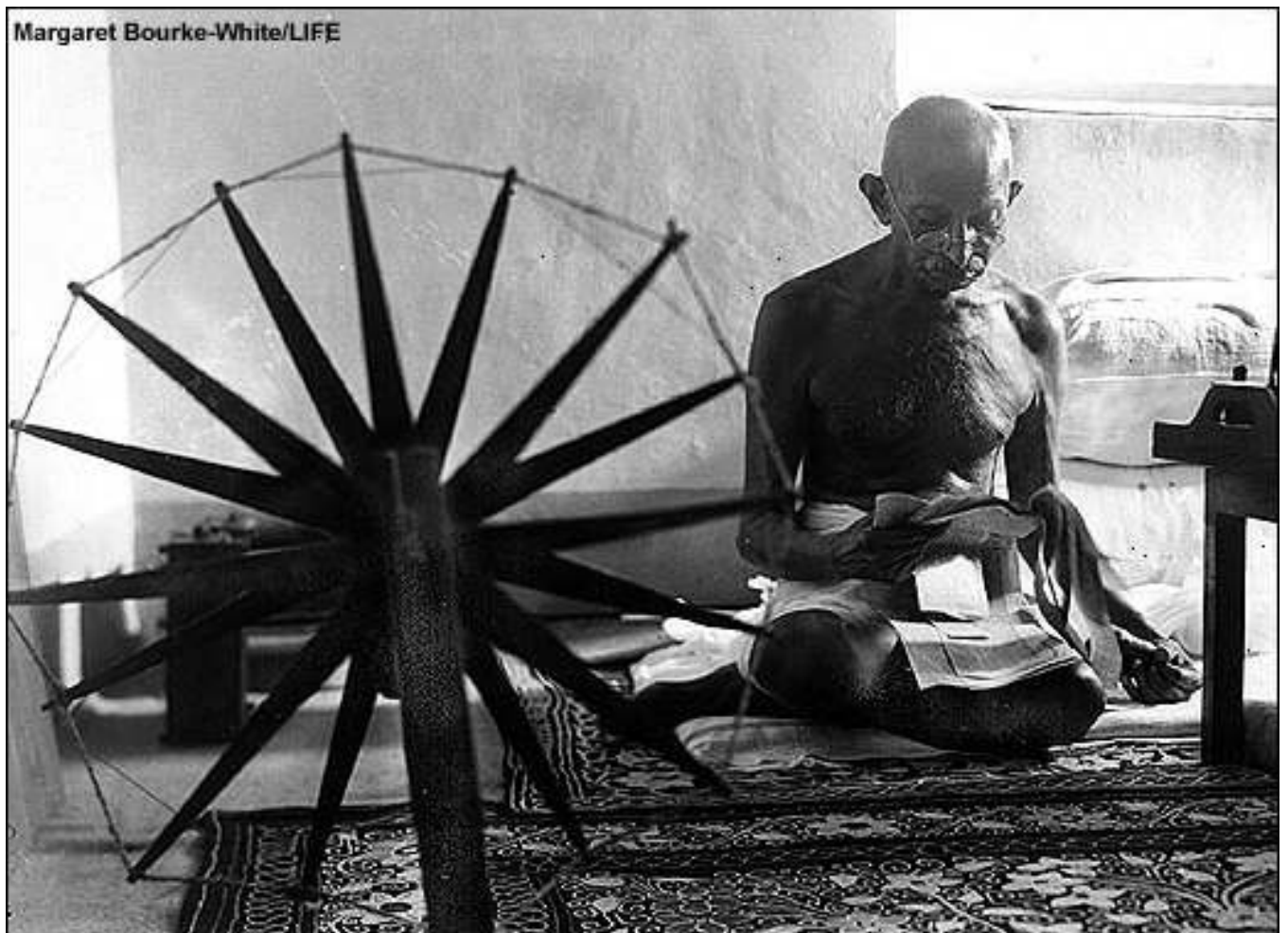


**HOPE OF
ISRAEL
MINISTRIES**

BIBLE

CORRESPONDENCE COURSE



Former Indian political and religious leader, Mohandas K. Gandhi

Why Christians Should Fast

Lesson 35

An Open Letter from the Staff...

Former Indian political and religious leader, Mohandas K. Gandhi, gained political prominence by fasting often. But Gandhi fasted for the purpose of fomenting strife and division within his country. He fasted to propagate his goal of national independence, not to develop **GODLY HUMILITY**. **YEHOVAH's** Word shows that Gandhi's fasting was totally in **VAIN!** You need to understand **YEHOVAH's** purpose for fasting and **WHY** He commands true Christians to fast today.

Yeshua the Messiah made the ultimate sacrifice so **WE** might have **LIFE**, and eternal life in **YEHOVAH** God's Kingdom.

But he also taught us how to live a rich, joyful, productive life **RIGHT NOW** in the **HUMAN FLESH!** As part of that abundant Christian life he taught fasting.

The Messiah **HUMBLED** himself often by fasting. He made fasting a **PART** of abundant living. Yeshua instructed his disciples: "WHEN you **FAST**, anoint your head and wash your face, that **YOUR FASTING** may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret **WILL REWARD YOU**" (**Matthew 6:17-18**, RSV).

The Messiah did not say "IF" you fast -- rather, he said "WHEN YOU FAST." This meant there **WOULD** be a time when **CHRISTIANS SHOULD FAST!**

When the disciples of John the Baptist asked the Messiah **WHY HIS** disciples didn't fast, Yeshua answered: "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The **DAYS WILL COME**, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and **THEN THEY WILL FAST**" (**Matthew 9:15**, RSV).

Yeshua the Messiah, the bridegroom, was taken away. **THOSE DAYS HAVE COME!**



HOPE OF ISRAEL MINISTRIES BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE LESSON 35

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About Our Cover...

Mohandus (Mahatma) Gandhi sitting at the spinning wheel is an iconic Margaret Bourke-White photograph.

Why Christians Should Fast

LESSON 35

YEHOVAH God Commands Us to Fast!

Why Fast?

To most people, “fast” is merely the opposite of “slow”! They don’t know that to “fast” MEANS to voluntarily go WITHOUT food and water.

Most people would think you’d STARVE to death if you told them you were going to FAST for a day or two!

To most people, FASTING sounds like part of an ascetic way of life -- a life of suffering and misery -- completely devoid of all the pleasures of abundant living.

But these are MISCONCEPTIONS. They are TOTALLY WRONG!

Fasting is NOT penance. Neither is it a “hunger strike” to try to FORCE your OWN WILL on YEHOVAH God or other people. Mohandas Gandhi fasted that way.

Fasting is a little-used TOOL and key to overcoming our human nature which YEHOVAH God has placed at our disposal. Fasting shows YEHOVAH that you are IN EARNEST about seeking Him -- that you’re depending totally upon HIM for ALL your physical and spiritual needs.

Fasting for spiritual reasons is intended to help bring about a HUMBLE ATTITUDE and to draw one CLOSER to YEHOVAH God Almighty. This CLOSENESS to YEHOVAH is what produces a life of abundant living -- coupled with a peace of mind never before experienced!

This lesson will show you what your Bible reveals about spiritual fasting -- exactly WHAT it is, what it DOES, and HOW to do it.

This vital, life-giving knowledge is ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL TO YOUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT!

1. On what day in the year does YEHOVAH God absolutely COMMAND His people to FAST? **Leviticus 23:26-27, 29, 32.**

COMMENT: YEHOVAH God commanded His people Israel to “AFFLICT” their “souls,” or bodies, one day of the year -- on the DAY OF ATONEMENT.

Anyone who did not AFFLICT himself by FASTING upon this solemn Day of Atonement was “cut OFF ” from among the congregation of Israel!

2. Does David clearly show us that one AFFLICTS his body when he FASTS? **Psalms 35:13.** Notice the marginal rendering for “humbled” is AFFLICTED. Did David “chasten” himself often with FASTING? **Psalms 69:10.** Notice that David’s ENEMIES reproached him for fasting (**verses 11-12, 18**).

