

Zahakiel: Pastor, please offer an opening prayer.

Pastor Chick: Dear Father in Heaven. We come before Your presence with thanksgiving as we have completed another week of victory over the wiles of the Devil and reached the Sabbath's shore of rest. We accept Your Spirit's refreshing now as we worship before Your Eternal Throne. In YAHSHUA's holy name, AMEN.

Elyna: Amen.

Barb: Amen

.gadriel: Amen, Amen

Lucan: Amen

Adriel: Amen

Naraiel: Amen

Kim: Amen.

daphna: Amen

Zahakiel: Amen

Zahakiel: Tonight's study is called "The Flames of Mara." The term "mara" comes from the Hebrew word for bitterness, as found in these verses: "And she said unto them, 'Call me not Naomi. Call me Mara, for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.'" (Ruth 1:20)

"And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter; therefore the name of it was called 'Marah.'" (Exo 15:23)

We are continuing this week to talk about those things that control behavior, and of all those things that control the flesh, bitterness is perhaps the most unhealthy, the most deadly, to both the body and the spirit. Here are some verses that talk about bitterness, which gives us some insight into the mind of Yah:

"Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken Yahweh thy Elohim, and that my fear is not in thee, saith Adonai Yahweh of hosts." (Jer. 2:19)

"Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." (Col 3:19)

"But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth." (James 3:14)

I find it very interesting that in Hebrew, Greek and English, the word translated as "bitter" does indeed relate to a taste, or to a sensation in the stomach, as well as to negative feelings. There seems to be a universal connection between that particular taste and

harmful emotions, therefore I believe it is connected very strongly to the events that befell humanity before the languages were divided at the Tower of Babel, specifically the first fall of Adam, and the flood in the days of Noah.

If anger is a fire, then bitterness is a slow burn, a simmering dislike that remains below the surface. In a sense, it is like "internal bleeding" of the soul. The individual may look healthy outwardly, and may even treat the object of his bitterness with apparent courtesy and affection, but inwardly death is drawing near.

In the CSDA experience, we have seen those who hold bitter feelings fall ill much more quickly than those who have joyful souls, and those illnesses can range from simple colds to fatal cancer. The body is simply not designed to hold on to such charged emotions, and this is why the Word of our Father specifically instructs us to put it away from our experiences.

Among those who were once actual members, but are no longer, bitterness was often at the heart of what drove them away. The Scriptures warn against this, saying, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see Yahweh, looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." (Heb. 12:14, 15)

By Yah's grace, the "many" being defiled by the bitterness of a few has been kept to a minimum, but when individuals feel that they have been "harmed" somehow, and then compound the problem by refusing to openly and honestly communicate about their feelings, this is what has caused the separation. We read, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as Yahweh for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (Eph. 4:31, 32)

These things that Paul lists, they are all contrary to the spirit of rest that the Sabbath is designed to teach us, and so the reason I have called this study The "Flames" of Mara is because bitterness, as surely as any active sin, leads to the fires of the second death. We read the Third Angel's warning, concerning those who receive the Mark of the Beast in their forehead or hand, "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever; and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name." (Rev 14:11)

This torment, this unrest, is merely a reflection of their inner, emotional and spiritual turmoil. As Adventists, we understand that without the Sabbath blessing we cannot accept the First Angel's message, which is about victory. Without it we cannot have pure doctrine, which is the message of the Second Angel. Without the Sabbath rest, we cannot avoid the

Mark of the Beast, because only those who rest in Yah, who trust in Him, find that they cannot be lured away by the reasoning of the world. The Beast makes the "whole world" worship by its deceit, (Rev 12:9) but through the Sabbath we take on the "mind of Christ," and can no longer be misled by those things that dazzle those whose hearts are fixed on the things of the earth.

To be sure, each commandment from our Father is necessary to purify our souls, so that we may be free from false doctrine and corrupt motives, but the Sabbath – against which the Enemy has leveled his most effective attacks historically – seems to hold a special place in the sanctification of Yah's people. The Father says, "Moreover also I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am Yahweh that sanctify them." (Ezek. 20:12)

Yahshua says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Mat 11:28)

These ideas are all connected. Sanctification and rest are tied together in Christ, and the reason why the Scriptures identifies and warns against bitterness so much is that it is the opposite of the principle underlying this rest. Consider the emotion of anger. Of Yah we read, "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith Yahweh thy Redeemer." (Isa 54:8)

If we are to be like our Father, this is how our anger ought also to be expressed and processed. Should we become angry over some matter, which is perfectly reasonable under certain circumstances, we are to deal with it as quickly as possible. When anger is left alone, then it sinks beneath the surface, becoming a long-lasting drain on our spirits, and making rest impossible to maintain.

So how do we, as Yah's people, overcome the temptation to bitterness? This is one of Satan's favorite darts to throw; therefore, we know that our Father has made our "armor" effective against it. In reading through the Scriptures, I have identified seven "keys" to overcoming, and I will list them here.

- 1) Be honest about our emotions.

As I referenced above, Yah's anger is brief, but His mercy is everlasting. When He is angry, however, He lets us know. For our part, we are told, "Be ye angry, and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath." (Eph. 4:26)

Here we see exactly how to deal with frustration, disappointment, and any other feeling that may make us angry. If we have a genuine complaint, it should be voiced and then put away. Now, this does not mean that we are to be angry people. We are not to

look for occasions to be angry, or seek to find faults in others. Yet the other side of the road is just as dangerous. Pretending that "everything is fine" when there is a legitimate cause for displeasure causes negative emotions to be "swept under the rug," where bitterness is formed and can grow.

