

# Teaching *from* Zion

"...for out of Zion shall come forth Torah  
and the word of the Lord from  
Jerusalem." – Isaiah 2:3



# LIES & DECEPTIONS

*Lying lips are an abomination to ADONAI, but those who deal faithfully are his delight."*

*Proverbs 12:22*



ISSUE 49 | NISAN 5783 | APRIL 2023

Published by Netivyah Bible Instruction  
Ministry, Jerusalem, Israel

The articles printed in this issue of Teaching from Zion are the sole responsibility of their authors. Feel free to contact us at [tfz@netivyah.org](mailto:tfz@netivyah.org) or by mail at **Mordechai Narkis St. 16, Jerusalem 9246208, ISRAEL**  
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#### About Netivyah

Netivyah in Hebrew means "the Way of the Lord." "The Way" was one of the names by which the early community of believers was known in the Brit Chadashah (New Testament). Paul says, "I worship the God of our fathers in accordance with the Way (which they call a sect). I continue to believe everything that accords with the Torah and everything written in the Prophets." (Acts 24:14 CJB). As followers of "the Way," we believe in the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We try to be faithful to God's law (the Torah) and to the rest of Scripture—the Prophets and the Writings. We believe that the Messiah promised in God's word is Yeshua (Jesus), the one who "saves His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

More Information: [www.netivyah.org](http://www.netivyah.org)

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# News from Netivyah

*Shalom Dear Friends,*

*We are so busy, and time absolutely flies by. Through it all, every step of the way, we so need and feel your prayers and support.*

*This year's Soldiers Gifts for Purim is finished, and we had such amazing participation from all of you. Folks from all over the world joined us and made the gifts for our believing soldiers very special.*

*We are launching one of our new programs, Houses for Healing. Netivyah has been working in conjunction with Brian Massey, who is the founder and head of the same organization in Abilene, Texas, for more than a year. Now, in God's perfect timing, there is the first "House" available for those who need extended medical treatment and housing for their supporting family members who want to be close to them/ the hospital. The apartments are near Hadassah Ein Kerem and Shaare Zedek hospitals. What do we provide? Along with the fully furnished apartment (Kosher kitchen, microwave, refrigerator, oven, washing machine, bedding, and towels, free Wi-Fi, and parking!), we are offering support and encouragement for the families in a calm and quiet place, a nutritious supply of fresh fruit, vegetables, and meat (and more) and the opportunity to receive the treatment and recovery so often needed by the families along with the patients themselves. Please keep this important project in your prayers as we desire to be God's hands and feet in helping the poor and needy in our beloved Israel.*

*Passover has just passed! It is the time we remember our redemption from Egypt, as God brought us out of slavery and bondage into His Promised Land. As believers, we know that this story of redemption and freedom from sin is the ongoing story for all who put their faith and trust in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and His Son, our Messiah Yeshua.*

*Thank you always for your prayers and support for everything we put before Him.*

*May this year be more meaningful than ever before.*

*Blessings,*

*Daniel Stern*

# DECEPTION & LIES

# THE WHY, HOW & WHEN!

by Joseph Shulam

When this topic was suggested by the Netivyah staff for the next Teaching from Zion magazine, I was so surprised. I have been a disciple of Yeshua the Messiah since the age of 16, and now I am 77 years old, and I have never heard a sermon or read an article in a Christian or Jewish magazine that is actually facing this topic head-on!

When I checked the concordance for relevant topics like the words: deceived, deceit, lying, liars, false... I was utterly surprised to see how many times the Bible uses these words, both in the reporting mood and also in the warning mood. I would like to look at this in this article for the Teaching from Zion magazine. But I don't want it to become a book yet. For this reason, I will do my best to keep this article in the normal range of articles for the Teaching from Zion magazine, about 5 to 9 pages.

The Bible opens already in the first chapters of the book of Genesis with the greatest deception of all: the snake in the garden of Eden, Satan, deceived Eve, and she carried that deception, and with her help Adam was deceived, and all of biblically known humanity in the garden of Eden was deceived. The first deception was a direct affront and twisting of the Creator's word: The Creator, the Father of all, said: "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'" (Genesis 2:16-17 NKJV).

So simple, so plain, so direct, and so devious was that primeval snake, Satan. He used the very same words that the Almighty God, our Father, used. He just added one little word to the formula: he just added the three-letter word in

*If Satan is the source of lies, then when we lie, we serve as servants of Satan. Maybe I could say that when we lie, we act like sons of Satan.*

English and two letters in Hebrew, "not" and "לֹא". What damage to all of humanity these two little words have caused in human history! The origin of these two little words is what needs to

be considered.

Satan is called in the Gospel of John 8:44-45: "He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it." From this text, I can draw some very serious conclusions: If Satan is the source of lies, then when we lie, we serve as servants of Satan. Maybe I could say that when we lie, we act like sons of Satan. If this idea is true, it of course complicates life greatly. I don't know any person who has not used at least "a little white lie" to get out of some embarrassment or unpleasant challenge!

I find it difficult to find any Biblical hero, male or female, that has not lied some time in their lives. The Word of God doesn't even mask the lies of the biblical heroes. On the contrary, the Bible emphasizes the sins of the most important of the fathers of our faith, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and from the Patriarchs of our faith we can go to the great kings like King David.

This makes the whole issue of deception, lies, half-truths, false reports, and manipulation of numbers in favor of oneself a very serious matter. And a matter that must be studied and exposed, opened up, and spread on the ground so that we and our brothers and sisters may understand God Himself and the heroes that He the Almighty can use as examples and teach us how and where to find the power that will direct us into His righteousness and truth.

After having attributed the deceptions and lies in the world and accredited them to Satan, the father of lies, we must open our eyes, be honest with ourselves and our own history-based faith, and learn some important lessons from the fathers

and heroes of our faith. These lessons will also shed light on how God deals with our human frailties.

After the events in the Garden of Eden with the trio of heroes who were the first residents of the Garden, Adam, Eve, and the serpent, the next text in the Bible where this serpent is clearly identified is in the book of Revelation:

Revelation 12:9 says, "So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

Revelation 12:14-15, "But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. 15 So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood."

Rev. 20:2, "He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;"

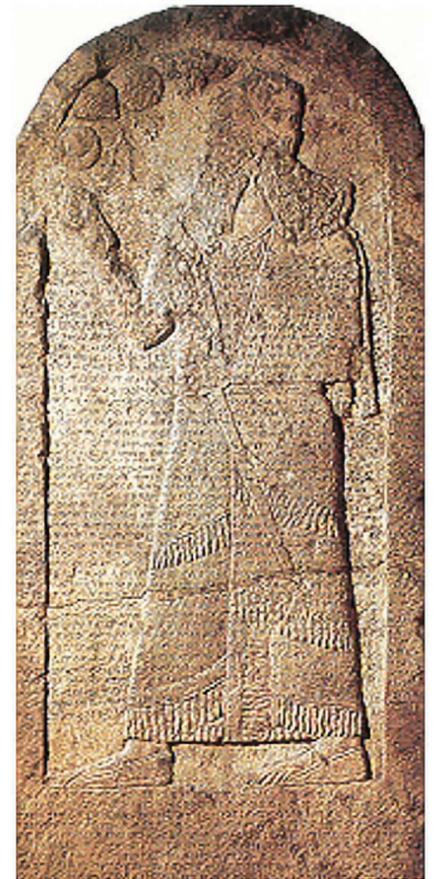
The picture is clear. The first chapters of Genesis, the beginning of all things here in our galaxy, start with the primeval serpent playing a major role in this movie. The end of the Bible, the book of Revelation, ends the saga of history with the same movie star, the serpent, who is the devil and Satan.

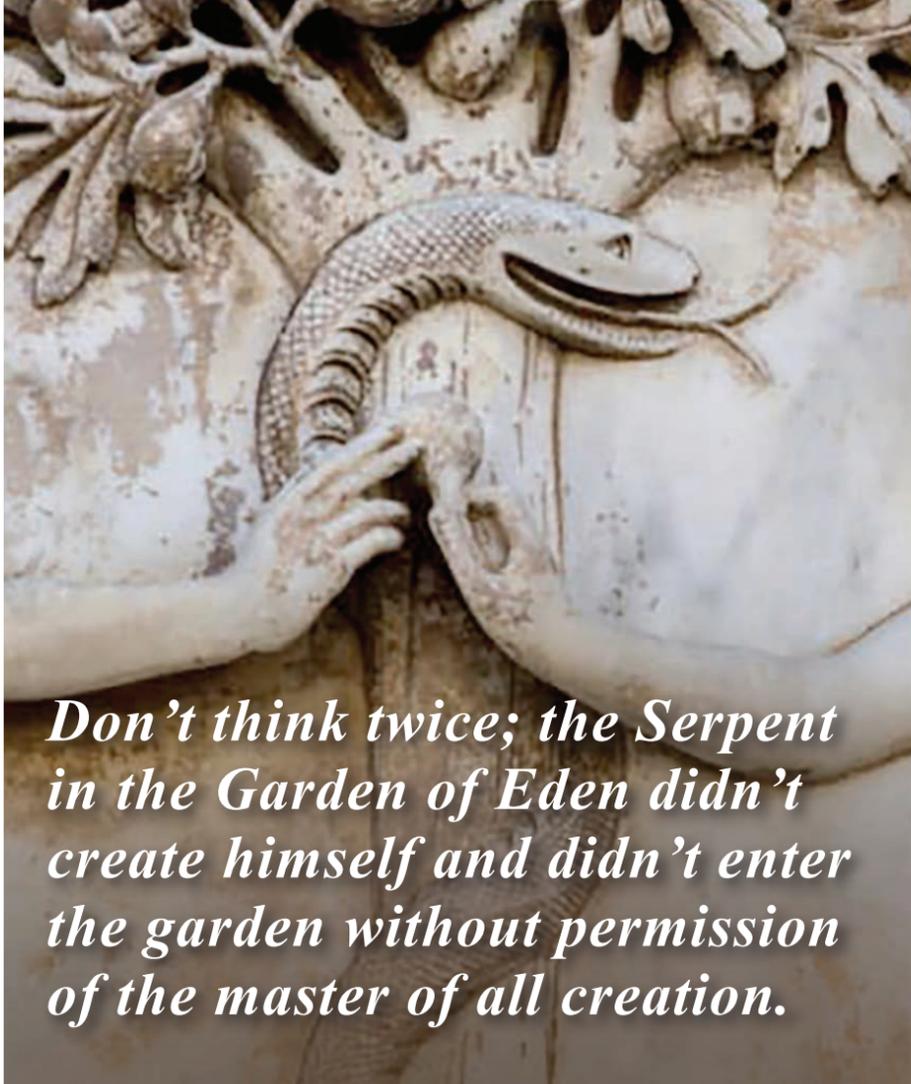
One of the most fascinating stories in the Bible is one that is often not known or mentioned in the study of God's word in Christian universities or from the pulpits of most churches. This is the story of the death of King Ahab. King Ahab is the most famous king of Israel

outside the pages of the Bible.

In 853 BC, the Assyrian king, Shalmaneser III, fought against a coalition of western kings near Qarqar in modern-day Syria. He left a description of the battle on a stele that was discovered in 1861 at Qarqar, near the Tigris River in Turkey. In the inscription on the Kurkh Monolith, he names "Ahab the Israelite" as one of the combatants and claims that he had one of the strongest forces, with 2000 chariots and 10000 soldiers.

The Qarqar Monolith of the Assyrian King Shalmaneser III mentions Ahab the Israelite. In this text, it is evident that King Ahab of Israel is a major player in the Middle East, side by side with the northern empires. The number





*Don't think twice; the Serpent in the Garden of Eden didn't create himself and didn't enter the garden without permission of the master of all creation.*

of his forces is a clear indication of his importance in the region.

In the Biblical narrative of King Ahab's death is the story of a lone prophet named Micaiah, the son of Imlah. Micaiah stood against the hundreds of prophets that supported and served King Ahab and his evil queen, Jezebel. All the false prophets prophesied that King Ahab and the forces of Israel would win the battle against the King of Assyria (Aram). The Israelite coalition was significant because Israel and Judea had not been friendly for many years, and there was deep enmity between these two halves of the Israelite nation.

In this situation, their common enemy was Assyria (Aram), and they joined forces. The King of Judea, Jehoshaphat, came to help King Ahab fight against

Assyrian King Shalmaneser III. The two kings, Ahab and Jehoshaphat, wouldn't go out to war without some assurance from God that they would be successful in defeating Shalmaneser III. So, King Ahab brought four hundred prophets who all prophesied the same words: The question that these prophets were asked was, "Shall I go against Ramoth Gilead to fight, or shall I refrain?" The answer of these 400 prophets to Ahab and Jehoshaphat was, "So they said, "Go up, for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king." King Jehoshaphat knew the Israelites. He knew that there was no way that 400 Israelites would ever agree to anything without at least some descent. So, he asked Ahab if there was any other prophet in Israel who might have a different answer. Ahab said that there is one guy who is always negative and against me.

Jehoshaphat said to Ahab, "Bring him over; I want to hear what he says. So, they brought Micaiah, the son of Imlah. Micaiah sees a vision of what is happening in the heavenly boardroom of the Almighty God Himself. Here is the discussion and answer that Micaiah and Ahab have with Micaiah's double answer to King Ahab:

"And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'Did I not tell you he would not prophesy good concerning me but evil?' Then Micaiah said, 'Therefore, hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left.' And the LORD said, 'Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?' So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner. Then a spirit came forward, stood before the LORD, and said, 'I will persuade him.' The LORD said to him, 'In what way?' So, he said, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And the LORD said, 'You shall persuade him and also prevail. Go out and do so.' Therefore look! The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you." (1 Kings 22:18–23 NKJV).

What we see here corresponds with the text of Job 1:6-10, "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So, Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth and from walking back and forth on it." Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?"

So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? 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 NKJV)

I am bringing these stories up to show the correlation and correspondence between the two scenes from 2 Kings and from Job 1. The two scenes project the same message, which is that Satan is not an independent agent that works independently from the Almighty God, the Creator of our Galaxy, but is totally dependent, just like the IRS income tax collector has a very negative and unpleasant job to do. Don't think twice; the Serpent in the Garden of Eden didn't create himself and didn't enter the garden without permission of the master of all creation, THE LORD Himself, who at least allowed that serpent, who is identified in the book of Revelation more than once as Satan.

For this article that I am writing about deception and lies, it is important for us to know and digest the story from 1 Kings 22 and understand that Micaiah the prophet sees THE SPIRIT, who is in the presence of THE ALMIGHTY, volunteer to go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of the prophets.

Now that I have set the stage for a panoramic view of this very difficult and challenging issue of deception and lies in the Bible, let us review the characters and personalities who used lies and the

reason behind the lies that they used:

Our father Abraham lies twice concerning Sarah his wife being his sister! Some Jewish and Christian writers and leaders have been trying to clear Abraham, our father, from the sin of speaking untruth. They say that Sarah was both his wife and his half-sister, thinking that it is a lesser sin to marry a sister (even if she is only his half-sister) than to lie. Here is the text that makes this sin severely punishable: "The nakedness of your sister, the daughter of your father, or the daughter of your mother, whether born at home or elsewhere, their nakedness you shall not uncover."

