

## Conquering the Spirit of Inferiority<sup>1</sup>

*"I thank you because I am awesomely made, wonderfully; your works are wonders - I know this very well. My bones were not hidden from you when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes could see me as an embryo, but in your book all my days were already written; my days had been shaped before any of them existed."* (CJB, Ps 139:14-16) *"I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works...Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written..."* (KJV, Ps 139:14-16)

### Introduction

The L-rd has created everything, and His creation is perfect. In fact, Scripture states that we are *"we are fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works."* Yet one of the greatest areas of struggle in young people (and in many adults) is the area of feeling inferior. Rabbi *Sha'ul* stated in 2 Cor. 11:5 *"For I don't consider myself in any way inferior..."* to others in the ministry. Should we also not feel inferior to others? But we do, and we do it often. Before beginning this journey into the overcoming and conquering the stronghold of inferiority, let us mediate fully into these Words of Life.

*"Seeing the crowds, Yeshua walked up the hill. After he sat down, his talmidim came to him, and he began to speak. This is what he taught them: "How blessed are the poor in spirit! For the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. "How blessed are those who mourn! For they will be comforted. "How blessed are the meek! For they will inherit the Land! "How blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness! For they will be filled. "How blessed are those who show mercy! For they will be shown mercy. "How blessed are the pure in heart! For they will see G-d. "How blessed are those who make peace! For they will be called sons of G-d. "How blessed are those who are persecuted because they pursue righteousness! For the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. "How blessed you are when people insult you and persecute you and tell all kinds of vicious lies about you because you follow me! Rejoice, be glad, because your reward in heaven is great - they persecuted the prophets before you in the same way."* (Matthew 5:1-12)

*"But he told me, "My grace is enough for you, for my power is brought to perfection in weakness. Therefore, I am very happy to boast about my weaknesses, in order that the Messiah's power will rest upon me."* (2 Cor. 12:9)

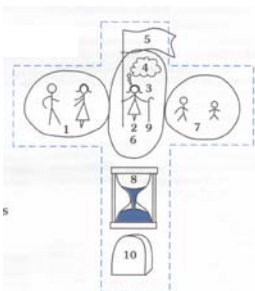
*"And I am sure of this: that the One who began a good work among you will keep it growing until it is completed on the Day of the Messiah Yeshua."* (Phil. 1:6)

*"In everything give thanks, for this is the Will of G-d for you who are united with Messiah Yeshua"* (1 Thes. 5:18)

*"We don't dare class or compare ourselves with some of the people who advertise themselves. In measuring themselves against each other and comparing themselves with each other, they are simply stupid."* (2 Cor. 10:12)

*"From now on, I don't want anyone to give me any more tsuris, because I have scars on my body to prove that I belong to Yeshua!"* (Gal. 6:17)

*"Furthermore, we know that G-d causes everything to work together for good to those who love G-d and are called according to his purpose; because those whom he knew in advance, he also determined in advance would be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."* (Ro. 8:28-29)



The L-rd's Ten Unchangeable Features are: (1) Parents, (2) Gender, (3) Physical Features, (4) Mental Capacity, (5) Race & Nationality, (6) Birth Order, (7) Brothers and Sisters, (8) Time In History, (9) Aging, (10) Death

## **Identifying the Problem**

Most people suffer from various forms of inferiority. Even the attitude of superiority is an evidence of feeling inferior. Those who have developed an attitude of superiority have done so by limiting their circle of comparison. Inferiority comes by comparing our unchangeable, G-d-given features with others. If we compare our height, parents or race with that of others, we make them the standard of acceptability, rather than *Yeshua*.

The result of comparison with others is usually a rejection of our own unchangeables; therefore, we are warned by G-d that to measure ourselves by others is unwise (stupid!). When we reject the design of our unchangeable features, we have difficulty accepting the Designer of them as a personal, loving Heavenly Father who wants the best for us. Therefore, an understanding of why G-d made us the way He did and a commitment to accept G-d's design is vital to our relationship with G-d and our daily walk with Him.

