

Crushed Because of Our Iniquities

“But He was pierced because of our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities. The chastisement for our shalom was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. We all like sheep have gone astray. Each of us turned to his own way. So Adonai has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:5-6)

Most educated people, even those who are not Believers, understand that there was a Creator and that do not really believe we evolved from monkeys or as a result of random collisions eons ago in the universe. Most believe there is a Deity but have not put their faith (trusted) in Him. We are skeptical beings, and our actions prove it.

Outside the Reitz Union in the UF campus it was common to see signs asking questions about people’s belief in God. Why would a loving God condemn people? Why did a loving God let things happen? Do you think you are going to hell? Does it matter? Each sign that had a question also had a *tear off* portion with an answer. Nice!

We all know the story of Adam and Eve in the Book of Genesis. We are made in the image and likeness of God and we were given dominion over all the created beings, including *dominion over ourselves*. God gave Adam (Eve was not yet created) a command, but left Adam with free moral agency, that is, the ability to choose for himself whether to do right or to do wrong. This was a sovereign decree, irrevocable and forever binding. Yes Virginia, you and I are always free to make our own choice when it comes to God, when it comes to life, and when it comes to death. He created human life for fellowship with him (Adam walked with God in the garden in the cool of the evening), and as such He desired to be loved and cherished and that by choice and not by force. If He is the Sovereign God, He could have chosen differently, but He didn’t. We, as humans, make the choice.

The Psalmist states: *“Behold, I was born in iniquity and in sin when my mother conceived me” (Ps. 51:5)*. The Hebrew word translated *iniquity* is the word *avón* and the Hebrew word translated *sin* is the word *chet*. These are two different Hebrew words which are not really synonyms and yet some Bible translations, such as the NIV, translate them both as sin. Is it likely that both words mean the same exact thing (to be sinful)? In the *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, *avón* is translated as an activity that is crooked or wrong, a *conscious and intentional* offense. On the other hand *chet* means to *miss the goal*, i.e., to sin against God. The *Orthodox Artscroll TNK* uses the word *fashioned*. How were you and I *fashioned in an activity that is crooked or wrong with a conscious and intentional offense so we might miss the mark?*

Isaiah 53:6 has the answer: *“Each of us turned to his own way”* Adam and Eve did, and you and I certainly do. It is all selfishly *about us* all the time. It is *how I see it, how I interpret it, how I believe it, and what is relevant to me right now*. Our actions, especially when we are young, are based on *I, I, I, and Me, Me, Me*.

Born in Iniquity

We were created with free moral agency, but we were asked *to trade it* for fellowship with the Creator by obedience. The definition of iniquity is understood in Scripture: *“²¹Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord!’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²²Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in Your name, and drive out demons in Your name, and perform many miracles in Your name?’ ²Then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you. Get away from Me, you workers of lawlessness (iniquity, KJV)!’” (Matt. 7:21-23)* We must ask, ‘When is preaching and prophesying iniquity? When is casting-out-demons iniquity? And when is doing miracles iniquity?’ The answer is in the verse: *when we do these activities in our own will rather than according to the Father’s will*. It is the same story as in Genesis.

As Believers, we are called to follow in the steps of our Lord and Savior, *Messiah Yeshua*. It is significant that *Yeshua* did *nothing* of His own will, but *only the will of His Heavenly Father (John 6:38)*. *Yeshua’s* refusal to follow His own will is lauded in the Book of Hebrews: *“You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness (iniquity /wickedness.); therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your companions” (Hebrews 1:9)*.

In a sovereign act our Creator endowed us with free moral agency, the right to choose between good and evil, between His Will and our will, between His Way and our way. But we humans have and continue to choose our own way – so a loving God and Father laid upon *Yeshua* the iniquity, self-will, and free moral of us all.

If we use the definition of *personal willfulness* for *iniquity*, Scripture bursts out with new clarity, meaning and application: “*Direct my footsteps in Your word, and let no iniquity get mastery over me*” (*Psalm 119:133*). If our decisions are not based on Scripture, we will fall into destructive habits that come by relying on our own willfulness.

Scripture distinguishes *uncleanness* from *iniquity*: “*...For just as you yielded your body parts as slaves to uncleanness and lawlessness, leading to more lawlessness, so now yield your body parts as slaves to righteousness, resulting in holiness.*” ²⁰*For when you were slaves of sin, you were free with regard to righteousness*” (*Ro. 6:19-20*). Uncleanness involves a violation of God's physical or moral laws (sin). However, iniquity can involve doing good deeds, but by our own willfulness and not by God's direction. Since self-willed actions tend to produce more self-willed actions, we go from what the KJV states: *iniquity unto iniquity*.

The *Mystery of Iniquity* is that we will follow our own faulty reasoning when we have available *Infinite God's Wisdom*: “*For the mystery of lawlessness (iniquity) is already operating...because they did not accept the love of the truth so as to be saved...they will believe what is false (the lie)*” (*2 Thess. 2:7-11*). When we persist in doing our own will, God turns us over to a *reprobate mind*, and we believe the lie that we are equal with God. In reality, we have placed ourselves above God by deciding what our will is in each matter rather than determining His Will.

Departing from iniquity (“*Get away from me, you workers of iniquity*” *Matthew 7:23*) means to stop doing what we are inclined and willfully want to do and to begin to do the will of God (which will be good works) in acts of faith and righteousness. Only as we depart from the iniquity of works that are initiated by our own will, will we be able to recognize and achieve the good works that are initiated by the Will of God. Works that are directed by God fit into His bigger picture and His greater plan for the world.

Every good deed must be motivated by God's love and not by our own self-will. The Apostle Paul was motivated by the love of Messiah in his ministry among Believers and not by his own self-will (*2 Corinthians 5:14*).

How should we prepare for Passover? May I suggest that the best way is that we examine ourselves and carefully consider our ways so that we *scrutinize our self-will*. It is possible that you are rejecting the *Messiah* in your heart because of self-will. Remember that: “*he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, and the Lord has laid upon him the iniquity and lawlessness of us all*”. *Shabbat Shalom!* Let us pray...