(Leviticus 18:9 NKJV). Just notice that according to this text, it can be your sister from either one side or the other, either the daughter of your father or the daughter of your mother.

Abraham's sin was doubly grievous; the fact that he lied and asked Sarah, his wife, to cooperate with his lie, was, in my opinion, even more serious, selfish, cruel, and extremely mean. To ask your wife to lie for your sake and endanger her life, well-being, and personal chastity is, in my opinion, and in the opinion of the Torah, a much more grievous sin. [1]

And for our father Abraham to do the same sin twice and for his son Isaac to repeat the same sin as his father makes the whole thing so much more serious.

Now let us go and see these lies and the incidents from a different perspective than the traditional one for both Jews and

*This action by Abraham shows the inflationary value of women in general and the fickleness of what we call "love of family" in the days of Abraham.*

Christians:

Abraham and Sara were strangers in the land of Egypt. For Abraham to have an audience with Pharaoh in those days is an indication that Abraham must have been someone very important, not only for his own people but as a person of influence in the region. Therefore, for Abraham to fear the integrity of Pharaoh is a clear indication of the power of Pharaoh and Abraham's diplomatic hedge to protect himself. As it is clear from the text, the lie that Abraham used was for his own protection. He was willing to abandon Sarah, his wife,

[1] "Please say you are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you."

(Genesis 12:13 NKJV). This was in Egypt with the Pharaoh. It should be noted that not every tourist who goes to Egypt for business (buying and selling) will have an audience with the Pharaoh. The second incident is with Abimelech, King of Gerar: "Now Abraham said of Sarah, his wife, "She is my sister." And Abimelech, king of Gerar sent and took Sarah." (Genesis 20:2 NKJV). It should also be noticed that Abraham spells his reason for asking Sarah to lie very directly: "so it may be well with me!"

[2] "So Isaac dwelt in Gerar. And the men of the place asked about his wife. And he said, "She is my sister"; for he was afraid to say, "She is my wife," because he thought, "lest the men of the place kill me for Rebekah, because she is beautiful to behold." Now it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech, king of the Philistines, looked through a window and saw, and there was Isaac, showing endearment to Rebekah, his wife. Then Abimelech called Isaac and said, "Quite obviously, she is your wife; so how could you say, 'She is my sister'?" Isaac said to him, "Because I said, 'Lest I die on account of her.'" And Abimelech said, "What is this you have done to us? One of the people might soon have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt on us." So Abimelech charged all his people, saying, "He who touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death." (Genesis 26:6–11, NKJV)

***So, why didn't God punish them for this sin of lying and deception? There doesn't seem to be a direct correlation between the events in Grar and Egypt with any known punishment or anger from God's side against Abraham!***

into the hands of the Pharaoh and later into the hands of Abimelech, king of Grar for his own good. This action by Abraham shows the inflationary value of women in general and the fickleness of what we call "love of family" in the days of Abraham (around the 18th century B.C.E. – Middle Bronze Age).

We see that the attitude of Abraham toward Sarah, his beloved wife, was transmitted to Isaac, his son, who did the same thing as his father, as it is recorded in Genesis 26:7–11. The thing that is fascinating to me in these stories

is the integrity of the Pharaoh and the same is true of Abimelech, King of Grar. Abraham and Isaac lied for their own safety, but the pagan kings, both the Egyptian Pharaoh and Abimelech the Philistine king, showed a degree of nobility beyond and above that of Abraham and Isaac his son. [2]

So, why did Abraham and Isaac lie to these pagan kings? They lied out of fear and out of a desire to save their own lives, and their distrust in God's blanket of protection that was already on them was demonstrated in the battle against the five kings of the north that captured Lot and his family. So, why didn't God punish them for this sin of lying and deception? There doesn't seem to be a direct correlation between the events in Grar and Egypt with any known punishment or anger from God's side against Abraham!

I would like to think that God takes into account our human frailties and weaknesses, our fears, and our anxieties. At times God understands our predicament, the predicament that He at least allows us to fall into. Just like in the flood of Noah. God was angry and caused the flood that, according to the Biblical narrative, destroyed all of humanity except the eight souls that were in the Ark of Noah during the flood, i.e., Noah and his family. After the flood, God shows some regret for having caused the flood and destroying the human race except for a few privileged characters. Now God makes a covenant with Noah and all of humanity forever that anyone who sheds blood or kills another human being, be it an animal or another human, his blood will be required, and his life will be taken. For this reason, God, in this covenant with Noah and his seed, gave the rainbow as a sign of the covenant that He, God, would not ever destroy all of humanity for any reason. This, in

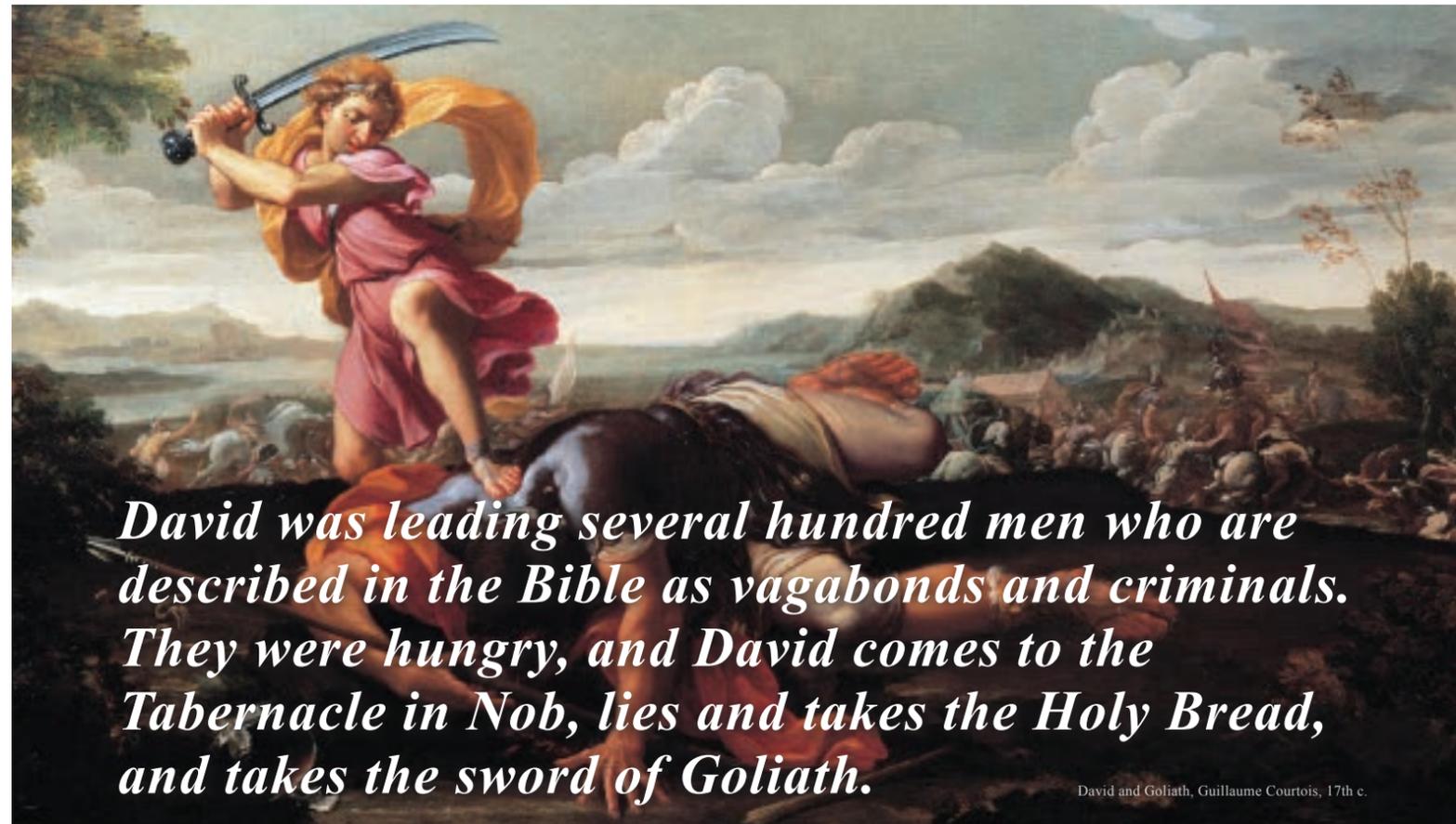
my opinion, shows that God had second thoughts about the flood and therefore gave the rainbow and the covenant that He would not destroy humanity with water a second time.

In my opinion, this is also the reason why God overlooks the sins and lies of Abraham and Isaac, understands their fears and their anxiety, and just goes along with the program to produce a SAVIOUR of the world through these humans, who have on their shoulders the salvation of the whole creation. The text in all three of these cases where our Patriarchs, Abraham and Isaac, repeated the same sin points out the sin but does not indicate any actual punishment or even a major reprimand of our Patriarchs.

This analysis by no means indicates that it is okay to lie and deceive! It does put a moral and just situation into the lives of humans that says that there is a relativity and priority where a sin is weighed against reality and mitigated by reality.

I could apply this principle to the thousands of cases where Christian, Catholic, and Protestant leaders lied and endangered their own lives in order to hide and protect Jews and Jewish children from the hands of the Nazi military and police. These Christians not only lied, but at times also resorted to stealing food to feed the extra souls hidden in their homes.

No! Lies and deception are not okay; they are not permitted under normal circumstances. But sin is relative, and the sacrifices for sin are relative as to who is the sinner and what he has to offer for his atonement. The rich sinner has to offer a bull for his atonement. The middle-class sinner who committed the same sin as the rich sinner has to offer a goat or a sheep. The poor



***David was leading several hundred men who are described in the Bible as vagabonds and criminals. They were hungry, and David comes to the Tabernacle in Nob, lies and takes the Holy Bread, and takes the sword of Goliath.***

David and Goliath, Guillaume Courtois, 17th c.

sinner that can't afford a goat or a ship can bring two birds, and even from a poorer sinner, God would be satisfied if he brought only a handful of grain anointed with oil, and that would have the same efficiency as the bull for the rich person. You see, dear brothers, the LORD grades us on the "Bell Curve!"

On the other hand, we do have the following words from God's wisdom texts that we must take into account and not neglect to always have these words of God in our mind in order to keep us in the favor and grace of God almighty.

Proverbs 10:9 says, "Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out."

Proverbs 12:22 says, "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who

act faithfully are his delight."

But, on the other hand, we have some very prominent characters in the Bible that did lie and deceive, even the priests in the tabernacle of the Lord. The most famous of these is the case with King David that later is also used to justify the disciples of Yeshua for picking grain on the Sabbath on the way between Nazareth and Capernaum, while walking through the valley of Beit Netofa toward the north side of the sea of Galilee.

Here is the story of David and the Tabernacle of the Lord in Nob. [3]

"So, David said to Ahimelech the priest, "The king has ordered me on some business and said to me, 'Do not let anyone know anything about the business on which I send you or what

I have commanded you.' And I have directed my young men to such and such a place. Now, therefore, what have you on hand? Give me five loaves of bread in my hand, or whatever can be found."

And the priest answered David and said, "There is no common bread on hand, but there is holy bread, if the young men have at least kept themselves from women." Then David answered the priest and said to him, "Truly, women have been kept from us about three days since I came out. And the vessels of the young men are holy, and the bread is in effect common, even though it was consecrated in the vessel this day." So, the priest gave him holy bread, for there was no bread there but the showbread which had been taken from before the LORD, in order to put hot bread in its place on the day when

[3] Heb nōb נוב]. Town north-east of Jerusalem where David met Ahimelech the priest (1 Sam 21:1). It was here that David and his companions ate the bread of the presence (an episode mentioned in Jesus' dispute with the Pharisees concerning the Sabbath; cf. Matt 12:1–4, Mark 2:23–28, and Luke 6:1–5) and where David received the weapons of Goliath. During this time Nob apparently held the position of chief sanctuary of YHWH after the fall of Shilo

it was taken away. Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the LORD. And his name was Doeg, an Edomite, the chief of the herdsmen who belonged to Saul. And David said to Ahimelech, “Is there not here on hand a spear or a sword? For I have brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king’s business required haste.” So, the priest said, “The sword of Goliath

David lied when he said that the king, i.e., King Saul, the first king of Israel, sent him to Ahimelech the Priest in Nob to get this holy bread for his people. He also deceived Ahimelech, the priest that King Saul sent him to collect the weapons of Goliath, the Philistine giant that David killed in the valley of Ella.

What we have here is a story with David who was not yet a King in Israel,

central Galilee with the Pharisees. Yeshua brings up this story of David and Ahimelech the Priest and the fact that there is no condemnation of David or his men for eating on Shabbat the hot bread baked by the Priests of Nob for the Lord’s table in the Tabernacle. The indication that David was not reprimanded by God or by God’s prophets for his deeds on that Shabbat is a legal precedent that for people who

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the Philistine, whom you killed in the Valley of Elah, there it is, wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you will take that, take it. For there is no other except that one here.”

And David said, “There is none like it; give it to me.” (1 Samuel 21:2–9 NKJV)

This story about King David is one of the more complex stories in the Hebrew Bible. Here are the problems:

It was Shabbat – on Shabbat, the holy bread that was baked by the priest to replace the bread that was baked a week earlier. This bread sat on a special table inside the tabernacle. It was an offering for the Lord. Symbolic, but holy and dedicated to God.

This bread was not to be eaten by people who were not consecrated on any day, but especially not on Shabbat, the day that the bread was baked and placed on the Holy Table.

but a fugitive from King Saul and his men. David was leading several hundred men who are described in the Bible as vagabonds and criminals. They were hungry, and David comes to the Tabernacle in Nob, lies and takes the Holy Bread, and takes the sword of Goliath.