Let us ask a basic question. If, for example, a person shows signs of self-rejection, such as an over attention to dress, mocking others' physical features, or excessive shyness, they should answer the following question: "If you had the power to change anything about your appearance or family, would you make any changes?"

Consider the following thoughts as you (yourself) ponder a response. A person with self-rejection will usually be very sensitive to rejection by others. If such a person senses any critical spirit or pride in us, he will avoid responding to your question on self-acceptance. If, however, a person senses that you genuinely accept him where he is, and you convey a loving, warm smile and a desire to help him be successful, he will be open to talking further with us about his unchangeable features. When a person explains the rejection of an unchangeable feature, one must be prepared to help him/her see that feature from G-d's perspective and then help him take steps to respond to it in a Scriptural way.

## **Biblical Self-Acceptance**

### **1. G-d prescribed us before birth.**

Before we were born, G-d wrote down all the details of our lives. "*Your eyes could see me as an embryo...*"

### **2. G-d is not finished making us.**

Our outward appearances are only the "frames" of the "pictures" (the frame of the masterpiece) that G-d wants to develop within our hearts. When the picture is finished, the frame will enhance its eternal message. "...*the One who began a good work among you will keep it growing until it is completed...*" (Philippians 1:6). ♪ "*He's still working n me, to make me what I ought to be. It took Him just a week to make the moon and the stars, the sun and the earth and Jupiter and Mars. How wonderfully patient He must be, He's still working on me!*" ♪

### **3. Comparison causes inferiority.**

We can always find somebody who we think is more attractive than we are, is more intelligent than we are, or has a better family than we have. Whenever we compare these unchangeables, we tend to develop feelings of inferiority. Therefore, Scripture warns us not to measure ourselves by one another. We can, however, compare our attitudes and skills with others, because these characteristics can be changed.

### **4. G-d has no outward ideal.**

The whole concept of a "Miss America" or "Mr. America" or "Miss Universe" is misleading, because it projects the false idea that there is a universal ideal of outward appearance. If there is any relationship between outward beauty and inward happiness, it is usually opposite to what we would expect.

Many attractive people are very unhappy for several reasons. They often experience greater temptation. They resent being liked only for their outward appearance by people who do not understand or care about their inward needs. They fear rejection when their physical attractiveness will fade, and they themselves often feel

inferior and unattractive. When a former Miss America was asked if she would change anything about her appearance, she quickly said “yes” and listed several unchangeables that she had not accepted.

### **5. G-d has an inward ideal.**

Although G-d has no outward ideal, He does have a universal inward ideal. It is the Person and Character of the Lord Messiah *Yeshua*. The more we learn of Him and become like Him, the more we experience true joy and fulfillment. *Yeshua* explained how happy those who are poor in spirit, and meek, and merciful, and pure in heart, and who have the other qualities listed in Matthew 5:1-12 will be.

### **6. G-d may sacrifice outward beauty to develop inward character.**

Because inward character rather than outward beauty is the key to true joy, G-d will sometimes allow scars, deformities, or “defects” in order to produce the inward qualities of meekness, kindness, humility, patience, and gratefulness. These qualities are far more important to success in life than outward appearance.

### **7. Differences in features are G-d’s “frames” to highlight His message in us and through us.**

There is infinite variety in picture frames. Some frames are tall, some are short. Some are dark, some are light. However, each frame is chosen to highlight the real message of the picture. Similarly, G-d chooses our outward features to highlight the life message that He wants to give in and through us. Based on these facts, we will probably not understand why G-d put certain things in our “frames” until we allow Him to develop His message of love and truth in our hearts.

### **8. Happiness and self-worth come by reproducing Messiah’s character.**

Rabbi *Sha’ul* called the Believers at Philippi his joy and his crown. (See Philippians 4:1) Rabbi *Sha’ul* had invested himself in their lives and watched them grow spiritually. The scars, defects, and limitations which Rabbi *Sha’ul* experienced had special meaning to him. They represented his efforts to bring the Good News to others and were the means of his receiving G-d’s grace, which gave him the desire and power to help others mature in Messiah.

