

SABBATH THOUGHT 2026-09-05—AFFLICTED WITH HUMILITY

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

The Day of Coverings has a commandment that is unique from all other holydays:

LEVITICUS 16:29 “*This shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth *day* of the month, **you shall afflict your souls**, and do no work at all, *whether* a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells among you.*

Many mentally replace the command to “afflict your souls” with fasting; however, it is never once mentioned in context with the Day of Coverings. Why is that? What fasting is in the Bible?

MATTHEW 15:32 Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because **they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint** in the way.

Fasting is going without food or drink for a period of time. Whether someone fasts unintentionally or not, after awhile it simply causes physical weakness as noted by Jesus who was concerned that the people might “faint” as they traveled home. The Day of Coverings is associated with fasting because it is a way to cause affliction:

ISAIAH 58:3, 5 ‘Why have **we fasted**,’ they say, ‘and You [*the LORD*] have not seen? Why have **we afflicted our souls**, and You take no notice?’ “In fact, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exploit all your laborers. ... 5 Is it **a fast** that I [*the LORD*] have chosen, **a day for a man to afflict his soul**? ...

But fasting does not affect everyone the same way. Some are able to fast for a day and barely notice any effects. Others find it difficult if not impossible to miss one or two meals. If the Day of Coverings is focused on fasting, why is there such a diversity of how people are affected by it? Because MEN emphasize fasting whereas God commands people to “afflict your souls.” There are some who think it is great if they feel little or no discomfort. They “find pleasure” in their physical robustness and resilience. But they do not understand affliction or why God commands it. Notice how the Bible describes affliction:

GENESIS 15:13 Then He [*the LORD*] said to Abram: “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will **afflict them four hundred years**.

EXODUS 1:14 And they [*the Egyptians*] made their [*the ancient Israelites*] lives **bitter with hard bondage**—in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service in which **they made them serve was with rigor**.

No one in this day and age can imagine the brutal affliction of slavery. Now notice how Naomi was afflicted. Over a short time not only did she lose her husband Elimelech but also her two sons. Her affliction caused an outpouring of grief:

RUTH 1:21 “I [*Naomi*] went out full, and the LORD has brought me home again empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has testified against me, and the Almighty **has afflicted me?**”

No one would suggest that these are anything except terrible afflictions and they all occurred WITHOUT fasting. The Bible is replete with stories of afflicted people such as David, the prophets, and, above all, Jesus Christ:

ISAIAH 53:4, 7 Surely He [*Jesus Christ*] has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, **smitten by God, and afflicted.** ... 7 **He was oppressed and He was afflicted,** yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.

While God does not expect afflictions on the Day of Coverings to remotely resemble what Jesus Christ endured, these examples show that affliction is not merely being slightly hungry. That is why the Day of Coverings must be understood as a time to afflict our souls rather than fasting. The real question, then, is *why* afflict our souls? The answer is in the Hebrew word itself:

DEUTERONOMY 8:2 “And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these **forty years in the wilderness, to humble [H6031 = ‘anah] you** and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.

God *humbled* the ancient Israelites during their 40-year wilderness excursion. The word for *humble* is exactly the same word translated *afflict* in the commandment for the Day of Coverings:

LEVITICUS 16:31 “It [*the Day of Coverings*] is a sabbath of solemn rest for you, and **you shall afflict [H6031 = ‘anah] your souls.** It is a statute forever.

If ‘*anah*’ means both *afflict* and *humble*, why is the requirement for Day of Coverings to afflict our souls rather than humble ourselves? Because no one can suddenly decide to BE humble. To “afflict your souls” is a conscious choice to deny ourselves and endure hardship. Translating the word as *afflict* instead of *humble* requires making a CHOICE and putting forth the EFFORT to have a mental, emotional, and spiritual state of humility that pleases God on that day:

[DOUAY] PSALM 51:17 A sacrifice to God is **an afflicted spirit: a contrite and humbled heart,** O God, thou wilt not despise.

Those who are afflicted by serious health conditions are some of the most humble people anyone can know. Even though they are deeply humbled already by the

burdens of this life, the expectation that they must add to their suffering by fasting causes them to dread the Day of Coverings. Instead of the day being a time to come before God with deep humility, they view themselves as weak and rejected. Why do they feel this way? Because of the endless preaching about the Day of Coverings being a day of fasting. There are preachers who demand everyone fast on the Day of Coverings. Oh, they may make exceptions but only when someone confronts him with the hardships it may cause. They probably only agree to avoid being sued if something bad happens. One such preacher writes that The Day of Coverings **"is a required fast. Everyone is to take it; everyone is to not eat food and not drink water on this day."** No exceptions. Those with risks of adverse health affects were to **"trust in [God]"** to supply your needs." This preacher must believe that if they died it was the result of a lack of faith; as if death would change that.

No mercy. No compassion. No agape love. There is no place in the Kingdom for those who have no regard for the excruciating pain and suffering some people endure in this life. Everyone must afflict their souls on the Day of Coverings but not everyone needs to fast to BE afflicted. Fasting is discussed at greater length in the booklet [Fasting—Afflicting the Soul, Humility, & Prayer](#) on the website.

For the vast majority, afflicting our souls is a matter of being humble before God. Is that possible without terrible physical sufferings? Yes! Being humble on the Day of Coverings is evidence of understanding that God so loved us that He sacrificed His Son whose blood cleanses us from all sin¹ and allows us to come into the heavenly dwelling place of God to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need². All are humbled when they consider that God literally gave everything to ransom us from death, wash away the filth of our sins, give us the power and mind of Christ, and beget us as His children.

Recognizing that the Day of Coverings is a time to share in a fellowship of humility before God fulfills the purpose of that holyday. For some, humility begins with fasting. For those who are already afflicted, fasting may be ill-advised. For all, it involves prayer and meditation on God's works and promises. It is a day to consider how undeserving we are of His love, His grace, His benevolence, and His longsuffering toward our imperfections, ignorance, and foolishness. All these were freely given so He can make us His very own children for all eternity. And that is the purpose for the Day of Coverings: **Establishing our hearts and minds in humility allows us to DWELL with God on that special Day of Coverings!**

Thinking of the Day of Coverings as a day to fast and avoid food and drink falls far short of "afflicting our **souls**." It has never been about fasting and that word is never used in reference to the Day of Coverings. Does that mean people do not need to fast? Absolutely not. Fasting for most is required to achieve the equivalent mental, emotional, and spiritual state of wearing sackcloth and being covered in dust and

¹ 1 John 1:7.

² Heb. 4:16.

ashes. Fasting is simply the most common way to fulfill the command to "afflict our souls" and be humble and contrite (remorse for sin) before God.

But humility is a matter of the heart, mind, and SOUL. It does not come by an empty stomach or physical pains and sufferings. It is a state of the highest agape love for all that God and Christ have sacrificed for us. Humility is required to know the great love of God that led Him to sacrifice His Son by a horrible death so that we can come before Him on His throne and talk to the Most High Creator. From the humility that resides in the depths of the heart and mind and strength and SOUL comes true praise, honor, worship, and thanksgiving unto God. Why? Because that kind of humility is also wrapped in contriteness:

PSALM 34:18 The LORD *is* near to **those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit.**

ISAIAH 66:2 For all those *things* My hand has made, and all those *things* exist," says the LORD. "But **on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit,** and who trembles at My word.

Those who are humble acknowledge the greatness of God. Those who are contrite acknowledge the lowliness of sinful flesh and blood. But those who are humble AND contrite DWELL with God!

ISAIAH 57:15 For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name *is* Holy: "**I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit,** to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

May God's grace and peace be upon you!

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