Normally, the Biblical narrative about David is not kind to him when he sins. When David sins, the Lord sends one of the two popular prophets who served David, Gad and Nathan. These prophets faced David and corrected him for his sins, and David very faithfully repented. In this case with the holy bread that was baked on Shabbat and the lies that he spoke in the name of King Saul, there is no prophet, no divine voice, and no punishment. As they say in the south of the USA, David comes out of this event in Nob “Scott-free!” It is on this very basis that the encounter of Yeshua and His disciples on the way to Capernaum through the valley of Netofa in the

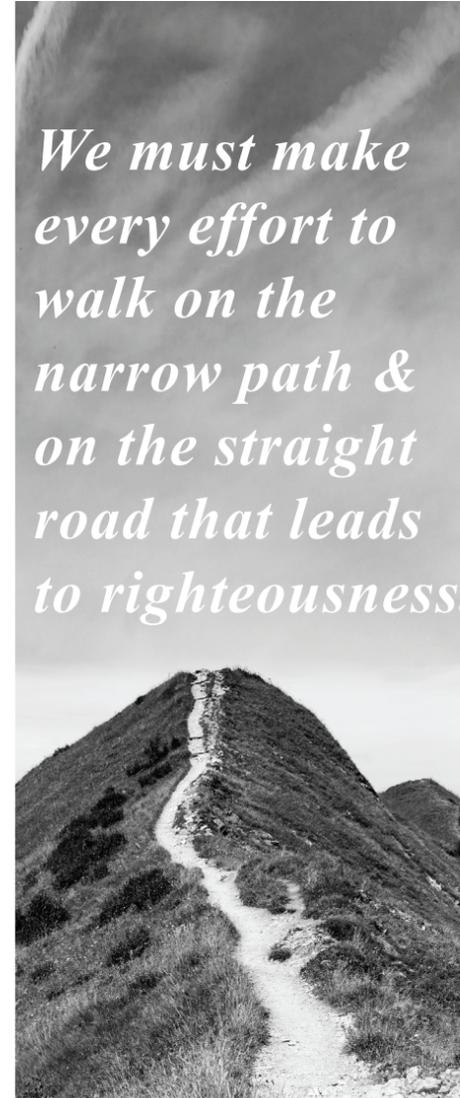
are hungry it is o.k., break the Sabbath laws. The same is true for people who are sick on the Sabbath.

What is the conclusion of the moral of this story with David in Nob and the lies that David used to achieve his goal and feed his band of 400 vagabonds and criminals that accompanied David during his fugitive years from King Saul’s anger?

I believe that Yeshua drew an analogy between King David and his men who were hungry and his disciples who picked up the green wheat and rubbed it with their fingers to get the grain and eat it. The wheat that is not yet fully ripe and can be squeezed out of the pod easily is called “Carmel” in Biblical Hebrew, and it is sweeter than ripe wheat, which is dry and hard.

I learn from this story that, for the preservation and survival of the soul, the life, or the health of a person, it is

*We must make every effort to walk on the narrow path & on the straight road that leads to righteousness.*



ok to deceive. One of the stories that I heard on the radio many years ago was about the Rabbi of the city of Hebron in the 1920s, Rabbi Slonim of Hebron. It was a typical Hebron winter, and it was Friday evening—a dark afternoon with heavy snow outside. Just a minute after Shabbat entered, Rabbi Slonim looked out of his window to see what the weather was like, and he saw the old

widow woman pacing back and forth very nervously. Many of the families and especially people who lived alone without relatives living with them would have a “Goy Shel Shabbat”—a non-Jew who would come and put wood in their stoves on Shabbat and turn the lights out on Friday evening. This Friday evening, the weather was so bad, and the widow was waiting for the Arab helper that used to come to turn off the lights (the oil lamp) and put a little more wood in the stove to keep the fire burning and the heat warming the house for a little longer. Well, Rabbi Slonim looks through the window and sees the widow woman looking through the window, waiting for the Arab to come, and becoming more and more anxious—the Arab is not coming because of the stormy weather. Well, after the Sabbath has already entered Rabbi Slonim puts on his Kafia (Arab headdress) and his coat and goes across the street to the widow’s house and speaks Arabic to her, puts the wood in the fire-place, fills the big clay water pot, turns off the oil lamps in the widow’s house, and wishes her a peaceful Shabbat and a good night in Arabic. Because it is a greater Mitzvah – good deed – to take care and comfort the widow than the observation of the Shabbat commandment.

We have the very same paradigm in the New Testament with the healing of the paralyzed man in the synagogue on the Sabbath.

We learn from these texts in the Bible and from the way that God treats King David and the patriarchs that not all the commandments have the same gravity and that a grave commandment is so much more important than a light commandment that we must observe. It is important to learn this point, and it is also just as important to avoid having to break even the lightest commandment of the Lord. However, life is not so kind to us sometimes, and the choices that we have to make are between the bad and the worst. In fact, we seldom have the privilege or the opportunity to choose between black and white. The choices are more often between light gray and darker gray, but it is gray.

I could use the case of Laban, who lied and deceived Jacob more than once in the 20 plus years that Jacob worked for him, his father-in-law, in order to marry the love of his life and come out of Syria with at least some wealth to start a new life in the land that God promised his grandfather Abraham for all the generations.

This is how the Lord God, the Father of all of us, has treated the major biblical characters from the beginning of creation to this very day.

I am repeating the principle that the Lord uses in judging us, his human children. It is the principle of relativity of all things! Only God is absolute in

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# ***Orthodox Jewish doctors and nurses work on Shabbat to heal and bless people who are suffering from health issues. Policemen and women work on the Sabbath and even on the day of Yom Kippur.***

all His ways, but He created us and all around us to live and function, do good, and be a blessing, knowing our frailties and inclinations.

I believe that all man created in the image of God want and desire to do good and be righteous, but at times they make bad judgments and out if the evil inclination of their hearts and passionate desires for the easy and wrong they make bad decisions that lead to other bad decisions and finally to the need to repent. As you read the prophets in the Bible, you can see that Israel as a nation for most of Biblical history didn't exactly walk in the straight and narrow path of the Lord. But God has love and patience for people in general and for Israel specifically, and the measure of God's grace seems to have

precedence over God's desire to punish and show His wrath.

On the other hand, we must make every effort to walk on the narrow path and on the straight road that leads to righteousness. If we have to make a deviation from the straight and narrow path of truth, love, and grace, it should always be only when doing good supersedes the deviant behavior or tweaking of truth like King David, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had to do to achieve a righteous and fair result for their righteous and just reward. Jesus heard on the Sabbath, knowing the relativity of the Sabbath commands. Orthodox Jewish doctors and nurses work on Shabbat to heal and bless people who are suffering from health issues. Policemen and women work on the Sabbath and even on the day of Yom Kippur (the day of atonement). People who work in the defense industry in Israel—some of them are even ultra-Orthodox Jews—do their best to observe the light and heavy commandments under normal circumstances. When they need to work in saving lives and combating terrorists, these Orthodox Jews drive cars and military equipment and do all that is necessary to allow the normal population to have peace and be able to honor the holiday.

Below there is a chain of texts that give us the admonition and instruction of how God wants His children to live and what is the 100% desirable and wishful life that we all want to live and be pleasing both to God and man. How real and how sad it is that most of us aren't always able, because of circumstances in life, to stay on the straight and narrow of God's commands. Please take the chain of texts from God's Word with extremely serious intent and desire and pray that you will never have to resort to deception and lies to save yourself, a family member, or a fellow man who has

fallen into life challenges that necessitate doing what Abraham did or what King David did in the town of Nob.

Galatians 5:16-26, "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ..."

Galatians 6:7-8: "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life."

Romans 12:2, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

Proverbs 11:3, "The integrity of the upright guides them, but the crookedness of the treacherous destroys them." — I especially like this text from Proverbs. It is so important to know and understand this clear instruction of the Holy Spirit for us all. The integrity of the upright (righteous) guides us in times of testing and in times of choices that are not so good. Trust the Holy Spirit to be your guide in times of deep conflict to take decisions that all seem not so straight, and all choices seem difficult and hard.

Luke 6:31: "And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them." For

me, these words of our Lord are the greatest key for wise and just decisions to make in questionable situations with hard decisions.

Ephesians 4:31–32: "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

Colossians 3:9 says, "Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices..."

Mark 7:20-22, "And he said, 'What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.'"

1 John 4:1 says, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world." This one is especially important, and it is based on Jeremiah 17:5–9. "Thus says the LORD: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the LORD. For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when good comes, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land which is not inhabited. "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is the LORD. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots

by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green and will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"

2 Peter 2:12–22, "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them, the way of truth will be blasphemed. And in their greed, they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;..."

2 Thessalonians 2:9–12 "The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness." I especially like these words of the Apostle Paul. God

sends the sons of disobedience "a strong delusion (lies), so that they may believe what is false (lies)... Follow the logic of this text and you will understand from where I am coming to my conclusions in this paper!

Judges 16:4-20, "After this he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, "Seduce him, and see where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him to humble him. And we will each give you 1,100 pieces of silver." So Delilah said to Samson, "Please tell me where your great strength lies, and how you might be bound, that one could subdue you." Samson said to her, "If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings that have not been dried, then I shall become weak and be like any other man." Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings that had not been dried, and she bound him with them. ...". This story of Samson and Delilah is of great importance in the history of mankind. The biggest deceptions have been between men and women. The agents of deception, from the Garden of Eden to the stories of Samson and Delilah and several other stories of women who have caused good men and even men of God to fail and fall into their web of deception, are something to be super careful about and super vigilant about. We have the story of Levi and Shimon and how they deceived the sons of Shechem and convinced them to be circumcised in order to be able to marry the daughters of Jacob.

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## ***ABOUT THE AUTHOR***

Joseph Shulam was born in Sofia, Bulgaria on March 24, 1946 to a Sephardic Jewish Family. In 1948, his family immigrated to Israel just before the establishment of the State. While in high school, he was introduced to the New Testament and immediately identified with the person of Yeshua. In 1981, Joseph and the small fellowship that was started in his house established one of the first official non-profit organizations of Jewish Disciples of Yeshua in Israel – Netivyah Bible Instruction Ministry. Joseph has lectured extensively and has assisted in encouraging disciples around the world. He and his wife Marcia have two children and two grandchildren.

# DECEIVING SOMEONE

Anonymous

My friends say to me you're deceiving her and her family. I thought for a while in my heart. How have I misled, betrayed, double-crossed, or made her believe something that is not true (the definition taken from Merriam-Webster dictionary)?

I care for her and her family. I know they care for me also. She asked to pray for a member of the family and others. I pray for my people in Israel. Just as the disciples did. I have not told her I believe in Yeshua ben David the Mashiach (Messiah). My friends say, "so you are deceiving her," that you, in her eyes (understanding), are not a Jew and are a traitor. I told them how do you think we, believing in Yeshua the son of God, can live in Israel in peace and not with contempt from our fellow Jews?

First, they must see how we live: that we love our neighbors as ourselves, that we are honest, keep the commandments, keep kosher, and keep Shabbat. Then, if they ask us, and if God puts it in our hearts to speak about God's beloved son Yeshua, then, and only then, we must speak up.

My father of blessed memory said, "Don't say or pronounce out loud in Israel, you believe in Yeshua. The eyes of our people have scales on them for the sake of the gentiles." There will come a time that Israel will look on Him, the one whom they have pierced, and they will mourn for Him (Zechariah 12:10). Their minds are hardened. For, to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Yeshua is it taken away (2 Corinthians 3:14).

In 2015, there was a young Jewish boy, a secular, called Natan. He was 15 years old when he died and went to

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heaven. He was shown what will happen in the future. In the first account of his testimony, he saw the Mashiach and when he would come to Israel. He said, "Everyone will be very, very surprised that he is, of all people, the Mashiach." (YouTube "Rabbi Rami Levy and 15-year-old Natan give-clinical death-testimony about the end of days coming soon") Natan didn't reveal in his testimony who the Mashiach is on the YouTube. In his first testimony, he said the Mashiach told him not to tell—it's not time yet.

Rabbi Yitzhak Kaduri, a very famous, well-respected Rabbi in Israel who passed away on January 28, 2006, left a note and asked that it be read after his death. In the note, he said Yeshua is the Mashiach. He didn't reveal it before he died because it wouldn't have been accepted. Rabbi Kaduri's closest friends knew and also believed in the Mashiach.

Generally, he received people, but they didn't know he believed in Yeshua. After the note that Rabbi Kaduri wrote, the son said it was a forgery, but I don't think it was a forgery; it had been checked twice.

All of the religious Jewish communities didn't accept that Rabbi Kaduri believed in Yeshua ("The Rabbi who found Messiah" on DVD and online). There are secret believers in Israel who believe in Yeshua among the orthodox, Charedim, conservatives, and seculars today.

Have I, Natan, Rabbi Kaduri, and other Jewish believers deceived the Jewish community? No. Even after Yeshua passed away, the disciples stayed low for a while and many believers kept it secret (book of Acts). In the time of Paul, before Yeshua appeared to him, the believers hid from Paul because he was persecuting believers.

I haven't ever told her or her family that I am an orthodox Jew. I only said to them that I am a Jew trying my best to love my neighbor as myself, keep commandments, keep shabbat and kosher. My friends wonder how I answer when she asks me, "What synagogue do you go to? Where is it located?" They want to know how I answer. There are several synagogues around my place that I go to, and then I stay the whole shabbat with someone or some family. I go to their synagogue. Sometimes, I have to work the night or day of shabbat and am unable to go to synagogue, but I pray at home and read the parsha and haftarah for that Shabbat.

So, what then if they ask what Rabbi you go to? I told her, presently I have no specific Rabbi. I read the comments of Rabbi Sacks. I have gone to a lecture that Rabbi Rivlin gave

which was very interesting. I listened to a Rabbi during Chanukah that was for women.

My mouth isn't full of cursing, deceit, and fraud (Psalms 10:7). My mouth is loving, willing to listen and cry when sad things happen to her and her family. I speak on the Tanach (Bible). I have no scheme to deceive them (Psalms 35:20). I have no evil scheme to destroy, divide, or hurt her or her family. I pray they, too, will know Yeshua as God's beloved son.

My friends say to me, "You are endangering her and her family for having contact with them." They are in an orthodox community, and whom they associate with shows in the community. It puts a bad light on them if someone knows you are a Jew that believes in Yeshua the Mashiach. In the orthodox community word gets around if they see you with them. They themselves don't know that you believe in Yeshua the beloved son of God. Someone might say to her and to her family, "She believes in Yeshua, are you like her?" Or they might not say a word and not talk with her and her family in the orthodox community. My friends say the day will come when they will find out, and they will feel betrayed.

I told my friends that I pray for her and her family often. I tried to cut it off, but I really love her and her family. They also care for me. If the day comes that they find out, I pray they too will have the appearance of Yeshua the beloved son of God. If they ask me, "Do you believe in Yeshua, that he is the Mashiach?" I will answer, "Yes."

In conclusion, have I deceived her and her family? The answer is no. I have kept it secret just like many people in Israel have also kept it secret; that they believe in Yeshua, today. Have I misled her about who I am? No, I am still a Jew. It's the general Jewish community who popularize the belief that when you believe in Yeshua that you're not a Jew. Even Paul said he was and is a Jew after he experienced the appearance of Yeshua (Acts 21:39, 22:3). Have I made her believe in something that is not truth? No. When I stay for shabbat, we talk about the parsha and haftarah, and sometimes about the prophets. It is strictly the Tanach (Bible).

I believe that it will be revealed who the Mashiach is, and then all of Israel and the Jewish people will know that I and many other believers in Yeshua didn't deceive or betray them. Written with the knowledge of the Lord by a Jew that believes in Yeshua the Mashiach.

# A DECEITFUL COVENANT

by Pnina

When I think of lies, deception, and betrayal, many biblical passages come to mind. Starting in the book of Genesis with the snake in the Garden of Eden, throughout the stories of the Patriarchs, into the books of Joshua and Judges. There are also many examples from the time of the kings. In the New Testament, we also have several examples. It shows how we humans never change from that moment in the Garden of Eden when man first sinned until today. We lie, deceive, and betray.