COMMENT: The word “humbled” in **Psalms 35:13** is translated from the Hebrew word “anah,” which means “to afflict, abase, beat down, chasten, and humble the SELF” (*Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*). The same Hebrew word is translated “afflict” in **Leviticus 23:27-32.**

3. What is the Bible example regarding abstaining from food and drink when one “afflicts” one’s soul -- that is, FASTS? **Deuteronomy 9:9, 18; Esther 4:16 and Acts 9:8-9.**

4. Did Luke, the author of the book of Acts, know that the Day of Atonement was a day of fasting -- did he call it “THE FAST”? **Acts 27:9.** See the margin of your Bible which refers you back to **Leviticus 23:27** and **Numbers 29:7.**

COMMENT: The Old Testament command to observe the Day of Atonement by fasting is NOT THE ONLY COMMAND YEHOVAH God gives His people to fast! Notice now the New Testament injunction for Christians to fast today -- IN ADDITION TO the Day of Atonement.

5. Did Yeshua the Messiah fast? **Matthew 4:2**. What was the **PURPOSE** of the



NO HUMILITY HERE! — Benito Mussolini, Italy's wartime leader. "Il Duce," the epitome of arrogance and pride, was killed by Italian partisans in 1945.

Messiah's fast? **Verse 1**.

COMMENT: Yeshua fasted to **DRAW CLOSE** to YEHOVAH God the Father **IN PRAYER** and receive **SPIRITUAL** strength to withstand the sinister temptations of the Devil!

6. Does the apostle Paul show us that the Messiah **NEVER CHANGES**? **Hebrews 13:8**. Is the Messiah to live his life in Christians today? **Philippians 2:5**; **Romans 8:9** and **Galatians 2:20**.

COMMENT: Paul plainly shows that the Messiah is the same yesterday, today, and forever. If he fasted when he trod the dusty roads of Palestine, then he will be fasting **TODAY** --

IN US -- if he **LIVES IN US** by the holy spirit!

7. Will we therefore be **FOLLOWING** the Messiah's **EXAMPLE** of fasting? **I Peter 2:21** and **I John 2:6**.

COMMENT: Since the Messiah did fast over 1900 years ago, and since Christians are those who follow the Messiah's **EXAMPLE** -- they will fast **TODAY!**

The Messiah's Greatest Trial

Yeshua the Messiah was faced with the trial of overcoming Satan the Devil in **SPIRITUAL COMBAT**. Had Yeshua failed to overcome the Devil, he would have **DISQUALIFIED** himself as the Savior and Ruler of all mankind!

Let's notice how the Messiah **PREPARED** himself for this greatest of all trials.

1. Why did the spirit of YEHOVAH God lead the Messiah into the wilderness? **Matthew 4:1**.

COMMENT: Yeshua the Messiah went into the wilderness for the specific purpose of being **TEMPTED** by Satan the Devil. He had to overcome the Devil's temptations to prove he was qualified to become the Messiah and Savior of mankind.

This was a **SPIRITUAL BATTLE** far more significant and stupendous than any of us can realize. Satan the Devil laid before the Messiah the **REALITY** of this temptation in a manner more poignant and real than any temptation that has ever been placed before any of us! The Messiah knew he would have to be successful in overcoming the Devil.

2. What did the Messiah begin to do in **PREPARATION** for his encounter with Satan? **Matthew 4:2**.

COMMENT: Yeshua prepared himself by **FASTING!** He **AFFLICTED** his body by denying himself food and water. The Messiah had to endure and overcome the desire to eat and drink for **FORTY LONG DAYS AND NIGHTS!** Then the Tempter came.

3. What was the first temptation Satan set

before Christ? **Verse 3.**

COMMENT: Satan not only tempted the Messiah to consume physical food, but also appealed to the Messiah's HUMAN VANITY by telling him to PROVE he was the very SON of YEHOVAH God by turning stones into bread!

The twisted mind of Satan thought the Messiah would be at his WEAKEST -- since he had gone without food and water for so long. By this time the Messiah was experiencing hunger and thirst almost beyond HUMAN endurance.

But in reality, the Messiah was at his STRONGEST -- SPIRITUALLY speaking!

The Messiah was completely HUMBLE before YEHOVAH God and CLOSE to his Heavenly Father through fasting and PRAYER. He was filled with the spirit of YEHOVAH God and knew he could draw upon his FATHER'S POWER to RESIST the Devil!

4. What was Yeshua's reply to the Devil's tempting suggestion? **Verse 4.**

COMMENT: The Messiah had the SPIRITUAL POWER from his Father necessary to combat the great spiritual force of Satan. He depended on the Father's power for deliverance -- not his own! The Messiah's human strength had all but left him by this time.

5. Finally, after enduring and overcoming the additional temptations Satan brought upon him, what was Yeshua the Messiah able to COMMAND the Devil? **Verse 10.**

COMMENT: Yeshua the Messiah endured the greatest spiritual battle ever fought! Satan the Devil OBEYED the Messiah and slunk away. The Messiah won over Satan because he humbled himself by drawing close to YEHOVAH God through FASTING and MUCH PRAYER!

Thus Yeshua the Messiah QUALIFIED to become our Savior and a future High Priest and king of this earth.

Hope of Israel Ministries -- Taking the Lead in the Search for Truth!

The Messiah Teaches Fasting

Yeshua the Messiah knows the kind of life to which his disciples -- true Christians -- are called. He knew we would have to face various trials and temptations. He knew we would need to prepare and condition ourselves as well.

The first mention of fasting in the New Testament, other than the actual example set by the Messiah before his temptation, is found in the "Sermon on the Mount."

In the sixth chapter of Matthew, the Messiah gave us the EXAMPLE of how to pray. We've learned how vital a part PRAYER is in the lives of all Christians. Yet, in this chapter Yeshua the Messiah placed the SAME EMPHASIS on FASTING as he did on prayer!

1. Exactly what did the Messiah teach his disciples about fasting? **Matthew 6:16-18.**

COMMENT: Yeshua TAUGHT his disciples to FAST. He gave them clear-cut, concise instructions on HOW TO FAST. He did not say "if, some time, you think you might want to fast" -- he stated, "WHEN YOU FAST"! He knew his true followers WOULD FAST!

2. But what did the disciples of John ask the Messiah concerning his disciples? **Matthew 9:14.**

COMMENT: The disciples of John didn't see the Messiah's disciples fasting. They wondered why and asked him.

3. What was the Messiah's reply? **Verse 15.** Did he clearly state that there would be a time when they WOULD fast? Read also the accounts given in **Mark 2:18-20** and **Luke 5:33-35.**

COMMENT: Since the Messiah was with his disciples most of the time, it obviously was not necessary for them to fast in order to draw close to YEHOVAH God. For YEHOVAH GOD was actually WITH THEM THROUGH THE FULL MEASURE OF YEHOVAH'S SPIRIT THE MESSIAH HAD!

But when the Messiah ascended to Heaven, He was no longer with his disciples in the same intimate physical way. And so in order to DRAW CLOSE to YEHOVAH God -- who is

spirit and in Heaven -- the disciples followed the teaching of the Messiah and FASTED OFTEN to become SPIRITUALLY CLOSER to YEHOVAH God.

The Messiah's clear-cut and concise teaching applies to all of his spirit-begotten children today since they are still fleshly mortal beings. Yeshua's teaching reveals that fasting is the way a physical human being can truly HUMBLE himself and really DRAW CLOSE to YEHOVAH God in prayer!

4. After his resurrection, what ORDER did the Messiah give his Ecclesias? **Matthew 28:18-19**. Did he command his apostles to TEACH ALL THINGS he had commanded THEM to do? **Verse 20**. Haven't we just seen that the Messiah taught them to fast?

