

How is your hedge?

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Over the last couple weeks, I discussed the significance of the Sabbath and being set apart. That has been especially important to remember during the pagan festival seasons of the winter solstice that just passed.

Along the way, we have also discussed things such as spiritual warfare, and the Hebrew concept of binding and loosing. If you missed these, I have posted them on the shemayisrael.net website.

I was thinking this past week about certain notions of spiritual warfare that I learned in Christianity, and one of them involved praying a hedge of protection.

The prayer would go something like this. "Lord, we pray that you place a hedge of protection around (fill in the blank)."

The intention was to invoke a supernatural forcefield against evil through a simple prayer.

This is another example of how Christianity often spiritualizes and simplifies something that is supposed to be lived, expressed and experienced in the physical realm.

Of course, when we refer to a hedge, we are talking about supernatural protection. That spiritual issue is described in a very concrete way. That is the nature of eastern thought and the Hebrew language.

A hedge in Hebrew is known as a “sukh,” and it generally refers to a row of thickets. Predators will typically not try to cross a hedge of thorns, for obvious reasons, if it is thick enough and high enough. So, erecting a hedge is a traditional method of protecting a person and their flocks from harm.

Now we don’t actually want thorny thickets to surround us. We want YHWH to protect us, like a hedge of thorns.

So we definitely want a “spiritual” hedge around us, the question is how? Does a simple prayer result in the construction of a hedge?

Often times we ask for things without realizing that we have a role to play in the request.

For instance, a person might say they believe in God, but if you ask them if they obey the Commandments, their response would probably be “no - because I’m not under the law.”

Of course, this flies in the face of the Scriptural understanding of belief, because belief is always accompanied by action and specifically obedience.

James specifically stated “show me your faith and I’ll show you my works – faith without works is dead.” In other words, our faith will be demonstrated by how we live our lives. (see James 2)

We saw that in the life of Abraham. He “believed” (aman), and it was accounted to him for righteousness. (Genesis 15:6)

Of course, the hallmark of Abraham's life was his journey of faith from Babylon to the Promised Land.

Sadly, there are many people who confess that they believe in the Messiah and love Him, but they do not express their belief through their actions.

Yahushua specifically stated: *"If you love Me, keep My Commandments."* John 14:15

So, obviously, if you believe Him, then you will obey Him - it's that simple.

I mention this simple example because it demonstrates the disconnect between many Christians and the Commandments.

You probably could get a Christian to admit that they should obey the 10 Commandments. But if you asked them whether they displayed the sign of the Covenant by resting on the seventh day Sabbath the answer would likely involve some excuse why they don't. "Sunday is now the sabbath . . . every day is the sabbath . . . Jesus is my sabbath . . . etc, etc."

So, the trend is toward excusing away most, if not all of the Commandments.

So, what about this hedge?

I remember praying a hedge of protection around my family many times in the past, without ever really understanding what that meant.

I thought that if I prayed it, then it would just happen. Somehow angels would appear and construct a perimeter fence around my

home in the spirit realm so that no evil entities could cross over and wreak havoc upon my household.

Well, that is not how the Scriptures describe a hedge.

We were actually given an example of a set apart hedged in property in the Garden of Eden.

We know that the Hebrew word “Eden” means “paradise.” The fact that it was described as a garden is a very significant. The Hebrew word for “garden” is “gan,” and it specifically refers to a “enclosed or protected space.”

Anyone who has a garden understands that you need to protect it from outside invaders and weeds that grow up in the midst of it, stealing precious resources that help bear fruit. In fact, if you want to talk about spiritual lessons for our physical existence, gardening is at the top of the list.

That is why YHWH Elohim placed man in a garden in the beginning. I believe that man’s ultimate purpose extended beyond the confines of the Garden, but the Garden was the place of preparation. I like to think of it as the “capital” of the Kingdom of YHWH here on earth - like Jerusalem.

The mandate was to tame and populate the planet, while maintaining a safe and protected space in the Garden. (Genesis 1:28)

Obedience kept it that way.

Now the assumption is that the Man and the Woman somehow failed to watch over the Garden, but could it be that YHWH allowed them to be tested by the serpent (nachash)?

Consider the example of another man who was hedged in. A man named Job.

“⁶ Now there was a day when the sons of Elohim came to present themselves before YHWH, and ha’shatan also came among them. ⁷ And YHWH said to ha’shatan, ‘From where do you come?’