None of us can claim that he never told a lie, whether (as we often want to tell ourselves) for a good purpose or not. We are all guilty of not always telling the truth. The concept of deception, “the concealment or distortion of the truth for the purpose of misleading someone,” is also found in many biblical passages, one of which is in the book of Joshua.

The people of Israel crossed the Jordan River and started their conquest of the promised land. From their camp in the Jordan Valley, they moved to the hill country and took over the local settlements as God instructed them. In chapter 8, we read about the conquest of Ai, after which Joshua builds an altar for the LORD on Mount Ebal.

Today, some 3000 years later, the remains of a large, fieldstone-made structure filled with ashes stands on Mount Ebal. This remarkable structure is dated to the time of the Israelite conquests and is the only structure from that time period on the entire hill. Its remarkable architecture, which has no direct parallels, the place, and the ashes of animal bones led its discoverer and excavator, Adam Zertal, to the understanding that this must be the altar Joshua built and the place where, some 3000 years ago, the people of Israel stood and heard the words of the Torah, as it says in Joshua 8:34–35. “And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing, and the curse, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the sojourners who lived among them.”

Though Joshua repeated the Torah given to the people of Israel and spoke it aloud in front of the entire people and even to the sojourners who joined them, it did not take long before Joshua and the other leaders were betrayed because the people already forgot about those very words.

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In Joshua chapter 9, we read about the Gibeonites, a group of people located not far from Ai and Jericho in four different towns: Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kiryath-Yearim. They are part of the Hivites, a tribe in the land of Canaan mentioned in the Bible.

Gibeon itself is located about 10 kilometres north of Jerusalem, along the road from Jericho in the east to



*Joshua was the leader of the people, but the text clearly indicates that he was not the only one making the decision to agree on a covenant with the foreigners.*

the Mediterranean coast in the west. As the adjacent Beth Horon Pass is the best passageway to the Judean and Ephraimite hill country, one who conquers Gibeon could easily get south to Jerusalem or north to Bethel, Shiloh, and Shechem and attack those places. The easy control of the roads made Gibeon a very strategic town, despite its relatively small size in the time of Joshua.

The Gibeonites understood the importance of their location, and the quickly spreading news about the destruction of the neighbouring town of Ai that some of them possibly saw frightened them. They understood that the Israelites would inherit the land and later admitted to Joshua that they were sure “...that the Lord your God had commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you—so we feared greatly for our

lives” (9:24).

Therefore, they decided to act with cunning. The only way to escape a certain death was to make a covenant with the Israelites, who would not want it if they knew who stood in front of them. Thus, the Gibeonites came up with a sly plan to tell the Israelites that they came from a faraway land to make a peace agreement.

When the Gibeonites came to Joshua, he was in Gilgal east of Jericho. Though we don’t know its exact location, we do learn that the Israelites, after crossing the Jordan, encamped here and set up the twelve stones that they took from the Jordan here as a sign. From this Gilgal, they set out on their battles to conquer the land. The exact site of Gilgal, usually understood as a heap or a circle of stones where people gathered for cultic purposes, is not easy to identify. Several sites from

Joshua’s time in the Jordan Valley that fit the description have been found in the past decades.

Four sites, in the form of a large footprint, have been identified and dated to the period of the conquest of the land by the Israelites. The largest of them is located some 30 kilometres north of Jericho, where a large natural theatre enables people spreading out on the mountain to clearly hear a person standing at the foot of the hill speaking.

No signs of living spaces have been found around this ‘footprint’, and it was identified by the archaeologist Adam Zertal as a ‘gilgal’, a gathering place. It does not fit the description ‘east of Jericho’, but it might give an indication of what these Gilgals looked like. Also, as the number of the people of Israel was great, we can imagine that their encampment spread out over

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the Jordan Valley between Jericho and the Jordan.

Though their distance to the Israelite camp in the Jordan Valley is no more than a day's journey, the Gibeonites arrived at Gilgal in old, worn clothes and patched sandals. Their donkeys carried torn and mended wineskins, and their bread was dry and crumbly. This miserable appearance, of course all set up, did its work.

Initially, the Israelites were a little hesitant when those foreigners suggested making a covenant and asked them if they were living "among them". Nevertheless, the conversation afterwards convinced the Israelites that they indeed came from a distant country. Though Joshua and the other leaders must have thought about the

words they read not long before on Mount Ebal, they ignored them and did not ask counsel from the Lord, who told them: "When the Lord your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it and clears away many nations before you—the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites—seven nations more numerous and mightier than you—and when the Lord your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them, then you must devote them to complete destruction. You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them. You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, for they would turn away your sons from following me to serve other gods. Then the anger of the Lord would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly. But thus shall you deal with them: you shall break down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and chop down their Asherim and burn their carved images with fire. For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth." (Deut. 7:1-6).

So, then, the people of Israel were obligated by the agreement to let the people of Gibeon live. Soon, the leadership started to receive complaints from the people, but there was no way to break their oath without causing God's wrath to come upon them. And thus, the leaders decided to give the Gibeonites a special position as servants of the Israelites: "But Joshua made them that day cutters of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and for the altar of the Lord, to this day, in the place that he should choose." (Josh. 9: 27). This

special task brought the Gibeonites as close as one can get to the altar where sacrifices were offered to the LORD.

Maybe it is because of this special service that God did not punish the Gibeonites severely for their act. Moreover, He even protected them, as we read in Joshua 10. Five Amorite kings came against Gibeon. The Gibeonites quickly informed Joshua and asked for his help because they had a covenant, and Joshua, with God's help, struck the enemy. Even large stones were sent from heaven to kill the army of the Amorites (Josh. 10:11).

The story of the Gibeonites and the Israelites, which began with deception, ended in a good way. Over the course of history, Gibeon gained more importance and played a significant role in the history of Israel. It is among the cities of Benjamin and the Levites (Joshua 18:25 and 21:17). David defeated the men of Abner ben Ner at Gibeon (2 Samuel 2:12), Solomon received the gift of wisdom at Gibeon (1 Kings 3:4–15), and it became the seat of the tabernacle of God (1 Chronicles 21:29). Until today, the remains of Gibeon were a reminder to us of the biblical account and how God can turn any situation to good.

The first story of the Gibeonites and the Israelites might feel far from our reality. However, important spiritual lessons can be drawn from this episode. The most obvious might be the lack of counselling with God before making a big decision, as we see in verse 14.

However, more lessons can be drawn from this passage. The first is discernment. Discernment of what is true and what is not, and what spirit is behind a word, a situation, or a person. The New Testament teaches us about this spiritual gift (1 Cor. 12:10), and

for sure it is one we need in our daily lives.

More than ever, lies are made to seem like truth, and many are deceived by what the world has to offer. Therefore, the second lesson is of equal importance: to have God's commandments always in our thoughts and on our hearts.

Joshua, who not only saw the miracles God did for His people, but also just read out aloud to them all the commandments, did not take the prohibition of making a covenant with the locals very seriously. The outcome had far-reaching consequences.

We also should have God's word on our minds, as the psalmist says in Psalm 119:97–98, "Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me." Had Joshua only remembered this, the outcome of the Gibeonites' trick might have been very different. And if we remember this, our lives will change dramatically, as our enemies will not be able to overcome us.

This shows us another lesson, namely, that the (spiritual) leadership does not always act correctly. Joshua was the leader of the people, but the text clearly indicates that he was not the only one making the decision to agree on a covenant with the foreigners. "The leaders of the congregation swore to them," says verse 15. Who those leaders were is not told, but they also must have heard the words of the law on Mount Ebal. They should have

*Someone claiming to believe God's word does not make him necessarily a good party for a covenant!*

corrected their main leader, Joshua, and told him to ask the Lord about the situation.

Instead, they also lacked discernment, and we do not read about a single voice opposing the act of making a covenant. The common people, though, complained, knowing the agreement with the Gibeonites was against God's instructions. This shows us how important it is to have individual discernment, granted by the Holy Spirit.

This brings me to the last lesson that we can draw from this story. That is, the enemy is very astute, and, more importantly, he knows God's word and even believes it. The Gibeonites told Joshua that they came because they heard what the LORD had done, and they believed it; otherwise, there would have been no need for them to try to escape the Israelites.

If the Gibeonites thought they would be stronger than (the God of) the Israelites, they would not have undertaken all the effort to come to Gilgal. However, someone claiming

to believe God's word does not make him necessarily a good party for a covenant! As James 2:19 reminds us, believing something does not make the difference between us and other people or even demons: "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!"

We are distinct from others when we live out and practice the word of God in all our decisions: "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22). In that way, living according to God's commandments, we can stand firm against the enemy. Yeshua taught us that "the sons of this world are shrewder in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light" (Luke 16:8).

Outer appearances and nice and even religious talk might deceive us very easily. Therefore, we should act only after investigation and counselling with the Lord. We should "trust in the Lord with all our heart, and not lean on our own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5).

But, even if we fail, our God is merciful. He continued to bless the Israelites, and because of Gibeon, he showed his greatness to the people of Israel several times. Even today, He shows us his mercy, giving His people a home in the land He promised—a land full of places reminding us of His goodness and great deeds.

Blessed be our God, whose mercy endures forever!

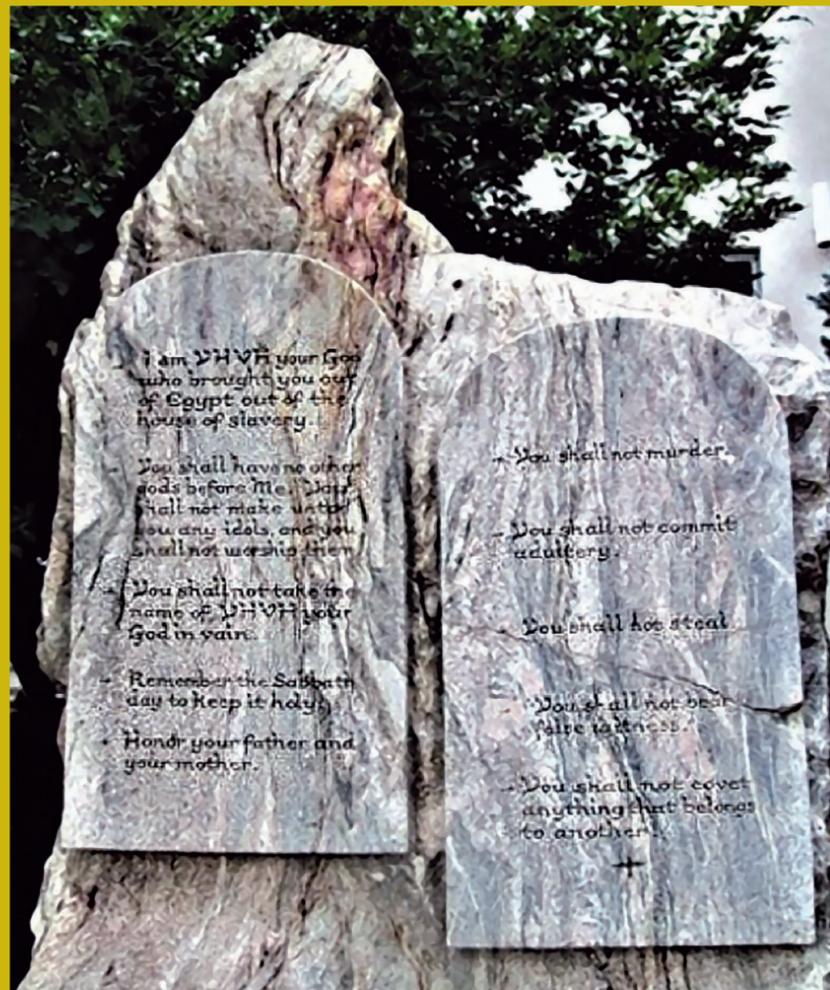
**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Pnina has been living in Israel for the past five years while also studying Biblical archaeology. She likes to explore the land of Israel, uncover its past, and enjoy the variety in nature, people, and stories that the land is blessed with.

# DECEPTION

## THE BROKEN ROD OF MEASUREMENT

by Elhanan ben-Avraham

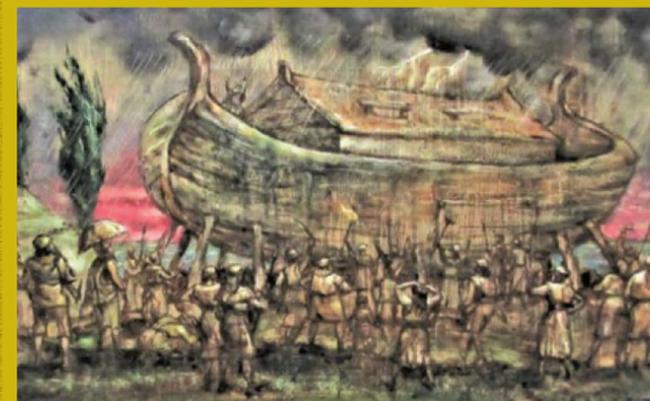


*“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!”*

Isaiah 5:20-21



When all standards of measurement are eroded and destroyed, everything becomes possible, even probable. When lawlessness prevails, values become relative only to the eye of the beholder, and lies can be held as truths without any existing argument. Absolutes become anachronisms to be scoffed and their purveyors scorned. Art becomes whatever one defines it to be, and music becomes noise—a cacophony without rhyme or reason. And all distinctions become blurred, be it male and female, right and wrong, good and evil, order becomes chaos, and dialogue is replaced with violence. And thus, with creeping deception comes the end of the age and of viable civilization.



Will the Free World recognize that it has drifted far from its foundation of the Judeo-Christian worldview of morality and ethics and truth? Will especially Americans remember and come to appreciate their great freedom “endowed by their Creator” while they still have it? Or will they continue to abuse that freedom without the responsibility that comes with it, continuing to indoctrinate their children from kindergarten to college with ideas that are antithetical to those endowed by the Creator, creating a generation not unlike that described in the days of Noah, and the similar consequences following?

We cannot break the inviolable laws of the Creator with impunity.

*“Observe and obey these words which I command you, that it may go well with you and your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of YHVH your God.”*

Deuteronomy 12:28

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elhanan ben-Avraham, born in 1945, is a professional artist, poet, writer, father of two, and grandfather of four, and he has been living in Israel since 1979. He has served in the IDF, taught the Bible internationally, published five illustrated books of poetry, painted two large Biblical murals in public buildings in Jerusalem, and most recently produced THE JERUSALEM ILLUSTRATED BIBLE, among many other works. He and his wife live in a quiet village in the Mountains of Judah.

# LIES & DECEPTIONS

by Lion Erwtaman



*Did this couple make a mistake? Yes. Were they damned and doomed? Not at all. But they were at the head of the exodus of humankind from Paradise.*

**W**e should not lie, and we should not deceive. Yet in the Torah, Nevi'im (Prophets), Ketuvim (Writings) and Berit Chadashah (New Testament), we encounter challenges regarding these kinds of communication. There are

enough of these lies and deceptions that they deserve a closer look, for at least two good reasons. First, they don't seem to be wrong as often there is no stern warning or punishment. And second, the G-d of Israel is involved in certain interactions with people where

questions arise. The purpose of this article is to make an inventory of most of these peculiar interactions and to find any hints as to how to deal with these kinds of situations, the same, similar, or comparable in our own lives.