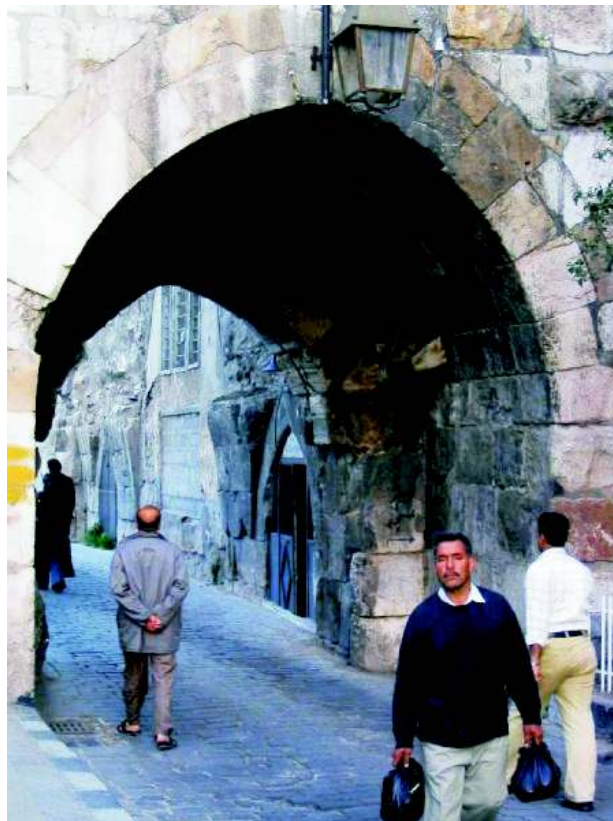
COMMENT: Since the Messiah does not change (**Hebrews 13:8**), his commands to the early Ecclesias also apply to all Christians through the centuries! He expects Christians today to worship the ever-living God in the SAME WAY. THEREFORE YEHOVAH GOD EXPECTS HIS SPIRIT-BEGOTTEN CHILDREN TO FAST TODAY!

Example of the Early Ecclesias

The early New Testament Ecclesias of YEHOVAH God was a FASTING church. And it was filled with SPIRITUAL POWER! Let's look at the example YEHOVAH's early Ecclesias set for us today.

1. When the Messiah struck down the apostle Paul (who was then Saul) on the road to Damascus, did Paul spend the next three days FASTING? **Acts 9:8-9**. Did he also spend this time PRAYING? **Verses 10-11**.

COMMENT: A most DRAMATIC CHANGE was taking place in Paul's life. This was the time of Paul's CONVERSION! HE WAS crying out to YEHOVAH God with ALL of his being while he fasted. PAUL WAS HUMBLING himself before YEHOVAH by FASTING, and PRAYING for His mercy and forgiveness!



Old city of Damascus, Syria, with Roman wall. It was in ancient Damascus that the blinded apostle Paul spent three days fasting and praying to YEHOVAH God.

2. After YEHOVAH God sent Ananias to Paul so he might receive his sight, did Paul show his willingness and desire to humbly obey YEHOVAH God by BURYING his old sinful way of life in the waters of baptism? **Acts 9:17-18**.

3. Did Paul later command Christians to FOLLOW his EXAMPLES of Christian living in the EXACT MANNER he followed the examples set by the Messiah? **I Corinthians 11:1** and **Philippians 3:16-17**. Did Paul CONTINUE to follow the Messiah's example by fasting often? **II Corinthians 11:27**.

COMMENT: Paul himself set an EXAMPLE in spiritual fasting for the Ecclesias of YEHOVAH God. In recounting his harrowing experiences as a minister of YEHOVAH God, he related that he was in "countless

fastings” -- which means HE FOLLOWED THE MESSIAH’S EXAMPLE and sought to be SPIRITUALLY CLOSER TO YEHOVAH GOD by doing a great deal of fasting!

4. Did the leaders of the early Ecclesias FAST and PRAY to learn YEHOVAH’s will when certain men had to be selected for specific jobs? **Acts 13:1-3**. Did YEHOVAH’s ministers FAST and PRAY when they ordained elders in the Ecclesias? **Acts 14:23**.

5. In his instructions to the Church at Corinth, the apostle Paul showed that YEHOVAH’s people would be a FASTING people. What did he teach husbands and wives concerning the marriage relationship? **I Corinthians 7:4-5**.

COMMENT: Paul was instructing husbands and wives not to withhold normal MARRIAGE RELATIONS from each other, except it be with common consent, in order to devote themselves to FASTING AND PRAYER. Paul clearly shows that fasting and prayer could, on occasion, INTERRUPT the normal marriage relationship from time to time!

But WHY? Exactly why should a Christian FAST? Why did the Messiah fast? Why did the apostle Paul fast? What is fasting and WHY SHOULD YOU FAST?

The PURPOSE of Fasting

Some have thought that fasting is a kind of PENANCE -- that YEHOVAH God is pleased if we “punish” ourselves by a fast.

Fasting in order to drive a “bargain” with YEHOVAH God -- fasting in order to try to bend YEHOVAH to YOUR way of thinking, in order to get your own way or your own WILL about some matter -- is an ABOMINATION to YEHOVAH God! It is ABSOLUTELY WRONG!

We fast to DRAW CLOSER to YEHOVAH God -- to get our minds off the world and the flesh and ON YEHOVAH!

Fasting -- doing WITHOUT ANY food and water -- also teaches a vital, priceless SPIRITUAL LESSON. Let’s learn this vital

lesson and understand HOW fasting draws us closer to YEHOVAH God.

1. Does YEHOVAH have great regard for those who are HUMBLE and “contrite” -- REPENTANT -- in attitude? **Isaiah 66:2** and **57:15**. Does YEHOVAH give GRACE -- unmerited pardon -- to the humble? **I Peter 5:5**.

COMMENT: True humility is NOT penance, or a state of poverty. It is an ATTITUDE OF MIND! And the one who is humble and repentant in attitude -- respectful of YEHOVAH’s Word and has a teachable spirit -- is the one YEHOVAH FAVORS and RICHLY BLESSES!

2. Does YEHOVAH God require men to walk in HUMILITY before Him? **Micah 6:8** and **Ephesians 4:1-2**.

3. Are all Christians therefore commanded to be clothed with HUMILITY before their Creator? **I Peter 5:6** and **Colossians 3:12**.

4. Does YEHOVAH HEAR THE PRAYERS of the humble? **Psalms 9:11-12** and **10:17**. Will YEHOVAH God always come to the AID of the humble? **Job 22:29**.

5. Do the HUMBLE and OBEDIENT receive riches, honor and eternal life from YEHOVAH God? **Proverbs 22:4**. But must the attitude of humility ALWAYS PRECEDE honor from YEHOVAH God? **Proverbs 15:33**.

6. Are people “naturally humble”? Do their minds have a humble approach to Almighty God by NATURE? **Romans 8:7**. What is the NATURAL proclivity of our human nature? **James 4:5**. What are the other thoughts and actions of the natural, hostile, carnal mind? **Galatians 5:19-21**.

COMMENT: Envy, strife, jealousy, etc., come from a stubborn, unyielding attitude that is anything but humble! This is the natural, carnal mind with which you and I were born. The natural mind is not and CANNOT, OF ITSELF, be truly humble.

Some might call themselves “naturally humble”. But in **Jeremiah 17:9**, YEHOVAH calls the carnal mind what it really is: “DECEITFUL ABOVE ALL THINGS AND

DESPERATELY WICKED"! By nature, man's mind LACKS Godly humility. That's what our hearts are like! YEHOVAH ought to know -- He created us.

YEHOVAH plainly states through Jeremiah that your mind is out to deceive, trick, fool, and bluff at every turn. This means your mind can TRICK you into THINKING you're humble when you're NOT! That means you probably LACK the humility necessary for INTIMATE, CLOSE CONTACT WITH YEHOVAH GOD!

If a person thinks he's "naturally humble," his carnal mind has TOTALLY DECEIVED HIM!

7. Does the natural mind of man, with its pride and lack of Godly humility, lead to a fall? **Proverbs 16:18-19.**

8. Does YEHOVAH God RESIST the proud? **James. 4:6.** But what does He give the HUMBLE? **Same verse.** What are we therefore to do? **Verses 7-8.** How do we become HUMBLE and DRAW CLOSE to YEHOVAH God -- are we to "afflict" ourselves? **Verses 9-10.**

9. We have clearly seen that the vanity of our carnal nature causes us to become exalted and puffed up. How did David control his tendency to become arrogant? **Psalms 109:24** and **119:71.** Did he understand that sincere humility before the Eternal God is acquired through FASTING? **Psalms 35:13.**

COMMENT: In the Bible "fast" and "humble" often mean the same thing. Often it will be expressed "he HUMBLED himself before God." This means that he FASTED before YEHOVAH God! So when you see the command to humble yourself, it usually means to FAST.

