



Shalom and welcome to my little place in Jerusalem!

Is Your Godly Imagination Starved?

This is a question posed by Oswald Chambers in his classic daily devotional, *My Utmost for His Highest* (Feb 10th). He draws attention to the prophet Isaiah's exhortation, in chapter 40, v. 26, "Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these?" Chambers then notes: "The people of God in Isaiah's day had starved their imagination by looking at the face of idols." Isaiah was challenging them to turn their focus, and their imagination, back to God.

Today, in our modern times, the prophet also exhorts us to take note of the splendor of the heavens and, by extension, all of Creation. This should stir the spirit and imagination of people enough to prompt us to ask, "What is their Source? Who created all these wonders?"

When we lift our eyes, and minds and thoughts, to Him, we discover the Creator; and the fact that He is not some amorphous Force, nor a distant Being or demiurge who is coldly aloof and disconnected from Creation. He is intimately involved; in particular with mankind, each of whom is created in His image.

We discover that when we call to Him, He responds. In fact, we find that He has been pursuing us on every step we have taken through life - longing, and patiently waiting, for us to stop, to look and to turn to Him with eyes wide open, and to finally see Him.

In order to do this we must look up! This requires us to wrest our gaze from the worldly things, that unceasingly and blatantly demand our attention, and to focus instead on the things of God. We can start with the simple, everyday details of God's creation around us - the wonder of the moon and the stars in the heavens, the birds and creatures, the flowers and trees.

Chambers offers us this beautiful description:

Nature to a saint [a tzaddik] is sacramental. ...In every wind that blows, in every night and day of the year...in every blossoming and withering of the earth, there is a real coming of God to us if we will simply use our starved imaginations to realize it.

God is the Master-artist, who reveals something of Himself to us in the beauty of His Creation.

Recently, I came across an article that references a Bill McKibben who records how he spent a week alone in the mountains. He experienced himself as small and yet connected to something large and awe-inspiring. He felt there was a purpose to his existence. When he came down he was calm and clear-thinking. Once home, he watched Cable TV for a week, at the end of which he was feeling agitated, unfocussed and desperately alone. This seems to emphasize how our connection with, and appreciation of, Creation somehow deepens our connection and relationship with God Himself.

I love a saying that is attributed to that great and historic surveyor of the heavens - Galileo Galilei. He observed:

The sun, with all those planets revolving around it and dependent upon it, can still ripen a bunch of grapes as if it had nothing else in the universe to do!

Such is the way of our God towards us!

Part of our human ailment is that we can become slaves to our daily, physical demands, to-do lists and timetables, only to discover that we are trapped in a lifestyle that has become a 'prison' - a very bleak and narrow place.

Our Creator's purpose, for this great gift of Life He has given us, is to allow all the potential He has placed within us to blossom and grow and to bear fruit. Our mission is to find and to fulfill the unique purpose He has for each of us - the 'something' that only you can do for His glory and for the extension of His Kingdom on earth. Our quest, then, is to move forward in His Divine purposes, that which enables us, spiritually, to spiral upwards - to become clearer in vision, stronger, an more Messiah-like in character, and to draw ever closer to the Holy of Holies, the intimacy of His Presence.

When we forget that this is the goal and purpose of our journey through life, we run the risk of wandering aimlessly around in circles - albeit it often comfortable and pleasure-seeking circles! Our gaze becomes focussed on meaningless idols and our hearts are drawn away from God. Life is not static and, so, spiritually we begin to spiral downwards. We lose spiritual awareness, and the flame of passion for God in our heart of hearts grows dim. Our Godly imagination becomes starved and we stray from His "highway of holiness" - His paths of righteousness - and we go our own way. Sooner or later we find ourselves in the constraints of a spiritual dungeon - dark and alone.

The good news is the gift of Repentance - *teshuvah*. Turning from sin, as did the prodigal son, and returning to our loving and merciful Father.

As the apostle Paul reminds us, in Romans chapter 8:

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Messiah Yeshua. For God ... By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the Torah might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

Further good news, according to the Word of Truth He has given us, is that our Father has set in place His calendar, a yearly cycle that guides us, His people, in His paths of righteousness and details specific times of meeting with Him. When we show up, we experience the joy of His Presence, the refreshment He offers, and the depth of instruction He has to share - as well as guidance for the next step of the journey! Why is this biblical calendar so important?

Time is a vital element of Creation, and the first thing God called *Kadosh* - holy. He instituted the reality of time and set in place the sun and the moon whereby the days and months could be measured. Then, He rested on the seventh day and proclaimed that this day would be the completion of Creation and the “Crown” of a week ; thereby setting in place the seven day unit of time.

God’s biblical cycle of time includes both historic, linear time and cyclical, spiritual time. By keeping the appointments that He has made with us, His children, and participating with Him in them, we fuse the two aspects of time together and can enjoy the benefits of both.

Over the course of history, the annual, biblical Feasts have been viewed by Christians as strictly “Jewish” celebrations. In our day, however, the realization is dawning, more and more clearly, that these are the appointed Feasts of **all** the redeemed of the God of Israel. Yeshua himself observed them as paths, or cycles, of righteousness and said, “Walk after Me!” At the same time, in modern history, as well as the many who have remained faithful to the ways of God, more and more Jews are being drawn by the Shepherd of our souls to Repentance and to return to the Ancient Paths. One can consider, with Godly imagination, that this might be a good place for the two flocks of the Shepherd to meet!

So, dear friends, be encouraged to pursue our Creator and to walk in His holy Ancient Paths, which, with a little Godly imagination, we find are as new, and fresh, and invigorating as the dawn of a new day!

Shalom, Shalom from my Little Place in Jerusalem!

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