## *The Blame Game*

In the Garden of Eden lived plants and trees, animals, and people. The group of people was named Adam and haAdam, as mentioned in Genesis 1:26 and 27. They consisted of men and women, according to verse 27. The women were called: Chavah (Eve), see Genesis 3:20, as they were the life bearers.

had been strictly forbidden by Adonai. They were allowed to eat from any plant and tree present in this Garden, except from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This latter tree had the sole purpose of exhibit, a three-dimensional piece of education on the subject of obedience to Adonai and of good and decent behavior.

As the letter of Hebrews to the Messianic Jews teaches: "But solid food is for full-grown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern between good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14). A sneaky snake lured Chavah into eating from this wrong "mix" fruit. And Adam thought it to be good to show his wife that he took her invitation in order to avoid



Benjamin West | The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise

One man, with the generic name Adam (human being), and his wife, Chavah (life bearing), are mentioned as causing a serious incident. The human form in which Adonai walked in this Garden in the location of Eden, allowed Him to meet this couple right after they had done something which

## *Good and Evil*

Humankind had to learn to understand the difference and the choice between good and evil. There should not be any mixing of these two qualities. Therefore, any fruit of the mixing of good and evil needed to be forbidden.

any tensions. Adonai looked for them as they hid in the bushes between the trees as some kind of poorly motivated Sukkot. And by means of a mix of lies and deception Adam defended his decision to Adonai, by blaming both Adonai and his wife, "The woman You gave to be with me, she gave me

## *Did Avraham and Itzchak speak the full truth to the kings they were threatened by? No, and not any heavenly repercussion has been recorded. It was perfectly alright to give partial truth in order to save their lives.*

of the tree, and I ate” (Genesis 3:12). The result was the ages-long journey that humankind had and will have to make in order to arrive at the same place where this journey started, the Garden of Eden. “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the congregations. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the Paradise of G-d” (Revelation 2:7).

### ***Spiritual Changes***

This journey is necessary for those who want to grow spiritually in order to get rid of the earthly inclination of blaming, of killing, of stealing, of unjust wife blaming without taking responsibility and because of that wrecking his relationship with Adonai, see 1 Peter 3:7. “Likewise, you husbands, dwell with them (your spouse) according to knowledge, giving honor unto your wife, as unto the costly fragile vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; in order that your prayers won’t be hindered”. And of mixing good and evil without any spiritual discernment. Did Adonai use this disobedience for the development of His cosmic Plan of Salvation? I believe so. Did this couple make a mistake? Yes. Were they damned and doomed? Not at all. But they were at the head of the exodus of humankind from Paradise, which each individual needs to turn into his and her aliah back to where we came from. But with the necessary spiritual

changes, without which no one will be able to enter the heavenly destination.

### ***Looking at Reality with Care***

After the Great Tsunami, the Flood, Noah is glad to be able to grow vine plants. And from the first fruits he makes wine, the costly fluid he wasn’t able to drink for a year. For unknown reasons Noah had undressed himself and he slept in his private tent. One of his sons, Cham, had become worried and as a good son he wanted to find out how his father was doing. He found his father in his tent, drunken and naked. After having shaken off the first part of his substance abuse Noah found out that his son Cham had caught him naked and drunk. This was embarrassing for Noah and not yet recovered from the results of the alcohol to his brain he uttered nasty words to his son Cham. No words of appreciation for Cham’s care for his father, which must have been painful. At the same time, Noah wishes for his son Cham to be a good servant, as we all need to learn to be. His brothers Shem and Yefet had not reached out to their father. Only after Cham found him, they knew their father was naked. They were prepared to not look at him, but to cover him. In Genesis 9:26 Noah blesses Cham by praising the G-d of Shem and wishing for Cham to be His servant. This was an interesting challenge to family unity.

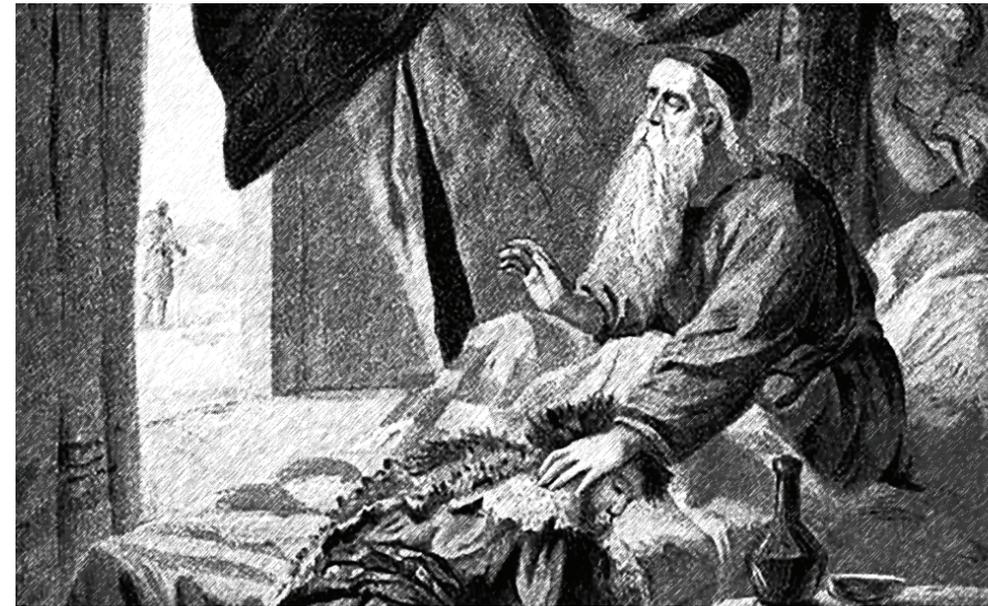
### ***Leaving out Truth Creating a***

### ***False Image***

Both Avraham (Abraham) and his son Itzchak (Isaac) encountered the dominance and power of the local Sheikh in the area they lived in. The term Abimelech is the generic name given to all Philistine kings in the Hebrew Bible, from the time of Avraham through King David. These kings had their own dating agencies, in which agents were actively searching for women to be added to their harem. The larger the number of women the larger the economic wealth of the king was being shown, to be compared with the number of camels, oxen, donkeys, and army personnel. In order to save their lives both Avraham and Itzchak lied about who their wives were. As Avraham explained, “Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see you, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I beg you, that you are my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of you” (Genesis 12:12-13).

### ***Saving Lives***

As wife they would have been possessions, in which case they could be dispossessed. As brothers of their partners, it was a totally different ball game. Sisters need the protection of their brothers. Sisters are supposed to be virgins, and that position needs to



be protected and guaranteed. So, they chose to let the agents know that they accompanied their sisters. Avraham was too late to say that, but because of plagues to the royal court Sarah had been rescued in time and Avraham’s life was saved. But Itzchak was on time in succeeding saving his life before Rivkah had been added to that harem.

### ***Not the Full Truth***

Did they lie? No, but they left out important information. Both Avraham and Itzchak were married to their wives Sarah and Rivkah. But both women are close family at the same time. As Avraham explains, “And yet indeed she is my sister. She is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife” (Genesis 20:12). In a similar way was Rivkah the sister of Itzchak. His father Avraham had a brother named Nachor. Nachor was married to Milkah and they had a son called Betuel. Rivkah was the daughter of this Betuel. Did Avraham and Itzchak speak the full truth to the kings they were threatened by? No, and not any heavenly repercussion has been recorded. It was perfectly alright to give partial truth in order to save their lives.

### ***Lying in Order to Honor G-d’s Prophecy***

Like more people in the Bible, Itzchak and his wife Rivkah aren’t able to get children. They are worried about that. The spiritually inclined Itzchak turned to Adonai, “Isaac begged Adonai for his wife, because she was barren. Adonai acted upon his intreating. Rivkah his wife conceived” (Genesis 25:21). They got twin brothers, Esav (Esau) and Ya’akov (Jacob) who caused pain to their mother by loving a lot while still in her womb. This caused the spiritually inclined Rivkah to pray to Adonai. This is what she heard Him answer, “Adonai said unto her: Two nations are in your womb. Two peoples will be separated already from their birth. The one people will be stronger than the other one. The elder shall serve the younger” (Genesis 25:23). We do not know whether Rivkah shared this prophecy with her husband.

### ***Following Prophecy***

If she did, he must have forgotten it at old age when he felt the urge to bless the firstborn son according to tradition. Itzchak was sixty years old when he had his sons. He must have been at

*Rivkah dressed Ya’akov in the clothes of Esav and covered his hands and his neck with young goat skins. All this in order to deceive her old and blind husband.*

least one hundred years old when he had lost his eyesight. Rivkah heard about the firstborn blessing ceremony which was about to take place. Time for action! Rivkah held on to the prophecy she received while still pregnant with the boys. That meant that Ya’akov should receive the firstborn blessing. But Itzchak was clearly set to bless his biologically firstborn son. So, Rivkah dressed Ya’akov in the clothes of Esav and covered his hands and his neck with young goat skins. All this in order to deceive her old and blind husband. And Ya’akov lied to his father when Itzchak asked him whether Ya’akov was his very son. I am, answered Ya’akov.

### ***Accepted***

Was this action of Rivkah and Ya’akov wrong? Remember how Esav sold his position of firstborn son with all privileges to Ya’akov. Remember also that the prophecy Adonai had given



to Rivkah was about to be nixed had Esav been blessed as firstborn. The choice needed to be made between the wrong blessing as the choice of a man and the words of Adonai which clearly pointed at blessing Ya'akov with the firstborn blessing. And remember how Adonai uses the name of Ya'akov as confirmation of the choice made by Rivkah and Ya'akov in these words: "I will bring you to the land, of which I have sworn to give it to Avraham, to Itzchak and to Ya'akov. I will give it to you as heritage. I am Adonai" (Exodus 6:8). In a dramatic prayer Moshe (Moses) says to Adonai: "Remember Your servants, Avraham, Itzchak and Ya'akov" (Deuteronomy 9:27).

### ***G-d of Avraham, Itzchak, and Ya'akov***

In Psalm 105, David sings regarding G-d's actions, when David brings the holy Ark from its temporary quarters in the home of Oved Edom to the holy city of Jerusalem, where it was installed with great ceremony and honor: "He has remembered His covenant forever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations. Which covenant he made with Avraham and His vow unto Itzchak. Then He established it for Ya'akov as a statute, for Israel as an everlasting covenant" (Psalm 105:8-10). Yeshua confirms this, when He talks about resurrection of the dead:

***Joseph was correcting them and teaching them a lesson, by a method of falsely acting and lying. The brothers learn and show real remorse, both to Joseph and to their father Ya'akov.***

"But talking about the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken unto you by G-d: 'I am the G-d of Avraham and the G-d of Itzchak and the G-d of Ya'akov?' G-d is not the G-d of the dead, but of the living" (Matthew 22:31-32). Rivkah and Ya'akov made the right decision.

### ***Honoring a Tradition while Lying and Deceiving***

Itzchak's wife Rivkah came to know that her oldest son Esav had plans to kill his brother Ya'akov, read Genesis 27:41. She told Ya'akov to flee and go to his uncle, her brother Lavan (Laban). He lived in the city of Charan in Mesopotamia. Ya'akov had to travel north to the city of Aleppo and then eastwards to the city of Charan. Just

to orientate ourselves, if one would travel south-eastwards, one would first reach the city of Ninve and further southwards the land of Babylon and the city of Ur. Ya'akov left Be'ersheva and traveled to Charan, also called Paddan-Aram. A long journey. While talking there to shepherds at the location of a well, he happens to meet Rachel who used that same well for her herd of small livestock. The shepherds had already told him that Rachel was Lavan's daughter. So, he rolls away the stone from the well's mouth, and he watered the flock of his cousin. Afterwards, he wept as he was moved that Adonai had led him to Rachel and via her to his family. He had reached his destination.

### ***Tradition, Tradition!***

Ya'akov fell in love with his cousin and asked Lavan to allow him to work seven years in order to marry Rachel. Lavan promised: "It is better that I give her to you, than that I should give her to another man. Abide with me" (Genesis 29:19). That was a lie and a deception. They had a wonderful wedding. Ya'akov and his bride went into their private dwelling. It was dark that night and the next morning Ya'akov woke up and asked whom he thought was Rachel how she had slept. He looked into the tender eyes of Rachel's sister Leah—Leah instead of Rachel. Ya'akov was dressed and out of their tent earlier than planned. He went to his father-in-law and asked:

"What have you done to me? Did I not serve you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?" (Genesis 29:25). Lavan answered him without any sense of guilt that this is tradition. The older marries first. The week of wedding celebrations was honored, after which Ya'akov got his first choice, Rachel. That was it, no earthly or heavenly correction or punishment. And the result has been the twelve sons, of whom Yehuda, son of Leah, became the forefather of Messiah.

### ***Using a Lie in order to Teach a Lesson***

Another remarkable son whom Ya'akov had was Joseph, son of Rachel. His brothers hated him when he was young. And they planned to kill him, "When they saw him in the distance, before he came near to them, they conspired against him to kill him" (Genesis 37:18). Poor Joseph is sold to traveling merchants. Once in Egypt, he is sent to prison although innocent.

Years later, when Joseph has become the first officer under Pharaoh, he is visited by his brothers because the harvests had failed. Joseph falsely accuses them several times as being spies, by imprisoning one of the brothers and by putting Joseph's own silver cup in Benjamin's grain bag. Joseph was correcting them and teaching them a lesson, by a method of falsely acting and lying. The brothers

learn and show real remorse, both to Joseph and to their father Ya'akov. This method did not get any critical remark in the Bible. And the twelve patriarchs of Israel were cleansed and got a new and fresh start, so that we can be proud of them.

### ***Yael Lying to Protect the Israeli Army***

Yael, a non-Jewish woman, happens to be in the escape route of the army general of the Canaanite army of king Yavin at the time. Yael calls to Sisra: "Yael walked out of her tent in order to meet Sisra. She said to him, 'Change your direction, my lord, change your direction and enter my tent. Don't be afraid.' When he had changed his route and had entered her tent, she covered him with a mantle" (Judges 4:18). It seemed to the general that he could trust this woman and that she would provide shelter to him. After pouring him a glass of milk Sisra slept. Yael came into action: "Then Yael, Heber's wife, took a tent peg and a hammer in her hand. Softly she went to him. Then she stuck the tent peg into his temples and fastened it into the ground: for he was fast asleep and weary. So, he died" (verse 21). Premeditated murder without a sense of guilt, as we can conclude from the report she gives to the commander of the Israeli army Barak, see verse 22: "Come! I will show you the man whom you are looking for. When he came

***Keeping his employers uninformed and yet showing respect is like what courageous Gentiles have done, when they hid Jews in the last world war, lying by answering no when asked whether they hid Jews.***

into her tent, Sisra lay dead. The peg was through his temples.” In time of war, it is completely allowed to protect human lives and to lie and deceive the enemy in order to neutralize him.