10. Will YEHOVAH God eventually EXALT the humble? **I Peter 5:6** and **Matthew 23:12.** Did Yeshua teach that no one will be accepted of YEHOVAH God until he becomes humble? **Luke 18:13-14.**

COMMENT: Notice in **Luke 18:11** that this Pharisee fasted weekly with a WRONG ATTITUDE. He fasted with the intent of ex-



PENANCE — Body of devout Hindu in Madras, India, is pierced by shafts of tiny metal spears. Many today erroneously believe self-torture is pleasing to YEHOVAH God and falsely assume fasting is penance.

alting himself in his self-righteousness. His fasting was a form of PENANCE, thinking other people would be IMPRESSED with his suffering, his "righteousness." And he thought YEHOVAH God would be pleased if he made himself SUFFER, and would therefore grant him HIS WILL.

That is NOT THE PURPOSE of fasting!

The purpose of fasting is to HUMBLE ourselves -- to help us see ourselves as we really are! And to see YEHOVAH God as He is!

True humbling is REPENTANCE, not penance. It leads to conversion -- admitting one's human ways are all wrong and turning to YEHOVAH's ways, receiving the power of His

holy spirit to completely overshadow one's own puny human strength.

Fasting is a HUMBLING experience. It cuts us down and lets us know how small and weak and insufficient unto ourselves we really are. You learn REAL humility!

You learn that you are merely a very physical human being. You learn that if you don't get that supply of physical food -- you'll eventually die of starvation! You learn the same is true with your spiritual life -- that you'll shrivel up and die SPIRITUALLY without a constant supply of the SPIRITUAL "food" of YEHOVAH's Word and the ENERGIZING POWER of His holy spirit!

Without fasting, you may MENTALLY admit that you are not much. But you don't really comprehend it -- you DON'T FEEL IT! YOU don't SEE how really weak and insignificant you ARE, until you begin to go without food and drink for a period of time. THEN the lesson is driven home -- right to the pit of your stomach!

Not only do you learn how weak and worthless YOU are, when you fast -- but you are made AWARE of the greatness of YEHOVAH God.

Being human, and as long as you feel strong and sufficient of yourself, you will by nature trust in yourself. YEHOVAH God is not so IMPORTANT to you.

But when you fast, YEHOVAH becomes VERY important! You begin to feel in your innermost being how much you NEED AND DEPEND UPON YEHOVAH GOD. Fasting brings you to grips with REALITY. You see -- and FEEL -- yourself as you REALLY ARE. You are brought face to face with your dependence IN EVERYTHING upon your Heavenly Father!

You begin to see how greatly you must rely upon YEHOVAH God, and receive of His spiritual strength. You realize you have no strength of your own, but that YEHOVAH is the source of ALL POWER, all might -- the source of the MIRACLE-WORKING POWER OF HIS HOLY SPIRIT!

And so the purpose of fasting is to HUMBLE YOURSELF before YEHOVAH God by going without food and water for a period of time, during which you draw closer to YEHOVAH by spending a great DEAL of time IN PRAYER TO YEHOVAH GOD and the STUDY OF HIS Word. You fast to CHANGE your attitude and DRAW CLOSE to YEHOVAH. It's the ATTITUDE YEHOVAH is interested in -- He wants to see a HUMBLE and REPENTANT MIND! (**Isaiah 66:2.**)

Fasting makes you realize what Job did -- that you are nothing but a heap of ashes! A mere chemical existence in the form of human flesh -- that's what your life is. That's what YEHOVAH God wants us to realize.

Then, when we recognize how feeble we really are, and how great YEHOVAH God really is, we can turn and trust in ALMIGHTY GOD for the SPIRITUAL power to overcome and grow in His character!

Ahab and Manasseh Humbled Themselves

Because men have fasted and really sought YEHOVAH God with all their hearts, MIRACULOUS CHANGES in their lives, in the courses of nations, and the world's history have taken place. YEHOVAH God HEARD! YEHOVAH ANSWERED!

Some of the most outstanding leaders known to mankind fasted -- and records of these fasts and the results have been preserved for you in your Bible. Not as mere historical facts, but as LIVING EXAMPLES! These men of character went through experiences as EXAMPLES for Christians today (**I Corinthians 10:11**).

The Bible shows that YEHOVAH also heard and granted favor even to the EXTREMELY WICKED when they humbled themselves before YEHOVAH God with FASTING and sought Him in earnest, heartrending PRAYER!

1. What does the Bible say of Ahab, King of Israel? **I Kings 21:25**. Did Elijah the prophet warn him of the punishment YEHOVAH God was going to bring upon his house? Read **verses**

17-24 and SUMMARIZE in your own words.

2. When Ahab heard Elijah's prophetic words, he was frightened -- TERRIFIED! What did he then proceed to do -- fast? **Verse 27**. The words "and went SOFTLY" shows that Ahab displayed REGRET even in his gait!

3. What did YEHOVAH say after He saw Ahab's repentant actions -- his regret and FASTING? **Verse 29**.

COMMENT: Because Ahab sincerely HUMBLLED himself before YEHOVAH God, the punishment was POSTPONED until after his death!

4. Just how wicked was King Manasseh when he took over the rulership of Judah after the death of his father, Hezekiah? Read **II Chronicles 33:1-9** and SUMMARIZE in your own words.

COMMENT: King Manasseh is recorded as having been one of the most wicked kings in Israel's history. He led Judah in idolatry for over thirty years!

5. Did Manasseh make the nation to sin MORE THAN the heathen peoples who possessed the land before the children of Israel? **II Kings 21:10-11**. Did Manasseh MURDER many innocent people? **Verse 16**. What was YEHOVAH going to do to the nation for its vile sins? **Verses 12-15**.

6. Did King Manasseh and His people heed YEHOVAH's warnings? **II Chronicles 33:10**. As punishment for their sins, did YEHOVAH cause the nation to be taken into captivity by the cruel Assyrians? **II Chronicles 33:11**.

7. Everything now seemed lost -- it looked hopeless for Manasseh and all Judah! In this terrible state of affairs, what did King Manasseh finally do? **II Chronicles 33:12**.

COMMENT: Remember that in the Bible "humble" is often synonymous with "fast." So Manasseh "humbled himself" before YEHOVAH God by FASTING! When the Bible says Manasseh humbled himself GREATLY, it means he spent a great deal of time fasting before the Eternal God.

8. Did Manasseh also PRAY to YEHOVAH God WHILE he fasted? **Verse 13**. Did he come to know that the Eternal God is the TRUE God? Did YEHOVAH hear and accept the humble supplications of REPENTANT King Manasseh and deliver him and his people?

9. After Manasseh repented, what action did he take to CORRECT his past evil ways? **Verses 14-15**. In what other way did Manasseh display positive obedience to the true God? **Verse 16**.

COMMENT: Manasseh COMPLETELY REVERSED his foul, haughty and disobedient attitude! He sought YEHOVAH God by FASTING and PRAYER. He humbled himself before YEHOVAH very greatly and prayed for the deliverance of his nation and himself. YEHOVAH heard -- YEHOVAH INTERVENED -- and YEHOVAH God Almighty DELIVERED him and his people, and restored Manasseh's Kingdom!

It's never too late for even the extremely wicked to turn to YEHOVAH God if they sincerely want to. But they must take positive, REPENTANT ACTION as Manasseh did!

YEHOVAH God Delivers King Jehoshaphat

Another example is that of King Jehoshaphat of Judah.

1. Did a huge heathen army menacingly approach Jerusalem to do battle? **II Chronicles 20:1-2**. What was Jehoshaphat's reaction? Did he trust in his OWN military might, as the United States would do today, if attacked? Or did he set himself to seek YEHOVAH's help by proclaiming a FAST throughout the land of Judah? **Verses 3-4**.

2. Did fervent, sincere PRAYER accompany their fasting? **Verses 5-12**. In **verses 8-9**, was Jehoshaphat reminding YEHOVAH God of His promise to Solomon? **II Chronicles 7:13-14**.