*So ha’shatan answered YHWH and said, ‘From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.’ ⁸ Then YHWH said to ha’shatan, ‘Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears Elohim and shuns evil?’ ⁹ So ha’shatan answered YHWH and said, ‘Does Job fear Elohim for nothing? ¹⁰ **Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.**” Job 1:6-10*

Notice how YHWH describes Job. We see here another example of resumption repetition as it mirrors the description at the beginning of the text.

We should therefore pay special attention to the character of this man described as *“blameless and upright, and one who feared Elohim and shunned evil.”* Job 1:1

The Hebrew word “tam” is defined as “blameless.” It can also mean “finished, fulfilled and completed.” This is the same word used to describe Noah. (see Genesis 6:9)

The Hebrew word “yashar” is defined as “upright.” It can also mean “straight and pleasing.” This is linked with a definition of Yisrael (Yisra’el) – the straight ones of El.

So Job, like Noah, walked the straight and the narrow. The fact that he feared Elohim means that He followed the Commandments. And yes, the Commandments existed before Mount Sinai.

The righteous line always knew what pleased Elohim, and those who feared YHWH walked according to His commands and instructions.

We talked about Job a little while ago, and it is interesting how we have come full circle in this continuing discussion involving spiritual warfare.

There is no doubt that Elohim provides a hedge against the enemy. He may remove that hedge to allow testing, but the existence of that hedge typically depends upon a persons' walk.

If we fear Elohim and shun evil, we should expect a hedge around us. As we live set apart lives, we place ourselves within the protection of YHWH. He becomes our "strong tower" and our "shield."

That is why we are supposed to wear reminders of the Commandments in the form of tzitzit, and literally write them on the door posts of our houses, and on our gates. These are physical actions and objects that keep our attention focused on the Commandments, and remind us of the purpose of those Commandments.

Now these objects, by themselves, do not make us set apart. They remind us, so that we live set apart lives, and we do that by obeying the Commandments.

Not only that, we are supposed to speak of the Commandments continually, so we stay focused on the straight path and remain "upright".

Ultimately, the Words are supposed to be written on our hearts and in our minds so that we walk in them and remain “blameless.”

So, YHWH provides the hedge, and we must stay within the hedge. We must continually watch and guard, and that is what the Torah is there for.

The Garden was the pattern, and YHWH describes His relationship with His people in terms of a vineyard.

“¹ Now let me sing to my Well-beloved a song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: My Well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill. ² He dug it up and cleared out its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, and also made a winepress in it. So He expected it to bring forth good grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes. ³ And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, please, between Me and My vineyard. ⁴ What more could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, Did it bring forth wild grapes? ⁵ And now, please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned; and break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.” Isaiah 5:1-5

This is an image of the garden that YHWH prepares for His people. Notice that it has a “tower” in the midst. In Hebrew we read “migdal” which literally means “watchtower”.

Again, the garden must be tended, but is also must be guarded. As we guard the Commandments, they guard us. We remain within the hedge as we obey. If we bear fruit, then YHWH maintains the hedge. If we fail to bear fruit, He will remove the hedge.

This is the message that we read in the Scriptures from beginning to end - from the Garden to the Renewed Jerusalem.

YHWH entrusts certain individuals to care for what ultimately belongs to Him. Adam and Hawah did not own the Garden. It belonged to YHWH. Likewise, Yisrael did not own the Covenant Land. YHWH allowed them to dwell there as long as they obeyed Him. This is a fact that Zionists completely ignore.

He essentially “leases” the Land as we saw from the Jubilee. No one ever owns the Land, they are there with permission from the owner. If they abuse the privilege, they will be forced to leave.

The Jewish people have no inherent right or entitlement to live in the Land outside of the Covenant.

Yahushua came and renewed the broken Covenant. What was once entrusted to Adam, and later Yisrael, now belongs to Him. All of it – the entire planet. Now He gets to choose who dwells in it, and on it.

This is the point that Yahushua was driving home in the following parable that He spoke to the priests and elders of Judah.

“³³ Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. ³⁴ Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. ³⁵ And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. ³⁶ Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. ³⁷ Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ ³⁸ But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.’ ³⁹ So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. ⁴⁰ Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers? ⁴¹ They said to Him, He will destroy

those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons. ⁴² Yahushua said to them, Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was YHWH's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? ⁴³ Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of Elohim will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. ⁴⁴ And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder. ⁴⁵ Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them." Matthew 21:33-45

Ultimately, YHWH owns it all, and He has given it to His Son. The Son represents the Father perfectly.