### ***Rachav Lying to Protect the Israeli Army***

When Joshua the new leader of the people of Israel reached the city of Jericho, he sent out two spies in order to view the land. The two Israeli soldiers entered the gate of the city and found the tavern run by Rachav (Rahab). The sheikh of Jericho received intelligence concerning the Israeli spies and he sent troops to catch them. Rachav tells them this story: “Men came to me, but I didn’t know from where they came. Around the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, the men went out. I don’t know where the men went. Pursue after them quickly, for you will be able to overtake them” (Joshua 2:4-5). It was smart to include the sentence in which Rachav said that she did not know where the men came from. That was to sow the image of not protecting people she had no clue of knowing.

### ***Woman of Great Faith***

It was also smart to let the troops know that they would be able to find them as that gave the impression of impartiality or even Making the troops think that Rachav saw the spies as enemies. And by sending them out of the gate, she made sure they would not find the Israeli spies. As to what Rachav’s motivation was to help the Israeli army, the story gives clues. We see her say to the spies: “I know that Adonai has given you the land. Your terror is fallen upon us. All the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how Adonai dried up the water of the Red Sea for you, when you came out of Egypt. And we heard

what you did to the two kings of the Amorites, who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sichon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed” (Joshua 2:9-10). Rachav has come to know the mighty deeds of Adonai, Adonai of Israel, as well as the people whom Adonai assisted so intensely.

### ***Rachav’s Statement of Faith***

Through all misery in her own city state of Jericho as well as the power game by her sheikh with the Israeli people, Rachav must have seen that real consolation comes from above, from the G-d of Israel in heaven. She must have seen Him actively involved on earth as well. And so, she comes with her remarkable and profound statement of faith of G-d in heaven and G-d on earth. By His actions He made Himself known to her, like He had done this to Yael and to Jethro, three Gentiles who had the openness of mind to change their religion with all the risks of losing acceptance of other people. Rachav had experienced what Moses described when Adonai executed judgment on the city conglomerate of Sodom and Amorah (Gomorra). He recorded it like this: “Then Adonai (YHVH) rained upon Sodom and upon Amorah brimstone and fire from Adonai (YHVH) out of heaven” (Genesis 19:24). The raining was done by G-d on earth who had eaten at Avraham’s table. The provision of the ammo came from G-d in heaven. This is what Rachav said: “As soon as we had heard these things, our hearts melted. There did not remain any more courage in any man, because of you [the Israeli army]. For Adonai your G-d, He is G-d in the heavens above and on earth below” (Joshua 2:11). She and her family were saved by the Israeli army, in spite of her method to get rid of the soldiers of Jericho’s sheikh.

***Obadiah, manager of the House of king Achav, continued to be faithful to Israel in spite of the persecutions of Jezebel. He hid 100 prophets in two caves and fed them with water and bread.***



### ***Hiding a Hundred Prophets***

Obadiah, manager of the House of king Achav, continued to be faithful to Israel in spite of the persecutions of Jezebel. He hid 100 prophets in two caves and fed them with water and bread. Not only did he hide these vulnerable prophets, he also hid that piece of information from his employer, the royal house of Israel, “The word of Adonai came to Elijah

***Adonai has the right to make life miserable for people without any warning. He also has the right to talk with Satan about this and give him the right to execute the process.***

in the third year, Go! Show yourself to Achav. I will send rain upon the earth. Elijah went to show himself to Achav. There was a fierce famine in Shomron (Samaria). Achav called Obadiah, who was the governor of his house; Obadiah feared Adonai greatly. For it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of Adonai, that Obadiah took hundred prophets and hid them, fifty per cave. And fed them with bread and water” (1 Kings 18:1-4). Keeping his employers uninformed and yet showing respect is like what courageous Gentiles have done, when they hid Jews in the last world war, lying by answering no when asked whether they hid Jews and when they bought more food than the visible amount of people in the home needed.

### ***Testing without Warning or Explanation***

Adonai has the right to make life

miserable for people without any warning. He also has the right to talk with Satan about this and give him the right to execute the process. Lying and deceiving? At least no warning. And if the person has been praying to Adonai, why did Adonai not make known that these prayers were insufficient or plain wrong? One example is to be found in the Book of Chronicles, “Adonai sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it. As he was destroying, Adonai looked

and He repented of the evil. He said to the destroying angel, It is enough, stop your hand. The angel of Adonai had reached the threshing field owned by Ornan the Jebusite” (I Chronicles 21:15).

### ***The Rich Man Yov***

A clearer example we find in the book of Yov (Job). Yov is a rich man, see the first five verses in chapter 1. In verse 6 the camera shifts position and is focusing on a board room meeting. In it we find Adonai and Beney HaElohim, the Sons of G-d, and among them is ha satan, the satan. After asking about satan’s travel experiences Adonai gives him the go ahead to destroy everything and about everybody around Yov. It must have been a horrible surprise for Yov. Why does Adonai allow satan to do this? Is satan so bad and who is he anyway? Is there any good in all

this? The Hebrew term ha satan means adversary. That does not sound nice. But in legal situations, we wouldn’t even begin to think that a public prosecutor would act satanically. Yet his role is to present a case before a judge in order to restore justice.

### ***Satan***

If we had an evil plan which we would try to execute, it would be nice if somebody came to thwart our action. We would be thankful afterwards. There is in fact such a situation in the Bible. The king of Moav (Moab) invited Balaam to come to him and curse the Israeli army. Balaam intends to do that. He gets up in the morning, saddles his donkey and rides with the princes of Moav to their king. Adonai does not like it and He gets angry: “The anger of Adonai was kindled because he [Balaam] went. The angel of Adonai stood in the way as an adversary against him. He was riding on his donkey and his two servants were with him” (Numbers 22:22). In this verse the angel of Adonai is called satan. And the satanic task is to block Balaam’s way in order to protect Israel. The Hebrew word satan is a word with a neutral meaning. How should we look at this boardroom meeting? It might be that this was the creation of an “eye of a needle” for Yov’s situation as a rich and financially independent man, compared in the Bible with a camel, see Mark 10:25. Yov needed to learn the hard way to become dependent on Adonai and Him alone.

### ***G-d Demanding Something Wrong from David***

In a particular situation Adonai demands from king David to count the people of Israel, “Again the anger of Adonai was kindled against Israel. He moved David against them saying, Go,



number Israel and Judah” (II Samuel 24:1). Right after this census took place David realizes that he made a big mistake doing this: “David’s heart felt remorse after he had numbered the people. And David said to Adonai, I have sinned greatly by what I have done. Now I beg You, Adonai, take away the iniquity of Your servant. For I have acted very foolishly” (verse 10). How could Adonai give this wrong demand? It gets even more mysterious, when we read this same situation as recorded in the Book of Chronicles: “Satan stood up against Israel and provoked David to number Israel” (I Chronicles 21:1). The seer Gad went to his king David to give him three damaging options to choose from, the

same in these two biblical versions. What should David have done after hearing this demand? He should have refused and gone against Adonai, who in the Book of Chronicles acted as adversary. And David should have thought why Adonai gave him this demand which went against His own Torah. Then he would have understood that Adonai was showing him what the negative situation was with the people of Israel at the time. A similar situation is written in the New Testament.

#### ***G-d Forcing Peter to Violate Torah***

Peter once climbed upon the roof of his house in Yaffo, Israel, to do Minche, the middle one of the three

***And David should have thought why Adonai gave him this demand which went against His own Torah. Then he would have understood that Adonai was showing him what the negative situation was with the people of Israel at the time.***

daily prayers, Shacharit, Minche and Ma’ariv. It was around twelve o’clock noon. While praying he got hungry and yelled downwards to prepare food for him. This took a while and Peter went into a trance, into ecstasy says the original Greek text. From the text it is clear that entered into a higher spiritual level of consciousness. In that timeless situation he saw: “the heavens opened and a certain vessel descending

***By demanding Peter to eat unkosher Peter did not just eat and break those precious laws. On the contrary, Peter learned that what Adonai calls unkosher, namely unclean animals, is unkosher. And Adonai had never said such a thing concerning Gentiles.***

unto him, in the shape of a large sheet knit at the four corners, let down to the earth. In it were all kinds of four-legged animals of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. A voice came to him, Get up, Peter. Kill and eat” (Acts 10:11-13). A horrible thing to demand from a Jew who lives according to Torah and lives according to kashrut, the dietary laws.

#### ***Rabbinic Authority***

Of course, Peter refused, as king David should have done in his situation. The voice tried this three time and then gave up. The sheet was pulled up and Peter descended from his higher spiritual level. Some people explain this text as the more evident beginning of the doing away of Torah. But we learn something quite different when we listen to Peter’s explanation. First, we need to know that at that time rabbis had decreed that it was forbidden for a Jew to have a relationship with or even go to a Gentile because that would make the Jew ritually unclean. And that was possible because according

to the rabbis non-Jews were ritually unclean. Had a Jew taken a mikveh, a ritual bath, and afterwards had met a Gentile, he or she would immediately become tamé, unclean.

#### ***G-ds Way of Educating***

Back to Peter. Roman soldiers came to pick him up because their base commander Cornelius wanted to hear more about Yeshua. Peter goes with them and enters the base. And then he explains to them why he visited them in spite of the rabbinic prohibition to do so. He formulates it like this: “You know how it is an unlawful thing for a Jewish man to keep company or go to someone of another nation. But G-d has shown to me that I should not call any man common or unclean” (Acts 10:28). In other words, by demanding Peter to eat unkosher Peter did not just eat and break those precious laws. On the contrary, Peter learned that what Adonai calls unkosher, namely unclean animals, is unkosher. And Adonai had never said such a thing concerning Gentiles. So also, here the

divine command was not wrong at all. It required from Peter to think twice, which those who misinterpret this interesting Bible text should do also.

#### ***Conclusion***

Lying and deception are being used as a weapon against the enemies of Israel without being any problem. Lying to German soldiers and Dutch state police during the Second World War was necessary and biblically allowed as well. In normal life it is necessary to be totally truthful, but there are also exceptions. If the truth would be harmful, for instance because of age or a fragile relationship, it would be good to be wise. In a congregation, it is only required for all the members to know the truth in a conflict, when the first means have been exhausted, as described in Matthew 18 from verse 15. And when you think that Adonai is talking to you, make sure you find out which circumstances you are in. Because perhaps He wants you to do the exact opposite of what He tells you to.

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#### ***ABOUT THE AUTHOR***

Lion Erwtaman, together with his wife Elze, is the cofounder, leader, and teacher of Beth Yeshua, a Messianic Jewish congregation located in Amsterdam. Nearing 30 years, they have been ministering to the congregation through teachings, worship, music, and dance, and Lion’s organization is a long-standing partner of Netivyah in Jerusalem which is led by his son-in-law Yuda Bachana. Originally a biologist and viola player, Lion also completed studies related to Tanakh, Talmud, and New Testament. Lion and Elze are blessed with three children and five grandchildren.

[www.beth-yeshua.nl/en](http://www.beth-yeshua.nl/en) | [www.youtube.com/c/bethyeshuaamsterdam](https://www.youtube.com/c/bethyeshuaamsterdam)

# IS GOD TURNING THINGS AROUND?

By Zahava Ilan

“They say that what is right is wrong and what is wrong is right; that black is white and white is black; bitter is sweet and sweet is bitter.” Isaiah 5:20. Isaiah wrote these words thousands of years ago, and they seem so pertinent today.

Society is telling our children that there are no longer two genders. Children can pick their gender and choose to be whatever they want. In some states, they

*What was so beautiful about the Asbury revival is that it was so genuine, with no big names or dynamic light shows to bring publicity. It was just a bunch of college students wanting to honor and worship God.*

can even do it without their parents' consent.

Family-friendly entertainment has a whole different twist from 20 years ago, with at least one character in every movie or TV series having to be LGBTQ or transgender.

It seems there's no stopping this train that's headed for a complete wreck, but there is hope. First of all, God is in control, no matter what, and He's always working behind the scenes. "He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together," Colossians 1:17.

Last month a revival started at Asbury University in Kentucky. It started in a chapel service with students repenting and worshipping; some of the students didn't want to leave. It lasted over two weeks and spread to other universities, high schools, and even middle schools across America.

This tiny town of 6,000 people was overflowing with people waiting in a line over half a mile long to get into the chapel! Some people came from other countries to experience the presence of God.

What was so beautiful about the Asbury revival is that it was so genuine, with no big names or dynamic light shows to bring publicity. It was just a bunch of college students wanting to honor and worship God.

At the same time, the Jesus Revolution movie about the true story from the 1960's of the "Jesus movement" hit theatres with rave reviews and lives being changed. Even some people got baptized in fountains outside the movie theatres!

Another interesting show is the successful crowdfunded series "The Chosen" which has impressed a lot of people around the world with the

quality storytelling of the life of Yeshua and His disciples. It actually portrays the Jewishness of Yeshua in a refreshing way and the characters seem very believable.

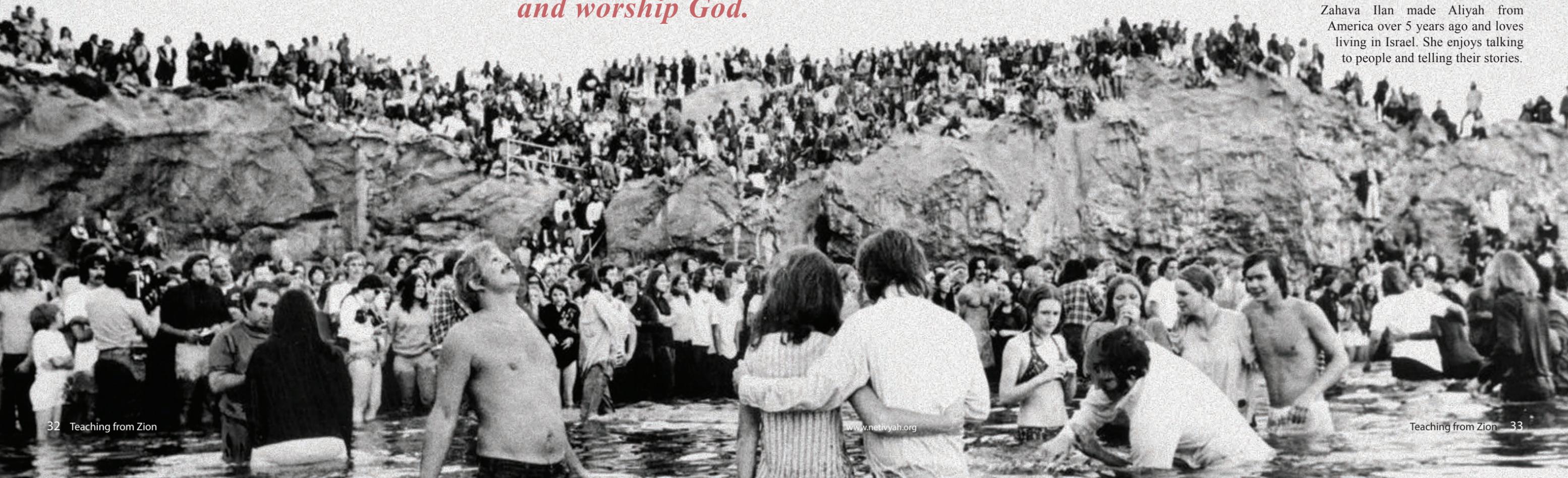
Some think that the timing of the Asbury revival, the Jesus Revolution, and The Chosen all coming out at the same time is the "New Great Awakening." Will there be another Jesus, Yeshua movement? I hope so.