3. What did YEHOVAH God answer the king through His prophet? **II Chronicles 20:15-17**.

4. How did YEHOVAH intervene to deliver Judah? **Verses 22-24.**

COMMENT: YEHOVAH God heard the cry of the people because they came seeking Him with earnest FASTING and sincere PRAYER. Once again fasting accompanied with heartfelt prayer brought results! YEHOVAH God heard and miraculously crushed several mighty armies by causing them to fall upon each other and DESTROY THEMSELVES!

5. Were the people also blessed with great riches after YEHOVAH defeated the enemy? **Verse 25.** How many days did it take them to cart off the spoils?

6. Did YEHOVAH God also strike great fear into the surrounding nations for Judah's future safety? **Verses 29-30.**

COMMENT: What a tremendous result of earnest fasting and sincere prayer! The chips were down -- the odds were against them. All looked hopeless -- but the entire nation turned to YEHOVAH God for help and He blessed them beyond their wildest expectations!

But how about YOU? When YOU are faced with a seemingly insurmountable problem, what do YOU do about it? Do you attempt to fight it with your own infinitesimal human strength? OR DO YOU SEEK YEHOVAH BY FASTING AND PRAYER? Do you FAST, and commit your problems into YEHOVAH's powerful hands?

YEHOVAH God is no respecter of persons. He will intervene for YOU as much as for King Jehoshaphat and Judah. If you HUMBLE yourself before YEHOVAH by FASTING and PRAY for His divine intervention and power, you ALSO will see your problems "fall upon each other" and DESTROY THEMSELVES!

A DOOMED City Spared!

1. Was the prophet Jonah commissioned by YEHOVAH God to take a warning message of impending doom and destruction to the SINNING people of Nineveh? **Jonah 1:1-2 and 3:4.**

2. How large was this leading Assyrian city of that time? **Jonah 3:3.**

COMMENT: A three days' journey meant that Nineveh was a huge, sprawling city. Jonah walked through this vast city, proclaiming the destruction YEHOVAH was to bring upon it because of its many sins. Jonah was taking a message directly from Almighty God to the SIN-LADEN, HAUGHTY peoples of this Assyrian metropolis.

3. Did the people of Nineveh BELIEVE



The site of ancient Nineveh. YEHOVAH God sent Jonah to warn this great Assyrian metropolis of its impending doom.

YEHOVAH's warning? **Jonah 3:5.** Was a FAST proclaimed for ALL the population? **Same verse.**

4. When the news of Jonah's dire message reached the king, did he command a COMPLETE FAST for EVERY LIVING THING in the city? **Jonah 3:6-7.** Did the king also order the people to turn from their evil ways -- to REPENT of the sins they were committing -- and PRAY for YEHOVAH's mercy? **Verses**

8-9.

COMMENT: The king was absolutely TERRIFIED by Jonah's message of impending doom! He began fasting himself and commanded EVERYONE else to fast -- INCLUDING ALL THE ANIMALS! This Gentile king MEANT BUSINESS!

And so the people of Nineveh followed the king's example and command -- they HUMBLISHED themselves before YEHOUVAH God by fasting and REPENTED of their sins.

5. Did YEHOUVAH God notice the people's fasting and repentance? **Verse 10, first part.** Did He therefore spare them in His mercy? **Same verse, last part.**

6. Did the Messiah mention this marvelous example of repentance to the self-righteous Pharisees? **Matthew 12:41.** In the Great White Throne Judgment resurrection, will the example of these people condemn the vain and haughty Pharisees for their rejection of the Messiah's warning to repent?

COMMENT: YEHOUVAH God withheld destruction from the great city of Nineveh because the people were willing to CHANGE THEIR WAYS! They believed YEHOUVAH's warning message and REPENTED of their sins. And they fasted in order to get off their "high horses" of vanity and show YEHOUVAH God they were in DEAD EARNEST about seeking His forgiveness and mercy!

YEHOUVAH God heard their sincere, earnest prayers and SPARED them!

The Judahites Learn a Lesson

Ezra was another man of YEHOUVAH God who knew the value of fasting. When the children of Judah were about to return from Babylon, he realized that many perils lay in their path. He was frightened lest enemies fall upon his defenceless group, slay them, and scatter them to the winds. Notice what he did.

1. Did Ezra order the people to FAST and PRAY to YEHOUVAH God for protection? **Ezra 8:21-22.** Did YEHOUVAH answer? **Verse 23.**

COMMENT: YEHOUVAH God heard and delivered them. He saw how sincere they were -- He saw their FASTING and heard their PRAYERS -- and He protected them!

2. Is this example, as well as others we've studied, for YOUR benefit -- for your learning and instruction? **Romans 15:4** and **I Corinthians 10:11.** Are you FOLLOWING IT?

3. How did Daniel, on a previous occasion, approach YEHOUVAH God when he desired SPECIAL UNDERSTANDING? **Daniel 9:3.** Also READ Daniel's prayer to YEHOUVAH in **verses 4-20.**

COMMENT: Daniel humbled himself before YEHOUVAH God by FASTING! He also confessed his sins and the sins of his people, and claimed YEHOUVAH's mercies and forgivenesses.

4. When his fervent prayer was ended, did the archangel Gabriel come to give him the understanding he sought? **Verses 21-23.**

5. Later, did Daniel once again seek special understanding by fasting and prayer? **Daniel 10: 2-3, 12.**

COMMENT: Daniel FASTED and PRAYED. He was "greatly beloved" because of his sincerely repentant and obedient attitude toward YEHOUVAH God. From the first day he began "chastening" himself WITH FASTING, his prayers were HEARD! YEHOUVAH sent the archangel Gabriel to reveal some of the most vital prophecies of the Bible!

YEHOUVAH's servants have always been FASTING servants! Fasting has helped to change their lives and has LITERALLY CHANGED HISTORY! Many times YEHOUVAH miraculously INTERVENED because His people FASTED!

They HUMBLISHED themselves by afflicting their bodies with fasting -- admitting that they were insufficient of themselves. They EXTOLLED YEHOUVAH'S GREATNESS, His divine might and power, and DEPENDED upon Him. They admitted their carnality and sinful human nature -- they FASTED AND REPENTED of their sins!

As a result, YEHOVAH heard their prayers and SUPERNATURALLY DELIVERED AND BLESSED THEM!

BUT WHAT ABOUT YOU?

Is fasting a part of YOUR Christian life?

What About YOU?

Does your life lack real SPIRITUAL IMPACT? Are you bogging down in countless problems, trials, difficulties and frustrations?

Then YOU NEED TO FAST!

If you have been drawing CLOSE TO YEHOVAH GOD by prayer, Bible study AND occasional FASTING as Yeshua the Messiah COMMANDS US to do, then you will be GROWING SPIRITUALLY!

You'll be conquering your human nature and learning to submit to the WILL OF YEHOVAH GOD. You will be receiving -- if you've been converted -- the POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT to zealously serve YEHOVAH God as you should! You'll be a spiritual MIGHTY MAN OR WOMAN OF VALOR, instead of a spiritual WEAKLING!

YEHOVAH exhorts YOU, and ALL Christians, "therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH FASTING, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your HEART, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for He is GRACIOUS AND MERCIFUL, SLOW TO ANGER, and of GREAT KINDNESS, and repenteth Him (or changes His mind) of the evil. Who knoweth if He will return and repent, and LEAVE A BLESSING behind Him ... ?" (Joel 2:12-14).

YEHOVAH has shown you His will about fasting. True Christians plainly NEED TO FAST! YOU have only YOURSELF to blame if you fail to obey YEHOVAH God in this vital point of His Word!

Write for: The Awesome Power of Earnest Prayer!

How NOT to Fast

Certain cautions need to be made plain, so that when you fast, it will NOT be IN VAIN.

Fasting is a PERSONAL matter. It is between YEHOVAH God and YOU! Others should not know you are fasting unless it is your mate or some other member of your family who is directly affected by your not eating. You should be especially careful not to fast as did the hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees.

