is the liver's job to process all these chemicals, but nowadays most people have an overwhelmed liver, because we have to process toxins our ancestors never *dreamt* of! Because the liver cannot possibly handle all of this overload, **it makes fatty cells and stores the toxic emotional chemicals in them.**

What does this have to do with prayer and fasting? When you fast, you give your liver a *great* rest! Because it doesn't have to process a meal, it can concentrate on beginning to unload all these stress-related chemicals from your liver AND what your fat cells burn off. Thus, as you fast, the fragrance of your fat offering rises to heaven *and* you lay aside all your old emotional toxins (stresses) on the altar of the Cross. It is a form of dying to your old self, the Flesh (in this case, quite literally!).

This is at least **one, powerful** way of casting all your cares upon Yahuwah (**1 Peter 5:7**)!

Even so, because fat is (biologically) a fairly intense, pure form of energy, when we burn it by fasting the Bible indicates that Abba Father smells a sweet aroma (**Gen. 8:21**) and releases heavenly forces that can set people free or break the chains of bondage over cities and nations.

Fasting focuses the higher parts of the soul heavenward. I do *not* mean as in death. Rather, it is when your body is briefly released from its job of digesting food and all associated work that the mind (part of your soul) is liberated to better focus on the things of heaven. It brings a restful clarity to the soul that's invaluable to our prayer and intercessory life.

The Bible is not specific on all the details of fasting. However, because the Biblical day (according to Scripture – **Gen. 1:5**) starts at sundown, I usually fast after dinner until dinner the following day. Fasting, IF YOUR HEALTH PERMITS, should be nothing but water. In Judaism, even to this day, most devout Jews **do not even drink water on a fast day like Yom Kippur**. This is borne out by the translation of the word mentioned above (*TSUWM* - to cover the mouth). I am not sure how healthy this would be for most people because of accumulated toxins and modern-day lack of nutrition, but many people could try it for one day. I would *never* advise more than that.

Many people are not able to fast on just water for medical reasons and there is NO condemnation in that! Do what you can. Abba in heaven looks upon the intent of the heart. Also, pregnant women, nursing mothers, little children and the elderly should **not** fast.

A less severe form of fasting would be to just drink water, fruit or vegetable juices, or perhaps a vegetable broth. People with blood sugar issues could attempt that for one day, being mindful of glucose levels throughout the fast. Fruit and vegetable juices should provide needed glucose. But if you have blood sugar issues please talk to a health care provider before proceeding.

Some Bible teachers promote longer fasts (3-7 days, etc.), and if you really feel led to do that please talk to your health care professional first. In this day and age, most people are **not** in a health condition where they would tolerate this type of fast very well even if it does seem more spiritually effective. We are no longer as healthy as folks were in the days of the apostles. This should be a matter between you, the Holy Spirit and your physician.

I often suggest that people do what is called a Daniel fast. This is what you find the young prophet doing in **Dan. 1:8-15**. He and his Hebrew companions refused the food of the king knowing it would not be kosher. So instead, they ate pulse (something like vegetable soup or lentils). If you just eat vegetables for a few days, this is a less severe fast, but it is still very powerful! In my personal walk with the Set Apart Spirit, I have been led for some time now to just make the Daniel fast a lifestyle. But just because I do it, does not mean that you need to do it. That is between you and the Holy Spirit.

Another alternative, which is beneficial for most and also spiritually helpful, is to fast from after dinner into the next day until lunch. That would be from 7 pm until noon the following day. It would be a 17 hour fast and it might be an easier way to begin the practice of fasting.

We suggest fasting one day a week. You may be astonished at how this prayerful act of submission can jump-start your prayer life or ministry! It is guaranteed to increase the Fire of the Holy Spirit within your heart - and absolutely increase your *zeal* for holiness and purity!

The blessings of a deeper and more intimate fellowship with the Father through His Son and the Holy Spirit can also bring discernment, miraculous wonders, salvations, and liberations into your life and the lives of others. During these End Times when we face so many challenges, fasting provides a way to amp up spiritual power in your life, church and ministry! Who doesn't need more of that? If there ever was a time for prayer and fasting, this is IT!

Be blessed and shalom! *Please pray for true revival and our nation!* - William Schnoebelen
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