It gives me hope that young people are turning from their sins and seeking Yeshua. May that fire of revival burn up the lust of self-pleasure that the world is displaying.

Let's pray for our young people that they would seek Yeshua with all their hearts, minds, and soul. "But from there you will search again for the Lord your God. And if you search for him with all your heart and soul, you will find him." Deuteronomy 4:29.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zahava Ilan made Aliyah from America over 5 years ago and loves living in Israel. She enjoys talking to people and telling their stories.



**LIES, DECEPTION, & EVIL:**

# **FOOLED BY THE SNAKE (AGAIN)**

By Tzvi Daniel

***“The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”***

*Genesis 3:13*

**Chavah**

We could arguably be comforted by the fact that, if one of the first people to ever have lived, was fooled by a lower being, how could we not be deceived at least to the same degree?

Adam and Chavah lived in Gan Eden, before the presence of the Creator of all and yet fell prey to the deception of the snake.

From the serpent in the garden, who beguiled Chavah, to the “deceiver of the whole world” in Revelation 12:9, mankind has been and continues to be challenged by that which seems to stand in opposition to the truth.

We could deduce from this that the author/s of the Scriptures want us to be aware that this reality permeates our existence. We come into this world in the purity of paradise, but it doesn't take long for that purity to be stained by our propensity to gravitate towards that which is contrary to the deepest purpose of our soul.

And it kind of makes sense that if the Creator wants us to choose that which is good, we will be “seduced” by the opposite, for us to exercise the gift of free will that we were given. Have you imagined before what the world would look like if evil didn't exist? What would then be the merit of choosing good?

Lies and Deception in the Modern World

Similar to the Biblical narrative where Adam and Chavah are confronted and tricked by falsehoods, we come into this world and are quickly faced with the same kind of challenges. From the early, formal, institutionalized education that seeks to promote an agenda in tune with the interests of the State, to the bombardment of TV programming and ads that pursue profit at any cost, our fragile and malleable minds are subject to the hardest challenges.

With the advent of the internet in modern times, we have fallen prey to some of the most ravenous schemes of mind control ever devised. Social media sells young people (and old alike) an illusion of a

***With the advent of the internet in modern times, we have fallen prey to some of the most ravenous schemes of mind control ever devised.***



***Notice how most of these tactics may be presented, packaged, and sold as something more enticing than it actually is. Like the fruit from the tree, it will most assuredly not end up being worth it.***

standard of beauty to envy, prototypes to hate and attack, reasons to contend with our closest neighbors, and material goods to covet. We could argue that these human qualities already existed in us but were simply given an outlet to be expressed and exacerbated.

Another internet-related ailment of society was manifested through pornography. An adult-rated theater that never ends to quench human lust. The human brain sees no difference between the real thing and pixels on a screen, and the bodily need for pleasure and reproduction has tricked most of us into harmful addictions that are challenging to beat.

Those that understand the game and seek to control human behavior, have gained, and continue to do so, from our weaknesses and apparent mindlessness. Our own governments, presumably instituted by us to protect our rights and interests, have hijacked control and manipulate public opinion through sheer propaganda. The illusion of two-party systems put to evidence that they are nothing more than two wings of the same bird.

The examples are too many to list, and for the sake of not exposing any one specific country, I will not list any particulars, but this includes all countries with centralized government authority. And anyone can do their research, from reputable revisionist historians to respected investigative journalists, to be challenged on historical facts we always thought to be correct.

Heck, in the last few years, we could see with our own eyes and hear with our own ears how those in charge sold out our God-given rights to Big Pharma, executing an impeccable plan of divide and conquer to have us fight against each other, and never realize who the real enemy was.

I know, I know, most people haven't awoken from their slumber yet, but an increasing number of them have begun to question ‘official’ narratives. Concerning this, we also have the global interests, where transnational, unelected organizations chart a future for humanity based on their own values, which, needless to say, are not godly, and in many cases, are probably in opposition to everything godly, such as the premise that there are too many people in the world (overpopulation) and that we should act in unison to avert this “risk”.

Interestingly enough, you might think that believers would realize that this

is in direct opposition to the first commandment ever given to Adam, reiterated to Noah, to “be fruitful and multiply”, but the propaganda is so overwhelming that oftentimes people miss it.

Through “reproductive health” (i.e. abortion), wars, the promotion of homosexual practices, and “gender care” (i.e. chemical castration) to name just a few, those in positions of influence carry out their plan to decrease the world population.

Notice how most of these tactics may be presented, packaged, and sold as something more enticing than it actually is. Like the fruit from the tree, it will most assuredly not end up being worth it.

Many people will sign off many of these claims as conspiracy theories, but a quick Google search will educate them on the very real nature of it, such as the US National Security Study Memorandum of 1974, written by Henry Kissinger, on the Implications of Worldwide Population Growth for U.S. Security and Overseas Interests.

Considering all these elements that are outside of our control can turn our landscape grim really quick leaving us hopeless, angry, or fearful, which can put us in a situation of paralysis, fight, or flight, which will most certainly not aid in our spiritual development.

**Lies & Deception we Self-inflict**

It is a natural human tendency to look for causes outside of ourselves to ascribe responsibility for our current state of affairs. It is indisputable that extreme cases, such as people born into slavery or victims in a war-torn country left orphans, are justifiably in an underprivileged position to face the challenges life throws at them.

# *In Jewish cosmology, man is created with a good urge (yetzer haTov) and a bad urge (yetzer haRa'). They correlate with the spiritual and physical natures.*

But even many in such situations have found it within themselves to not view this life from the position of a victim but rather to use their pain to propel them to do something extraordinary. For most of us, though, the case is not that extreme. And yet, many of us will tell ourselves (and others) a story that might allow us to remain inactive and wallow in our mediocrity.

The exact same situation may present itself to two different people, and one will rise above it and become stronger and more competent as a result, while the other one will feel oppressed, victimized, and get depressed from it. What is the difference between the two? The story in their head.

Just as the proverbial angel and demon on each shoulder, each of us hears a whisper coming from somewhere that will entice us to do something bad against our best interest or encourage us to do something good despite our most basic instincts. Biblically speaking, these could be God vs Satan, or the Holy Spirit vs the flesh, etc. But they truly exist in the mind and heart of every human, regardless of their

belief system.

For every endeavor we set out to achieve, there is going to be a voice of discouragement inside our heads that will make sure we are aware of our inadequacies. For every good deed we carry out, a voice will remind us of the bad things we have done before. And so on.

It's not hard to make the connection between this negative force and the snake that beguiled the woman in the garden. Is it a mere illusion? Could we say that it is not true?

## *The Purpose of Evil*

One of the most popular arguments against the existence of God used by unbelievers, or maybe even a reproach to Him by some agnostics, is based on the fact that evil exists in the world. "If there is a God, then why would he allow X or Y?"

And it is not a bad question. If there really is a Creator, Who started off on a blank canvas, why would he create things that we deem negative, which, in turn, will end up generating harmful consequences to His own creation?

We must go back to where it all started. Because that negative force was there, whispering over the woman's shoulder (or maybe inside her head), to entice her to do that which would bring about her death (not immediate, but eventual).

In Jewish cosmology, man is created with a good urge (yetzer haTov) and a bad urge (yetzer haRa'). They correlate with the spiritual and physical natures. A parallel idea is the one of this world (olam haZeh) and the world to come (olam haBa'), which do not necessarily correspond with periods or ages in historical or eschatological chronology, but a reality that exists right now.

On the same note, Yeshua proclaimed the Good News of the Kingdom that was accessible to people, contrary to what they thought, not by outward observation, but by understanding an inner spiritual reality (Lk 17).

The Creator gifted mankind with free will, and for man to exercise this gift, opposing forces must exist. What would be the merit otherwise, of doing something good if we were not tempted by evil? Or, a step beyond that, would we even have the motivation to pursue goodness and truth, were it not for the existence of evil and deception?

There would be no need for a Torah whatsoever, or a Messiah to guide us on the good path if there wasn't a propensity for man, or even the ability for him, to err on the side of evil.

## *The Concept of Satan in the Scriptures*

There are a lot of believers that 'blame' Satan for all the bad things that happen in their lives or in the world. In Christianity, for the most part, there is this personification of what that negative force is. Although represented, as we have seen, by the snake in the garden, one may be surprised to not find the word Satan in the whole Torah. In fact, the only time the Hebrew word satan (שָׂטָן) appears in the first five books of the Bible is in Numbers 22 in the story of Balaam. And is not talking about a creepy red being with horns and a trident, but surprisingly, is referring to the angel of the Almighty.

"And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the YHVH stood in the way for an adversary (satan) against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him." (Num 22:22)

"And the angel of the YHVH said unto

# *In fact, the only time the Hebrew word satan (שָׂטָן) appears in the first five books of the Bible is in Numbers 22 in the story of Balaam. And is not talking about a creepy red being with horns and a trident, but surprisingly, is referring to the angel of the Almighty.*

him, Why have you smitten your ass these three times? behold, I went out to withstand (leSatan) you, because your way is perverse before me:" (Num 22:32)

We can see here that in the mind of the author of the Torah, satan did not have a capital S (figuratively, since there are no capital letters in Hebrew) and it refers more to an idea; a concept of an opposing or adversarial force.

Consider the following passages, which are talking about the same event:

"And SATAN stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel." (1 Chr 21:1)

"And again the anger of YHVH was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah." (2 Sa 24:1)

This is pretty striking. The terms YHVH and Satan were used here interchangeably. Some would consider that even blasphemous. Did Satan or YHVH "tempt" David to take a census? I would like to point out that the same Hebrew word (from the root סָטָם) is used in BOTH cases, for "provoked" and for

"moved". It can also mean "to instigate" or "to entice".

In the context of this passage, the point I am making is: David had to be "tempted." Does it matter if YHVH tempted him, or if it was Satan? Is Satan not just God's created tool? He only exists because the Creator wills it. You can see how the writers of Samuel and Chronicles did not seem to make a clear distinction here to accommodate Christian theology.

Note: In these cases and others, the word "satan" does not appear with the definite article ה. Meaning, it is not talking about "the" Satan, but merely "a" satan. There are at least two instances where the definite article does appear, speaking of a personified Satan, such as in the story at the beginning of the book of Job. But even then, the author transmits a clear understanding that Satan is not its own autonomous, independent power but rather a force subject to the Creator, unable to do anything outside of His will.

## *In Perspective...*

We have seen the reality of how lies, deception, and evil exist in this world. It existed when God created everything and has existed in every generation up

to our days.

We saw that there are actors in the world that purport evil and deception, but on the other side, we saw how it is also manifest in our minds.

It is clear in my opinion that these negative forces will not cease to exist as long as we live in this world, merely because they serve a purpose in Creation.

It would prove an impossible task to overcome this evil by physically killing all the bad people or trying to do away with all the devices created to keep us within the deception. Just like weeds, the powers of darkness will continue to sprout and manifest as long as there are people in the world because the source of it is found in the human heart.

There will be a day, in the Messianic Era, when this dynamic might change, and man will be prevented from operating in a paradigm opposed to goodness and Truth. But until then, we might benefit from understanding that through lies, we can find the truth, through darkness we can grasp what the light is, and through evil, we might find and operate in the ultimate good.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tzvi is an Argentinian-Israeli Jew who currently lives in North Carolina, USA. During his time in Israel, Tzvi worked in archaeology in the City of David and the Ophel area with Eilat Mazar. There, he developed a special interest in Biblical history and the Hebrew language. He currently teaches Biblical Hebrew to Spanish speakers online and co-hosts a successful radio show on a US based Messianic Ministry, speaking and writing articles on a variety of topics, ranging from the Hebrew language and Biblical history to current events in Israel and the world.

# THE REALITY OF DECEPTION

By Barb Cody

Looking out my front window, a breeze catches the furry tufts of grasses that I planted last year. I notice black beetle-like insects clinging to them. Curious, I go outside to examine them more closely. There is not one bug in sight. The angle from which I was observing them made shadows that looked like bugs. From a different angle, I could see them clearly.

It was a trick of the light—my eyes deceived me.

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.” (James 1:17)

For a few moments, I believed a different reality than the one manifested. It was a weird sensation. It looked so real; and it made me consider how many times what looks real, is different from, well, reality.

I can think of times when I was misled, confused, or even betrayed by a friend, and I thought that I understood the situation. When the truth was exposed, my perception shifted to encompass a new reality.

I’m reminded of episodes of intrigue and deception from ancient times.

Jacob worked for Laban for seven years and then was given Leah instead of his beloved Rachel (Genesis 29). Jacob’s sons convinced the men of the city to undergo circumcision after their sister Dinah was defiled—then killed them (Genesis 34).

There seems to be a thread of falsehood running throughout the length and breadth of humanity, either wanting to mislead others and hide the truth or else desiring to believe in something that is, in reality, not true.

However, we are not called to live that way. In James’ letter to “the Twelve Tribes in the Diaspora”, he exhorts his readers to carefully consider their ways and thoughts. It’s an excellent guide to the many pitfalls that can cloud our judgment. His observations are succinct and direct. There’s very little room, if any, for compromise.

Again and again, we read, “Do not be deceived,” and “Do not delude yourselves.”

When James writes about temptations, he makes a startling assumption; “...for YOU KNOW the testing of your faith produces perseverance.” Who is he writing to? Maybe the Jewish followers of that century lived in a different reality than today’s followers. Maybe they came to faith in Yeshua with the

full knowledge that they would face trials and persecutions for their new beliefs. Maybe they expected it; so, they could “count it all joy” when they encountered severe challenges.

This was a new view for me to perceive. I can only think how irritating tests, trials, and temptations are when they arise. But I didn’t grow up in the tenuous tension of early believers. It makes me ponder those believers today whose lives are hard and dangerous because they choose to follow Yeshua. Many in certain dark parts of the globe are experiencing first-hand the joy of testing, and are persevering or paying with their lives. So, I believe James when he says that trials and temptations will pay off in patience. And the full outworking of patience is a wholeness—a fullness if you will—with no lack.

Compare that to the results of not persevering, but rather of being “enticed” away by deadly desires within us. That desire bears the fruit of sin whose full outworking ends in death.