2) Communicate with the brethren.

Of course, frequent communication with anyone increases familiarity and reduces the chances of misunderstanding, but this is particularly important among Church members, where disagreements and bitterness have a real chance of disrupting the Gospel work and, as Paul says, defiling many. Free, open communication among the people of Yah is pleasing to Him, (Mal 3:16) and insulates us against many of Satan's attempts to exploit little cracks that appear from time to time. Speaking often among ourselves prevents issues from arising in the first place, and ensures that if any do, they are put away both quickly and completely.

3) Confront those that trouble you.

The first key is to be honest with our emotions; however, we need to refine that idea just a little bit. If I am legitimately angry with one brother, do I then go to another brother to complain? Clearly, it is not only about expressing our genuine feelings, but about doing so to the right audience. Here, we must follow Gospel Order strictly. We have learned, by unfortunate experience, that the least deviation from the method our Father has given to us can result in significant loss. On this issue specifically, we read, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." (Mat 5:23, 24) The proper way to deal with one's anger is not to vent in a random direction, but rather to "be reconciled," and then Yah will accept our gifts.

4) Reject the temptation to engage in evil surmising.

Assume the best of those around you, especially those of Yah's Covenant. Avoid taking statements personally. Filter your thoughts, to ensure that you truly have cause for complaint, and only then press the matter. Assuming the worst, and taking personal offense easily, indicates that one has fallen into one of Satan's traps, and causes one to think and speak contrary to the doctrine of Christ. (1Tim 6:3, 4) We must be diligent, therefore, to avoid this cunning snare.

5) Ensure that our own motives are clear.

People tend to become angry and defensive when they feel judged. If their motives are impure, then they have no real cause to confront the individual that is making them uncomfortable. When that is the case, the anger is not confessed and surrendered, but neither is it resolved by confrontation. By making sure that we see ourselves clearly, which is really only possible if we willingly stand in our Father's judgment and accept His assessment of us, then we can be certain that our perception of others is likewise accurate. As Yahshua taught, "first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." (Mat 7:5)

6) Live in an atmosphere of Heaven.

The Bible says, "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name." (Psalm 100:4)

"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." (Phil 4:6)

Rejoicing in one's own blessings with a spirit of thanksgiving makes it impossible for bitterness to grab hold. If we are grateful for all the things that Yah has given to us, knowing that we have neither earned nor deserve them, then what is there that can cause us any negative feelings toward another person? What we have has been given to us, and what others have has been given to them. If someone else is so spiritually empty that they try to cause another person unnecessary pain, then they are to be pitied. It is not worth introducing any additional obstacles into our own walk of salvation on account of someone else's actions. The proper response in this case is to pray for such an individual as that, to say, as Yahshua did to His persecutors, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34)

The prayer will always be true. No intelligent, educated person would attempt to trouble a child of the King of the Universe. Anyone who tries to lay a stumbling-block in the path of one of Yahweh's saints, one of Yahweh's joyful children, will have their willful ignorance to blame for what will befall them in the judgment. But we, if we keep ourselves free from bitterness, we will not suffer for their failures. Finally...

7) Fix your eyes on Yahshua.

This is perhaps the simplest, but the most important, of these keys. Injustice is never going to be eliminated in this world. As Yahshua said, "ye have the poor always with you..." (Mat 26:11) We are not going to be able to make life fair for everyone, as the effects of sin are far-reaching and ever-present. The very existence of evil in this world is expressed in the way that it causes sorrow, danger, and pain for Yah's living creatures.

Sometimes we will be treated unjustly, and certainly in the time of trouble we may have much evidence to point to of this. But just because injustice will last until the return of Yahshua, this does not mean that we should not advocate for justice whenever we can. We are "Protestants" for our own liberty, and for that of others. For our own peace, however, we cannot find fulfillment in the struggle for equality on earth through human means. It is only in Yahshua that we have enduring joy.

Yahshua said, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:14)

Yahshua has, and is, the Water of Life that is the only water capable of quenching the flames of Mara, the flames of everlasting death. As we avoid this most effective dart in Satan's arsenal, we show that the salvation offered by our Father is complete and enduring. We show the universe that the safety we have found under Yahweh's wings is all-encompassing, and we verify His promise to us, "But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil." (2Th 3:3)

Zahakiel: Are there any questions or comments about tonight's study?

Adriel: C

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

Adriel: I have not forgotten what Pastor told me some years ago now - that whatever happens to us has to come through Yahshua first... good or bad and it is allowed for our sanctification and I find great peace in that. End

Pastor Chick: (or the salvation of another) 😊

Adriel: Amen

Elyna: Amen

Zahakiel: Are there any others with thoughts to share? If there are not, I will ask Bro. Luke to close with a prayer.

Lucan: Dear heavenly Father. We thank you for the reminder you have given us of the dangers of bitterness and unresolved conflicts. We know that, from the creation until now, Satan has sought to cause others to fall in the same manner as himself. We have seen many depart from among our number, refusing to bring their disharmony to the light. We know that you are faithful, and have provided beyond what is needed to meet every challenge. We know that no lasting harm may come to us as we faithfully serve you and rest in your judgment. And we thank you for the opportunity to purge all leaven and

residue of bitterness from our hearts in preparation for the soon coming revelation of that judgment from heaven. In Yahshua's name we pray, amen.

Pastor Chick: Amen.

Zahakiel: Amen.

Barb: Amen

daphna: Amen

Adriel: Amen

Naraiel: Amen

Elyna: Amen.

.gadriel: Amen, Amen