1. What did the Messiah warn his disciples about INSINCERE fasting? **Matthew 6:16.**

COMMENT: The Scribes and Pharisees of the Messiah's day did not fast for the deep spiritual purpose that the Messiah intended. They fasted out of pure VANITY! They fasted to get the approbation of MEN -- not YEHOVAH God!

When they fasted, they deliberately let their hair hang down and would not wash their faces. They walked about the streets in a downcast, dejected manner with grimaces of pain written all over their faces -- all the time BRAGGING about their fasting.

These hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees were fasting to be SEEN OF MEN -- not YEHOVAH God! They wanted others to SEE them and say, "Oh, look at that poor fellow. He's FASTING!" These hypocrites hoped the people would think they were very RIGHTEOUS men.

The Pharisees were guilty of fasting INSINCERELY! The Messiah commands us NOT to fast in this manner.

2. How did Yeshua say we should fast? **Matthew 6:17-18.**

COMMENT: The Messiah tells us to WASH our faces and COMB our hair -- to SMILE when we fast. Why? Because your fasting is to be seen of YEHOVAH GOD -- not men!

3. Did YEHOVAH rebuke His ancient people for fasting in vain? **Zechariah 7:5-7.**

COMMENT: Fasting for VANITY IS AGELESS! Fasting -- yet not having your heart

set on returning to YEHOVAH God and drawing near to Him -- is futile.

Such a fast will do you no good whatsoever! And hypocritical fasting -- fasting to be seen of MEN -- is loathsome IN YEHOVAH'S SIGHT. YEHOVAH will turn away from anyone fasting in such a selfrighteous, insincere attitude. It is NOT well-pleasing to Him!

4. Did ancient Israel make a PRETENCE of seeking YEHOVAH God and His ways when they fasted? **Isaiah 58:2.**

COMMENT: With some today, fasting is a hypocritical parade -- a self-righteous display -- a "holier than thou" approach, even as it was with ancient Israel. IT IS NOT SINCERE REPENTANCE FROM THE HEART -- a sincere CHASTENING of the self!

5. What did the people answer YEHOVAH God in reply to His condemnation of their INSINCERITY in seeking Him? **Verse 3**, first part. Did YEHOVAH show them that their ATTITUDE in fasting was entirely wrong? **Verse 3**, last part and **verse 4**.

COMMENT: The Revised Standard Version makes **verse 4** much clearer: "Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice be heard on high." In other words, such a fast is futile -- VAIN!

Their attitude for fasting was not that of earnestly seeking YEHOVAH's will -- rather, the people were seeking their OWN LUSTFUL WILL! THEY WERE GUILTY OF FASTING INSINCERELY!

They did not desire to change their vile, sinful ways. They were merely fasting SELFISHLY to try to GET their OWN way. This is not the humble and contrite, or REPENTANT, attitude that YEHOVAH respects and accepts.

6. What else did YEHOVAH say about such hypocritical fasting? **Verse 5.**

COMMENT: Fasting for PENANCE --

merely as an act of contrition and suffering to get God to NOTICE YOU -- is loathsome to YEHOVAH God. Such insincere and self-righteous fasting is nothing more than just plain VAINTY!

7. What kind of fasting does YEHOVAH want -- what type of fast is well-pleasing in His sight? **Verses 6-7.**

COMMENT: "To loose the bands of wickedness" means to QUIT SINNING! Fasting to DRAW CLOSE TO YEHOVAH GOD and to purge your life of all sin -- learning to walk by YEHOVAH's living laws of joy and happiness -- is what YEHOVAH desires!

8. What blessings will YEHOVAH bestow upon those who fast and seek Him in the RIGHT ATTITUDE? **Verses 8-11.** Isn't this kind of fasting WORTHWHILE and WELL-PLEASING to YEHOVAH God?



Ritual crucifixion in the Philippines. Penance of any kind is loathsome to YEHOVAH God!

COMMENT: YEHOVAH wants to see a sincere, humble, SELF-SEARCHING fast. A fast during which one is striving to root out sin and is drawing CLOSE TO YEHOVAH God.

9. Will YEHOVAH hear the prayers of those who fast hypocritically? **Isaiah 59:2** and **Jeremiah 14:10, 12.**

COMMENT: YEHOVAH will not hear their prayers because they are NOT WILLING to put sin out of their lives. They want the blessings of YEHOVAH without putting out the

very agent -- SIN -- that CUTS THEM OFF from YEHOVAH and brings CURSES upon them!

When one seeks YEHOVAH God with PRAYER and FASTING, his whole intent should be that of meekly surrendering to YEHOVAH's will. Often this means a COMPLETE CHANGE in thoughts, attitudes, and habits. One must be willing to SURRENDER EVERYTHING TO YEHOVAH -- bringing every thought into captivity to Yeshua the Messiah (**II Corinthians 10:5**).

This is the kind of fasting YEHOVAH God RESPECTS and ACCEPTS.

How Long? and When?

The Bible does not set specific time limits for each kind of fasting, except for the Day of Atonement which is a commanded DAY-LONG fast -- from sunset to sunset -- as we already know.

David fasted for SEVEN DAYS when his child by Bathsheba was sick unto death (**II Samuel 12:16-18**), doing without nourishment of any kind. But this was a very SERIOUS matter. David had committed an ENORMOUS SIN in YEHOVAH's sight! He knew he had to TOTALLY REPENT and have his heart cleaned up by the spirit of YEHOVAH God (**Psalms 51:1-19**).

Generally speaking, fasting for spiritual reasons may be from one to three days. If the problem is serious, or the need URGENT, it certainly would not be wrong to fast longer. But in the case of longer fasts, GREAT CARE needs to be maintained!

Moses, Elijah, and the Messiah himself are the only three examples in the Bible where a servant of YEHOVAH God fasted FORTY DAYS. They had very SPECIAL missions to perform and had to prepare themselves with prolonged fasting and prayer. But such fasting for this degenerate age is absolutely NOT advisable for you, OR ANYONE ELSE!!

Fasting MUST NOT BE CONTINUED TOO LONG!

An UNWISE, OVER-LENGTHY FAST CAN PROVE FATAL!

Moses, Elijah, and the Messiah were able to fast forty days. They were physically in far better and stronger condition than most of us today. It would be almost totally impossible for a person today to fast forty days without food and water and NOT DIE!

SUCH A FAST WOULD BE MOST UNWISE FOR YOU!

NEVER GO TO EXTREMES! Generally, one to three days' fasting is enough.

But WHEN should you fast?

A one-day fast may be taken anytime during the week. But if your work is strenuous and you feel fasting would hinder you in your job, perhaps Sunday would be the best time.

While working at your job, it usually will not be possible to fast much more than a day or two at a time. During such fasts you should utilize the normal mealtime for sincere, heart-rending PRAYERS TO YEHOVAH GOD -- devoted to the specific reasons for fasting.

If you feel the need for a longer fast from time to time, you can use the opportunities that vacations and certain "days off" afford us. There will certainly be times during the year when you may employ several days in a row for fasting.

If you contemplate a three-day fast, you might find it more convenient to fast over the weekend. A fast from Friday through Sunday will not generally interfere greatly with one's work. And during the weekend you will also have MORE TIME to draw close to YEHOVAH God through BIBLE STUDY and PRAYER.

One caution needs to be observed, however. Since the Sabbath is a HOLY DAY of YEHOVAH God and a FEAST DAY, it is not generally advisable to spend the Sabbath fasting. But on certain occasions it is permissible, especially if the spiritual problem is URGENT. However, since the Sabbath IS a feast, you should NOT make it your CONSTANT ROUTINE to fast every Sabbath!

If you ever think you should fast for LONGER than three days, you should definitely

seek WISE COUNSEL PRIOR TO ATTEMPTING SUCH A LENGTHY FAST! (Some may also need to seek advice if they plan to fast more than ONE day -- depending on their health.) If you have ANY QUESTIONS about fasting, be sure to consult one of YEHOVAH's ministers and/or a medical doctor.

Learn to Fast Progressively

Some may have to learn to fast PROGRESSIVELY and gradually work up to fasting for one or more days at a time.

A good way to begin is to make the positive decision to fast for ONE MEAL. YOU might decide that breakfast would be the meal to begin with.