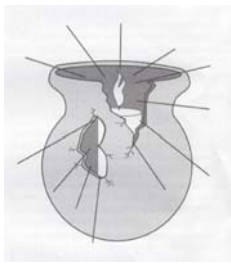
One of the most difficult questions about G-d is “Why would He allow physical defects to occur?” The Apostle Rabbi *Sha’ul* answers this question when he explains that infirmities are G-d’s mark of ownership and the means of giving us more grace so that His strength is made perfect in our weakness.

### **9. Defects are marks of ownership.**

Just as a rancher places a brand on a cow so its ownership is undisputed, G-d allows scars and defects to remind us that we belong to Him. Rabbi *Sha’ul* stated, “...*I have scars on my body to prove that I belong to Yeshua*” (Galatians 6:17). The Greek word for “mark” is *stigma*. It means “a sign of ownership.”

### **10. Defects can motivate us to develop the character of Yeshua.**

When properly understood and accepted, physical defects will produce a godly humility. G-d gives grace to the humble, but resists the proud. Thus, the more grace we receive, the more desire and power we have to develop the character of *Yeshua* and to do His will. Based on this truth, Rabbi *Sha’ul* exclaimed, “...*I am very happy to boast about my weaknesses, in order that the Messiah's power will rest upon me.*” This statement was in response to *Yeshua*’s promise, “*My grace is enough for you, for my power is brought to perfection in weakness...*” (2 Cor. 12:9).



G-d compares our bodies to “earthen vessels” which will suffer wear and tear on the outside so that the beauty of *Yeshua* might shine more perfectly from within. A physical defect is like a hole in a beautiful pottery vase. We see no reason for the defect, but G-d knows that as long as the pot is intact, the splendor of *Yeshua*’s beauty will not shine through. Bitterness over the defect will quench the light within and cut off the potential of letting others see *Messiah*’s strength and radiance through our physical infirmities. When we repent from our bitterness and thank G-d for His purposes for the defect, the light will be relit and brighten the paths of many others.

### **Steps of Action:**

#### **1. Identify unchangeables or “defects” that you reject**

Review the ten unchangeables, and determine if there are any that you have resented or for which you have never thanked G-d. Ask yourself whether you have any bitterness for mental or physical defects.

#### **2. Thank G-d for each unchangeable**

We are told in all things to give thanks, for this is the will of G-d in Messiah *Yeshua* for us. (See 1 Thes. 5:18.) This instruction applies to unchangeable features that G-d has given to us, and also to infirmities of the flesh. To give thanks is not the same as being thankful. Giving thanks is an act of our wills; being thankful is the response of our emotions.

#### **3. Give special thanks for any rejected “defect.”**

If you have had a special rejection for a particular physical feature, it would be wise to pray, “Lord, thank You for the way You made me, and I do now thank You especially for this physical ‘defect.’”

#### **4. List qualities which unchangeables could develop**

After thanking G-d for unchangeables and “defects,” it would be important to determine some of the reasons why G-d has allowed them. Scripture teaches us that “...all things work together for good... {to [conform us] to the image of his Son}” (Ro. 8:28-29). For example, poor eyesight could teach the following:

- To learn patience through the limitations of poor vision
- To show kindness to others who have difficulty seeing
- To be grateful for the eyesight that G-d has given
- To be diligent in developing spiritual eyesight through Scripture
- To be discerning in what I use my eyes to see
- To be humble in remembering my daily dependence upon G-d

Let us pray: “Elohei Avraham, Elohei Yitzchak, Elohei Ya’akov, Elohei Avoteinu, our Avinu Malkenu...”

<sup>i</sup> Adapted from “How to Tear Down The Strongholds on Inferiority” IBLP, USA, 1992