In fact, Yahushua specifically stated: *"He who has seen Me has seen the Father."* John 14:9

He also stated: *"I and My Father are One."* John 10:30

So, their message is the same. Yahushua did not change any of the Commandments of the Father. He was very clear on that point.

"¹⁷ Do not think that I came to destroy the Torah or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. ¹⁸ For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the Torah till all is fulfilled." Matthew 5:17-18

YHWH owns the vineyard. He set up the hedge and built a tower. He has entrusted us to be "vinedressers" and bear much fruit.

The only way that we can do this is to keep close watch over it, and guard His Commandments. He gives specific instructions that we must obey if we want to stay within the protection of His hedge.

If you are in the midst of battle and your commander yells out “hit the deck and keep your head down,” I suspect you will obey. He’s trying to save your life.

If you stand up and start charging the enemy alone, then you have no one to blame but yourself if you get shot.

YHWH is often described as “YHWH of Hosts (tzeva’ot).” The Hebrew word “tzeva’ot” refers to armies and war. YHWH is the head of an army that He leads into battle. He is our Commander and Chief - not Joe Biden or Donald Trump.

It is not just in battle that we need to obey YHWH though. His Commandments are made for everyday life.

For instance, He gives us very specific instructions regarding what to eat and what not to eat. He actually defines what is food. Just because you put something in your mouth doesn’t mean that it is food.

People eat a lot of things that YHWH forbids, and then end up with all sorts of sickness and disease.

That is why He promises health as a benefit of obedience. Our obedience to the dietary instructions leads to health and provides a hedge.

Don’t expect to eat unclean food all your life, and then go to a Benny Hinn Crusade to get healed when you get sick. You have stepped outside of the hedge.

In fact, some sickness and disease is directly tied to sin.

Remember when Yahushua healed the man at the Pool of Bethesda. He later told him *“see, you have been made well. Sin no more lest a worse thing come upon you.”* (see John 5:1-14)

The implication is that the “infirmity” was the result of sin, and if he continued in that sin, it would get worse.

That reminds us of a teaching that Yahushua gave concerning unclean spirits.

“⁴³ When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. ⁴⁴ Then he says, I will return to my house from which I came. And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. ⁴⁵ Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation.” Matthew 12:43-45

So, it is possible that the man who was healed allowed an unclean spirit to bring on an infirmity through sin. He had no hedge of protection, because he was not blameless and upright. Therefore, if he continued to sin, the door would remain open, and the spirit could freely return.

Indeed, we see other examples of sickness being the result of unclean spirits. Take for instance, the incident involving the epileptic boy.

“¹⁴ And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, ¹⁵ Master, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. ¹⁶ So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him. ¹⁷ Then Yahushua answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me. ¹⁸ And Yahushua rebuked the demon,

and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour.”
Matthew 17:14-18

Notice that Yahushua didn't bind the demon. He rebuked it. The epilepsy was caused by a demon, and when the demon was gone, the boy was cured.

It is sad how many people are given a “prescription” for something that requires rebuking. They take a pharmaceutical drug which probably just keeps the door open, rather than cleaning house and mending the breach in the hedge. Now there's some spiritual warfare for you, if you get my drift.

The bottom line is that we all need a hedge to surround us. YHWH is the One Who provides the hedge, but we play a part.

We don't just pray for a hedge of protection. We recognize the hedge that YHWH provides for His people, and then we stay within that hedge by living set apart lives.

The Sabbath is a weekly reminder as the people of Elohim observe *“the Sabbath of YHWH in all your dwellings.”* Leviticus 23:3

So how's your hedge?

Have you inspected it lately?

Instead of “praying a hedge” around you, I suggest that we thank YHWH for the hedge that He provides, and then live within that hedge.

Climb up on top of that migdal (watch tower), and keep watch over your vineyard. When you see an issue, go down and tend to it.

Watch and tend – those instructions given to Adam apply equally to us. Why? So that we can bear much fruit.

More on that next week!

Berakhot

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Shema Yisrael (Hear O Yisrael) are the words that Yahushua spoke when asked what was the First Command.

*“The first of all the Commandments is: ‘Hear, O Yisrael,
YHWH our Elohim, YHWH is one.’
Mark 12:29*

*“He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”
Matthew 11:15*