The procedure, then, would be to go to bed the previous night with the POSITIVE REALIZATION that the following morning you are going to put away the temptation and desire to eat and drink according to your regular routine. Put yourself in the positive mental attitude that you NEED TO DRAW CLOSER TO YEHOVAH GOD!

When morning comes, go about your normal routine of dressing and grooming for the day -- all the while realizing that it is NOT just the normal routine, but rather a time when you are giving special attention to AFFLICTING your body -- humbling yourself before YEHOVAH God.

When the time comes for the usual morning meal, devote that time to prayer in place of satisfying your physical hunger and thirst. During this prayer ask YEHOVAH to help you draw closer to Him and DRINK IN of His holy spirit.

Next time you decide to fast, go without eating for TWO meals, again spending your normal mealtime in prayer to YEHOVAH. Finally, the next time go without food and drink for a full TWENTY-FOUR HOURS! That way you will have gradually accustomed yourself to fasting.

By learning to fast progressively, you'll find that fasting for a day or two is not as difficult

as you may have thought -- especially if you have your mind on the PURPOSE of fasting and are spending your time properly!

One person I know has a routine which he often follows while fasting which is excellent -- regardless of the specific spiritual purpose for fasting. During the waking hours of the fast, this person will spend ONE HOUR in fervent prayer to YEHOVAH God, utilize the NEXT HOUR in Bible study and then follow the THIRD HOUR with meditation and reflection upon the things studied, and the lessons to be learned.

During the meditation period, he will sometimes take an invigorating walk -- preferably in an area where he can be near to YEHOVAH's creation.

By following such a routine, one will quickly find himself much CLOSER to YEHOVAH God and filled with the SPIRITUAL POWER necessary to cope with the problems at hand.

Anyone who has learned to fast knows that one experiences a depth of understanding and a profound closeness to YEHOVAH in fasting that can not be experienced in any other way. Following a routine such as the man above often follows in fasting can be the means for many to conquer obstacles in their Christian lives that cannot be mastered in any other way!

How Often Should We Fast?

Nowhere in the Bible do we have an exact statement of how OFTEN we should fast -- except, of course, once a year on the Day of Atonement. Yet we have several EXAMPLES which will help us to understand how often WE should practice fasting in our lives.

I. Did the apostle Paul fast OFTEN? II Corinthians 11:27.

COMMENT: Paul had no specific command in the Old Testament teaching him how often to fast. However, Paul was acutely aware of the race he was running and how DILIGENTLY he needed to strive to overcome himself and enter YEHOVAH's Kingdom. He

considered it necessary to FAST OFTEN -- even in the face of the trials and afflictions he constantly endured -- to maintain the SPIRITUAL STRENGTH necessary to serve and obey YEHOVAH God.

2. Did the "Gentile" (Israelite), Cornelius, obviously fast quite often? **Acts 10:1-2, 30-32**. Was he therefore selected by YEHOVAH God to be the first "Gentile" of the House of Israel to receive the gospel and the holy spirit? **Acts 10:34, 44-45** and **11:18**.

COMMENT: Cornelius lived such a life of service and overcoming before YEHOVAH God, that the apostle Peter was sent to him to expound the gospel of the Kingdom and BAPTIZE him and his repentant family. It is most significant that Cornelius had been praying and FASTING when YEHOVAH decided to send Peter.

3. Have we seen that the prophet Daniel CHASTENED himself a great deal by fasting OFTEN? **Daniel 9:3** and **10:2-3**.

COMMENT: We have seen that fasting played a vital part in the lives of those YEHOVAH used down through history. From these examples, the principle we should apply in determining how often to fast should be based upon the NEEDS IN OUR LIVES.

The PURPOSE of fasting, as it is amply demonstrated in YEHOVAH's Word, is not to punish ourselves as a form of penance, but to HUMBLE ourselves and DRAW CLOSER TO YEHOVAH IN PRAYER! Therefore we should fast FREQUENTLY enough and LONG enough to keep ourselves CLOSE TO YEHOVAH GOD -- in the vital spiritual condition that will enable us to overcome and endure to the end.

Everyone of us wants to live the vital, progressive and growing SPIRITUAL life of a dedicated Christian. Therefore the Messiah has placed fasting at our disposal as a vital tool and key to overcoming.

Fasting should become a VERY REAL PART OF OUR LIVES!

We can fall short of the tremendous goal

and reward YEHOVAH God has prepared for us if we NEGLECT TO UTILIZE this vital tool!

Follow YEHOVAH's Directions -- You Won't "Starve"!

Some few who have never fasted are FEARFUL of fasting. Their dilemma occurs because of a misunderstanding of the word "fast." They confuse fasting with "starvation"! This is a totally wrong concept. Fasting is NOT STARVATION!

When you fast your body automatically cuts in and utilizes a reserve fuel supply. You need not worry about starvation when fasting. Most people use this false scare as an EXCUSE for NOT fasting.

There is not one single case recorded in the Bible of a person dying as a result of fasting as YEHOVAH directed. But there are many recorded examples of people who would have been SAVED if they had fasted!

There is no excuse or reason for anyone in NORMAL GOOD HEALTH to be fearful of fasting. YEHOVAH hasn't commanded you to do anything that's harmful to your body if you're in GOOD HEALTH TO BEGIN WITH! (However, if you want to fast, but have a health problem which might be aggravated by fasting -- such as DIABETES -- be sure to get expert advice before fasting.)

Fasting is not intended to get your mind on yourself and how you might "starve" to death! The idea is ridiculous. Rather, get your mind OFF YOUR FEARS AND ON THE POWER OF THE CREATOR GOD! DON'T BE AFRAID TO FAST!

Now here are some perfectly NORMAL REACTIONS in your body which you can expect to experience while fasting -- reactions which are GOOD FOR YOU.

The most common sensation experienced when one first begins fasting is the churning of the stomach. But this will stop after a short time. The stomach is merely doing some ADJUSTING since it isn't receiving any food.

During a fast some encounter a slight headache for a while. This is due to the poisons in your system that the body is throwing off. During a fast, especially of several days duration, a **CHEMICAL HOUSECLEANING WILL** take place. IF YOU don't have a headache, then you may have a "thick" feeling in your head for a while at the beginning of the fast, which will gradually disappear.

After missing a few meals you will begin to feel a little weak. This is only normal and natural since no food or drink is entering the stomach. As mentioned before, if you have a job where heavy work requires a great deal of energy, then it would be wise to fast when you have some time off from work.

When you feel a little weak during a fast, realize that YEHOVAH God wants you to learn by this that you're a physical, earthy being. That your temporary **PHYSICAL** life is totally dependent on the physical food you eat!

By analogy, the same is true **SPIRITUALLY**. Without receiving YEHOVAH's **SPIRITUAL ENERGY** through His holy spirit, you become weak spiritually. That is the great lesson God wants you to learn when you feel physically weak from not eating.

So once you've started a fast -- **TRY TO STICK WITH IT!** Don't quit fasting because you feel a little **WEAK** -- YEHOVAH wants you to realize how weak you become spiritually **WITHOUT** His divine power!

Other Reasons for Fasting

Many times in our lives we are faced with making important **DECISIONS** which affect our lives, and possibly the lives of others. YEHOVAH tells us to seek wise counsel and a multitude of counselors in making such decisions (**Proverbs 11:14**).

YEHOVAH GOD is our greatest Counselor. We should seek Him diligently for wisdom in any decision we must reach.

There can be no better way to seek YEHOVAH's counsel and wisdom than by **FAST-**

ING and **PRAYER!** If we begin to fast when there is an important decision to be made, and cry out to YEHOVAH for wisdom, He will surely give it to us.

1. What example do we find in the Bible of fasting and prayer **BEFORE** an important decision had to be made? **Acts 13:1-3**.

COMMENT: In the Church at Antioch, a decision had to be made as to who would be sent on an evangelistic journey into Asia Minor. Notice that they **FASTED** and **PRAYED** and YEHOVAH revealed **HIS** selection to His ministers through the holy spirit!

2. On what other important occasion did YEHOVAH's ministers **FAST** and **PRAY**? **Acts 14:23**.

COMMENT: Again we clearly see that before elders were ordained in the Churches in Asia Minor, the evangelists and ministers prayed to YEHOVAH God with **FASTING**, before coming to their all-important decision.