According to James, God gives generously and “without reproach”. Temptations come to build perseverance, to build character, to build trust. And they are often the product of our base desires. Testing

*I want a life of eternal change. I don’t want to stay the same. That’s one of the things I love about James’ letter. It inspires me to do better. Yes, it lists the many ways in which we try to deceive ourselves into thinking that we’re doing alright.*

and trials reveal a two-fold angle in which to view ourselves.

On the one hand, they show what we’re really made of. Have you ever reacted to an unjust situation and wondered, “Where did those emotions come from --- how could I have had such an ungodly desire for vengeance?” I

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Barbara Cody is a seamstress & poet who loves spending time outdoors. She can usually be found hiking in the woods or at the local house of prayer. She resides in the US, but her heart lives in Israel.

know I have. All too often.

On the other hand, however, this revelation of our inner selves gives us a picture of what it is that we lack.

“So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” (James 1:1,20)

Likewise, we are called into a two-fold obedience as a result of our temptations. The one avenue is to make certain that we hear the Word that was spoken into us. “Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of His creatures.” (James 1:18) Again, in verse 21, “...receive with meekness, the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”

So, we must hear the Word, but it’s not enough just to hear it and thereby increase our trust in the Living Word—our Messiah Yeshua. We must also walk out the Word in our lives, daily.

What good is it if I look in the mirror and see a crumb of toast stuck to my cheek, then walk away and forget to brush it off? It will surely come back around later in the day. What good is it to have a revelation of who we truly are, on the inside, and not cry out for change? What good is it to become complacent and comfortable with who we are and accept our faults? How does that conform me into the image of my Savior?

I want a life of eternal change. I don’t want to stay the same. That’s one of

the things I love about James’ letter. It inspires me to do better. Yes, it lists the many ways in which we try to deceive ourselves into thinking that we’re doing alright. Reading it is like walking through a self-evaluation checklist. Do I murder? No. Do I give to the poor? Yes. Do I keep a close range on my tongue? Maybe not so much.

“For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.” (James 3:2)

When confronted with the darkness lurking inside, the only godly response is to seek the light. “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” (James 4:8)

James begins his letter by stating that to be double-minded is to be unstable in everything. He ends it with the exhortation to be patient. “Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.” (James 5:8)

I’m sorry to confess that I take comfort in knowing that these Jewish believers were every bit as human as I am! But even more comforting is the certainty that down through all the ages, like a continuous thread running through every generation, the Word of God is our sure and dependable hope for freedom from instability and deception.

Yeshua, the Living Word, is weaving a beautiful tapestry in the hearts of His followers, and transforming the kingdom of darkness into His Marvelous Light.

# THOSE WHO LEAD YOU ASTRAY

By Ariel & D'vorah Berkowitz from Arad, Israel

Lies are blatant attempts to hide the truth. Deception is a clever attempt to hide the truth. In the end, however, the goal of both is the same—to deliberately try to make sure that truth, especially God's truth, is hidden, smeared, masked, and prohibited from manifesting itself. We have been asked to write about such lies and deceptions. Because of this title, one might expect to read about names of people, movements, and groups that practice such lies and deceptions. This article will not do that. Instead, we will

John specifically says, "I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray" (2:26). The Greek word that is rendered "lead you astray" could also be translated "deceive." Hence, if one wants to learn about lying and deceiving in matters related to our faith in Yeshua, 1 John is the place to look! John mentions several areas of our lives that are vulnerable to lying and deceiving. We will have a brief look at each in the order that they appear in the text of 1 John.

he/she has fellowship with the Lord, yet does not walk in the light, that is a deception.

An important key to understanding what John is saying is the tense of the Greek verb translated "practice." It is in the present tense, which suggests continual walking. Thus, John is not speaking about an occasional, inconsistent walk contrary to the Lord. He is speaking about one's habitual lifestyle. In other words, if a person claims to be a believer in Yeshua yet

***John uses the word "commandments" seven times in this brief letter. Many believers have a rather nebulous understanding about this word "commandment."***

briefly examine the subject of lies and deceptions from the biblical book of 1 John.

First John was a letter written by John (people assume it was the Apostle John) to an unspecified group of believers. It was penned sometime in the late 1st century CE. In this letter,

## ***The Believer's Relationship to Sin (1:5–10)***

This first area of possible deception concerns itself with our walk with the Lord. John says in 1:6, "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth." If a person says that

does not have a consistent habitual life of walking with Him, then there is good reason that person is either deceived or is deceiving others that they are a believer.

This concept is repeated later in 1 John 3:4–10. Throughout this passage John again uses the word "practice" in the

***If we are correct in our understanding of the word "commandments," then John is saying that another area of lying and deceiving among believers is to say that the teaching of Moshe has been rendered inoperative.***

present tense. However, John adds another significant piece to the puzzle. He says, "No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (3:9). Notice that when John speaks of "practicing sin," he is using the Greek present tense again. Hence, John is talking about one's habitual lifestyle, not an occasional lapse. However, John adds that knowing that Yeshua's presence inside the believer can be a major deterrent to deception. The new creation does not sin because he/she is simply not a sinner any longer. Yet, John is careful to remind us that we still have a flesh, wherein sin dwells. The believers shall yield his/her members to righteousness to avoid habitually walking in sin.

## ***The Believer's Relationship to the Torah (2:1–6)***

John mentions a second area of possible deception of which the believer needs to be aware. He writes in 1 John 2:4, "The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

John uses the word "commandments" seven times in this brief letter. Many believers have a rather nebulous understanding about this word "commandment." Some have assumed that these "commandments" are things that either Yeshua or one of the Apostles have taught. Few consider the very real possibility that John is speaking about the Torah of Moshe.

The Greek does not really help. It uses the word entolas which has a wide variety of possibilities. Yet, we also need to consider that entolas is the most common way to render the Hebrew word mitzvot (מצוות), a word used frequently in the Torah to speak of the specific instructions from the Lord.

We would suggest that this is most likely how John is using the word "commandments." Why not? Is there any good reason why John would not be rebuking his readers for neglecting the Torah? After all, when the Apostles, such as John, went about teaching the Scriptures, the Torah of Moshe would have been their primary text! When Yeshua instructed His students to teach people His commandments in Matthew 28:19–20, it is safe to assert that all of Yeshua's commandments were explanations and applications of instructions already taught by Moshe.

If we are correct in our understanding of the word "commandments," then John is saying that another area of lying and deceiving among believers is to say that the teaching of Moshe has been rendered inoperative. In fact, Moshe himself speaks to this issue in Deuteronomy 4:2 when he implores his people, "You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." Historically, many Jewish thinkers have added to the Torah by positing the divine authority of the Oral Torah, and many Christian

thinkers have taken away from Torah by insisting that the Torah has either been replaced by the Apostolic Scriptures or done away with altogether. We need to see that John is emphasizing the centrality of the commandments in the lives of believers. Therefore, John tells his readers, "The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4).

## ***The Believers' Love for One Another (2:7–11; 4:20–21)***

Some of the oft overlooked mitzvot of Moshe are the instructions to love our brothers. He repeats it at least twice in Leviticus: "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord" (Leviticus 19:18) and "The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 19:34).

Because Moshe taught about the importance of love within the covenant community, John informs us that the command to love is not new. He says, "Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard" (1 John 2:7). However, John also remarks that his readers needed to revive that commandment; for they were claiming to be believers

1. Planao (planaw), in A Greek - English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature, Third Edition, ("BAOG"), revised and edited by Fredrick William Danker, 821.

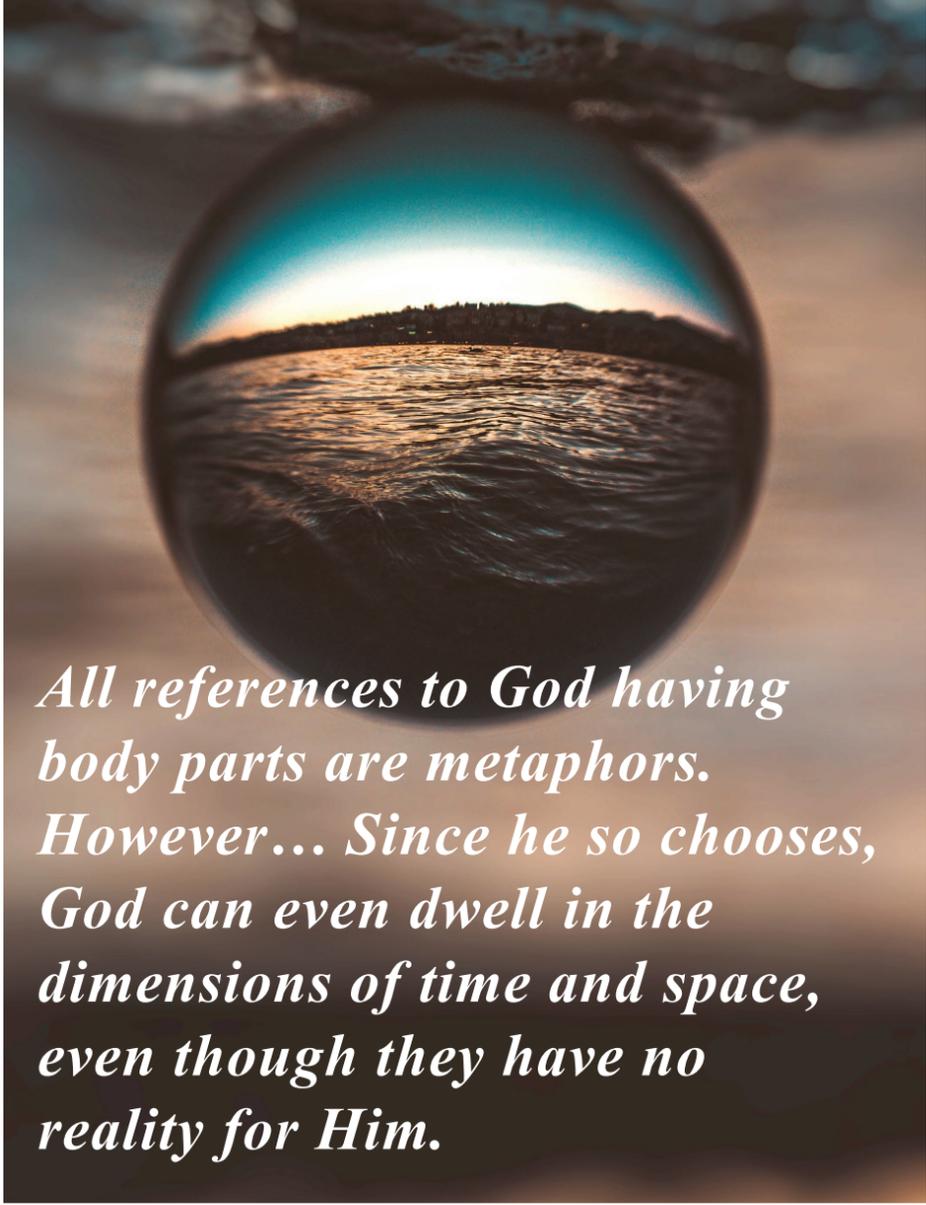
*Although He always remains beyond time and space, He desires that in the reality of time and space, it should be known that He is one.*

yet not doing as the Torah teaches and loving their brothers and sisters. Hence, John says that they were in darkness because of that.

Furthermore, John says to them, “On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining” (1 John 2:8). When he says “new” commandment, of course he knew the Torah taught it already! Therefore, we are to understand the word “new” in the sense of “renewed” or “refreshed.” It is a reminder to live the Torah consistently by loving others in the body of Messiah. Those who habitually do not, are shrouded in darkness. Once again, the key to understanding this is to see that John is constantly speaking about consistency in loving consistently. He is not addressing an occasional lapse.

#### ***The Truth about Messiah (2:18–25)***

The final area of possible lying and



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deception spoken of in 1 John concerns itself with what people believe about the person of Yeshua. To be sure, this is a controversial area of thinking in the Body of Messiah today.

At the very beginning of his letter, John says that he is testifying to his readers what he had experienced in his own life concerning Yeshua. He says, in 1 John 1:3, “what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also.” So, whatever John says about Yeshua, he is speaking from firsthand knowledge. What does John say about the matter?

He says in 5:1 that “Yeshua is the

Messiah and is born of God,” indicating that there was something supernatural about Yeshua’s birth. This was John’s way of referring to what is called the “incarnation.” John continues to speak about Yeshua’s incarnation in terms of posing three witnesses to the fact that Yeshua was incarnated. John says the Spirit, water, and blood together make a combined witness that Yeshua was incarnated.

John Stott comments on this by saying, “The Spirit, the water and the blood all testify to [Messiah], and the reason why they agree is that God Himself is behind them. The three witnesses

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form, in fact, a single divine testimony to [Yeshua the Messiah], which God has given. The perfect tense indicates the continuing validity (in itself and through the Spirit) of God’s historical testimony to [Messiah]. It is God who testified to His Son in history, in the water and the blood, and it is God who testifies to him today through His Spirit in our hearts. Moreover, it is because...the witness is divine, that we ought humbly to receive it. For we accept man’s testimony, when it consists of the evidence of two or three; how much more, then, should we accept the testimony of God which

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2. John Stott, *The Letters of John*. (Tyndale Commentary), Nottingham NG7 3HR, England Inter-Varsity Press, UK, 2010, 181.

3. Gurary, Nosson, *The Thirteen Principles of Faith — A Chadisic Viewpoint* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1996), 54

is itself threefold and which, because it is God’s, is greater than any man’s?”

John continues to say that this Yeshua “is the true God and eternal life.” Earlier in his epistle, John warns his readers, “I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth. Who is the liar but the one who denies that Yeshua is the Messiah? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son” (1 John 2:21–23). Thus, those who deny that Yeshua is the Messiah and that He has come in a special way from His Father are those who have fallen into deception.

Many today, including some in what is known as the Messianic movement, have succumbed to a low view of the person of Yeshua. Perhaps they want to be accepted by others, especially other Jewish people, who insist that an incarnation is impossible. Let us not fall into such problematic thinking! Nothing is impossible with God! If He wants, He can even take upon Himself a human body for a specified period of time — which is what He did in Yeshua. One Hassidic Jewish commentator says this:

All references to God having body parts are metaphors. However... “Since he so chooses, God can even dwell in the dimensions of time and

space, even though they have no reality for Him. They are His creations, and He completely transcends them, yet He chooses them for a dwelling place. Although He always remains beyond time and space, He desires that in the reality of time and space, it should be known that He is one.”

This is a good description of what God did in Yeshua. In Yeshua, God came to dwell in the dimensions of time and space. This is exactly what John is teaching about Yeshua concerning His incarnation. Let us not give in to lies and deception by denying this precious truth.

#### ***The Believer’s Discernment (4:1–6)***

In this precious and helpful letter John provides for us the certain cure for falling into lies and deception. He says in 4:1–6, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (4:1). Believers everywhere need more than ever to rely on the Spirit of God to help them to test the teachings that are given to them from so-called prophets. They need divine discernment. John simply teaches us to not accept everything a teacher says. If we are careful and discerning, then we will not fall prey to the plethora of lies and deceptions that abound.

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