There are still other reasons for **FASTING**. If you've made a wretched failure in something -- humble yourself before YEHOVAH God and ask His forgiveness and pray for His power to overcome.

If you discover that your attitude is **LETHARGIC** and you just can't seem to pray as you should -- then **FAST AND PRAY!** That's the way to draw **CLOSE** to YEHOVAH God. If you feel your prayers aren't being heard, that is the time to **HUMBLE** yourself before YEHOVAH. YEHOVAH **HEARS** the humble and contrite -- the repentant in attitude.

The time you really need to fast -- and **QUICKLY** -- is when you've realized that you have **STRAYED** from YEHOVAH, or **DESPERATELY** need his **HELP!**

Of course, there will be times when you'll need to **HUMBLE** yourself and **PRAY** for YEHOVAH's Work and His ministers. And there'll be times when you should fast and pray for **OTHER** individuals and their problems as David did (**Psalms 35:13**).

But you can also fast in order to **PRAISE** YEHOVAH -- to give Him **THANKS** for calling

you into the knowledge of His truth. When you fast, it need not always be when you're facing a great problem, but simply to say "Thank you" for all of YEHOVAH's abundant blessings!

So the next time you need special help to overcome a serious problem, to make an important decision in your life, or when you're really concerned for someone else's difficulties -- FAST. FAST AND PRAY!

CRY OUT TO YEHOVAH GOD WITH ALL YOUR BEING! Draw close to YEHOVAH with fasting and prayer and He will hear!

Fast and Pray for Spiritual Power

When was the last time you fasted? Do you just fast "once a year" -- on the Day of Atonement when YEHOVAH God COMMANDS it? If so, YEHOVAH knows how spiritually WEAK YOU really are! You may not REALIZE it -- but it's true!

The longer you go without fasting, the further you tend to drift away from the reality of YEHOVAH God and His GREAT POWER! The further you drift from a close, INTIMATE CONTACT with Almighty God. And the WEAKER YOU become spiritually!

YOU NEED TO FAST! YOU need to seek YEHOVAH God and draw close to Him by FASTING AND PRAYER!

If you draw close to YEHOVAH, acknowledge your NEED for Him, and depend on Him -- He will strengthen you by FILLING YOU WITH HIS HOLY SPIRIT! He will give you the SPIRIT OF POWER, LOVE AND A SOUND MIND (**II Timothy 1:7**). You'll receive His joy, peace, patience, gentleness, humility, faith and self-control (**Galatians 5:22-23**).

YEHOVAH will literally INSPIRE YOU WITH HIS HOLY SPIRIT!

Notice now what the Messiah says to you.

1. Even while you are going without physical food and drink, how will you be receiving eternal, SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT?

John 7:37-39. Do you also receive spiritual "food" through the study of YEHOVAH's Word when fasting? **Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4** and **John 6:63.**

COMMENT: By fasting, studying the Bible and praying, you recharge your "spiritual batteries," so to speak, by receiving MORE of YEHOVAH's holy spirit. You receive SPIRITUAL POWER from YEHOVAH God!

2. At one point during his ministry, a man came to the Messiah's disciples and asked them to cast a demon out of his son. They couldn't do it (**Mark 9:17-18**). But when the Messiah appeared on the scene, how did he rebuke the foul spirit? **Verse 25.** Did the demon leave? **Verses 26-27.** What did Yeshua tell his disciples when they wondered why THEY couldn't cast this wicked spirit out? **Verse 29.**

COMMENT: Because Yeshua was close to the Father through MUCH PRAYER and FASTING, he received the SPIRITUAL POWER necessary to cast out this particularly obstinate and rebellious demon!

3. Did the Messiah admit he could do NO spiritual works OF HIMSELF? **John 5:30.** Then WHERE did the Messiah say the spiritual power he demonstrated time and again really came from? **John 14:10.**

COMMENT: Yeshua received SPIRITUAL POWER from YEHOVAH God the Father to do mighty miracles and accomplish the work of YEHOVAH God -- because he FASTED AND PRAYED A GREAT DEAL!

You ALSO can receive that spiritual power. By drawing close to YEHOVAH God with PRAYER and FASTING, YOU can receive new vigor, enthusiasm, spiritual steadfastness and REAL POWER!

Fasting can help CHANGE YOUR APPROACH TO YEHOVAH GOD, broaden your horizons and fill you with greater faith. Fasting will not only cause you to be more THANKFUL for the blessings of YEHOVAH God -- the little things like food and drink -- but it can help change your entire approach and OUTLOOK TOWARD EVERYTHING!

Fasting and prayer can literally ALTER AND CHANGE YOUR WHOLE LIFE!

Fast SOON!

Do you want YEHOVAH God to intervene on YOUR behalf? Do you really want to RECEIVE MORE of the holy spirit? Do you desire to have close, INTIMATE CONTACT with your Heavenly Father, who bestows every good and perfect gift?

Do you desire to have greater spiritual POWER and IMPACT in your Christian life? Do you want to be FILLED with the spirit of YEHOVAH God -- the spirit of love, POWER and sound-mindedness?

DO YOU DESIRE to WALK WITH YEHOVAH GOD?

Then FOLLOW THE EXAMPLES set for you in YEHOVAH's Word! Seek YEHOVAH God by chastening and humbling yourself before Him with FASTING!

Remember the examples of Moses, David, Jehoshaphat, Daniel, and the nation of Judah in Ezra's time. Remember the New Testament examples of Yeshua the Messiah and Paul! Remember the very words of the Messiah, speaking to you and me:

"THE DAYS WILL COME, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and THEN SHALL THEY FAST IN THOSE DAYS" (**Mark 2:20**).

If you will obey the Messiah, and seek YEHOVAH God by fasting whenever you need to, your life will be MIRACULOUSLY CHANGED! You'll be blessed beyond your ability to comprehend. You will be blessed with spiritual love, CLOSENESS TO YEHOVAH GOD, and DYNAMIC SPIRITUAL POWER!

Additional Reading...

The Peril of False Repentance

Prayer Cloths and Special Miracles

NOTES:

Answers to Questions in Lesson 34:

1. spiritual
2. strength, utter fearlessness
3. Yes.
4. White.
5. To protect visitors from becoming unclean.
6. purity and righteousness.
7. No
8. symbol of Christian triumph.
9. Yes.
10. Stepha.nos and di.edema.
11. diadem (di.edema) of power and rulership.
12. preaching of the true Gospel message.
13. YEHOVAH's Word.
14. the judgments of YEHOVAH God.
15. The House of Israel and the House of Judah.
16. dispersed Israelites.

NOTES:

Check Your Progress...

Question 1: Is fasting a form of penance, done because we are sorry we have human nature? _____

Question 2: Fasting should always be accompanied by _____

Question 3: When all Nineveh fasted and repented, YEHOVAH _____ that great city.

Question 4: What is an attitude of mind that YEHOVAH desires to see in us? _____

Question 5: Does YEHOVAH God always hear the prayers of those who are truly humble in His sight? _____

Question 6: Had the Messiah succumbed to Satan's temptations, he would have _____ himself from ever becoming our Savior and High Priest.

Question 7: What does the phrase "afflict one's soul" mean in the Bible? _____

Question 8: Was it necessary for the disciples to fast while the Messiah was still with them? _____

Question 9: How often should we fast? _____

Question 10: How long should one fast? _____

Question 11: Can fasting and prayer literally alter and change your whole life? _____

Question 12: How can you become stronger spiritually and have more of YEHOVAH's faith? _____

Question 13: You may have a _____ the first day of your fast due to poisons in your system being expelled by the body.

Question 14: What does it mean to "loose the bands of wickedness"? _____

Question 15: Did the apostle Paul fast often, thus setting us an example? _____

The answers will be found in the next lesson. Approximately 3 weeks after receiving Lessons 33-36, you will receive a mail-in test that covers these four lessons. The test will be returned to you after grading. Following the completion of the Hope of Israel Bible Correspondence Course you will receive a **Certificate of Completion**. If you complete the course with a grade of 75% or better you will also receive an **Outstanding Student Award**.

