The Season of Thanksgiving

By Dr. Stephen Pidgeon

Chag Semeach, Yom Yada!

> **Nechemiah (Nehemiah) 8:1-2**
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> And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spoke unto Ezra the scribe to bring the Cepher of the Torah of Mosheh, which Yahuah had commanded to Yashar'el. 2 And Ezra the priest brought the Torah before the assembly both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.

The seventh month is a month worthy of a bit of consideration. Under the Gregorian calendar as practiced in the West, we all know the seventh month as the month of July, but it begs the question as to why month number 9 has the prefix "sept" which means seventh, why month number 10 has the prefix "oct" which means eighth, why month number 11 has the prefix "nov" which means ninth, and why month number 12 has the prefix "dec" which means tenth.

In the Ivriyt (Hebrew), we have two names for the seventh month: the original name Ethaniym, and its Babylonian derivative, and now the modern Jewish, name Tishrei. Either way, it is on the first day of this month.

> **Nechemiah (Nehemiah) 8:3-8**
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> And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the Cepher of the Torah. 4 And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithyahu, and Shema, and Anayah, and Uriyahu, and Chilqiyahu, and Ma`aseyahu, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedayahu, and Miysha'el, and Malkiyahu, and Chashum, and Chashbaddanah, Zakaryahu, and Meshullam. 5 And Ezra opened the cepher in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up: 6 And Ezra blessed Yahuah, the great Elohiym. And all the people answered: Amein, Amein, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped Yahuah with their faces to the ground. 7 Also Yeshua, and Baniy, and Sherevyah, Yamiyn, Aqquv, Shabbathai, Hodiyah, Ma`aseyahu, Qeliyta, Azaryahu, Yozavad, Chanan, Pelayah, and the Leviyiym, caused the people to understand the Torah: and the people stood in their place. 8 So they read in the cepher in the Torah of Elohiym distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

And so it was that the Torah was read to the people of Yerushaliym on this first day of the seventh month. Now consider the instruction given to the people on this day:

> **Nechemiah (Nehemiah) 8:9-12**
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> And Nechemyahu, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Leviyiym that taught the people, said unto all the people: This day is holy unto Yahuah Elohaykem; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the Torah. 10 Then he said unto them: Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Adonai: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of Yahuah is your strength. 11 So the Leviyiym stilled all the people, saying: Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved. 12 And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

As we enter into our feast of Thanksgiving, I call you to this same joy and to this same feast. We do not have the benefit of a feast called by Yah, as His fall feasts have been completed for the year. Yet we have an

opportunity to give thanks nonetheless, and to contemplate the things about which we should be thankful and should give thanks between that feast Cukkoth (Tabernacles) - which celebrates that time when Yah tabernacled among us, and the feast of dedication (or rededication) called after the name Chanoch (Enoch) which means dedication, namely Chanukah. This then can become a season of thanksgiving – day after day – for the joy of Yahuah is our strength.

> **Nechemiah (Nehemiah) 11:16-19**
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> And Shabbathai and Yozavad, of the chief of the Leviyiym, had the oversight of the outward business of the house of Elohiym. 17 And Mattanyahu the son of Miyka, the son of Zavdiy, the son of Acaph, was the principal to begin the thanksgiving in prayer: and Baqbuqyah the second among his brethren, and Avda the son of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Yeduthun. 18 All the Leviyiym in the holy city were two hundred fourscore and four. 19 Moreover the porters, Aqquv, Talmon, and their brethren that did guard the gates, were a hundred seventy and two.

Verse 17 gives to us in this text a couple of key words. The word "principal" is in the Hebrew, of course, rosh; the word "begin" is techillah; the word "thanksgiving" is yada, and the word "prayer" is tephillah.

The word yada is an important word in the study of scripture. הדי yâdâ means in its common application to use (that is, hold out) the hand; physically to throw (a stone, an arrow) at or away; especially to revere or worship (with extended hands); intensively to bemoan (by wringing the hands): - cast (out), (make) confess (-ion), praise, shoot, (give) thank (-ful, -s, -sgiving).

So, we begin this season with the blessing: Chag semeach, yom yada!

The Substance of Things Hoped For

Let us continue on our faith journey and consider the substance of things hoped for. Here, we have an interesting roster of things to consider. What are the things for which we raise our hopes?

I remember a saying that was taught to me many years ago: Expect nothing and you will not be disappointed. Yet we hope for things, do we not?

Winston Churchill once declared that Russia was “a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma." His definition continues to have a certain validity, even in our age of the increase of knowledge as per Daniy’el (Daniel) 12:4. Yet, having traveled to Russia on several occasions, and having been a lover of Russian art, ballet, and music since my teen years, I tend to think not of Russia herself, but in terms of the Russian people. To me, the Russians have lived over the centuries under a condition of completely crushed hopes, and so the struggle of the Russians is a condition of interpersonal conflict, where there is a drive to suppress the urge to hope for a better life in order to manage the high probability of such a hope being utterly demolished. And there, even with the knowledge that such hopes will be completely dashed with the rise of the next monarch to power, a small itch of hope nonetheless sneaks in, only to be unceremoniously crushed again. Those who survive this spiral will then live to do it yet again. The average Russian life over the centuries can be described as hope crushed, do it again!

So, then, are there things about which we can hope, that are not subject to the destructive forces of the cynics around us (and you know who I’m talking about – the person who can’t wait to rain on the parade of someone else, who revels in destroying the dreams and hopes of others, and for no other reason than to inflict emotional pain)?

In communist countries, and other countries where all of the property is claimed to be owned by the central government, people do not smile or laugh in public, for to do so is to make the claim in public that you have something about which you are happy or joyous. Such a presentation in these kinds of nations is an invitation

to trouble because someone will come to where you live to see what it is that is making you so happy. To the pagan, the thing bringing joy will most assuredly be something material.

Yet, as we continue our exploration into the meaning of the word faith, let us consider again the controversial words of Pa'al:

> **Galatiym (Galatians) 5:1-4**
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> Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Mashiach has made us free and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. 2 Behold, I Pa'al, set forth as concerning you, except that Mashiach was circumcised, none of ye benefit. 3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole Law; 4 Ye are abolished from Mashiach; whosoever are justified by the Law; ye are fallen from grace.

Before continuing any further, let us take a look at the key word in this passage above, which in my view is the word justification. The Greek word that is used here is δικαιοω dikaioo (Strong's Greek Dictionary 1344), which means in the first instance to render innocent. This word is taken from the root δικαιος dikaios (Strong's Greek Dictionary 1342), which means equitable in character or act, and by implication, innocent, or holy. While the word justification is a proper interpretation, it is better understood as to be found innocent:

Ha'Mashiach is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are seeking to be found innocent or to be holy by the Torah; ye are fallen from grace.

We have previously distinguished holiness from righteousness, righteousness being in its essence lawfulness, the keeping of the whole of the Torah. Consider the words of Yahusha:

> **Marqus (Mark) 10:17-25**
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> And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him: Good Rabbi, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? 18 And Yahusha said unto him: Why do you call me good? There is none good but one, that is, Elohiym. 19 You know the commandments,
>
> Do not break wedlock Do not kill Do not steal Do not bear false witness Defraud not Honor your father and your mother. 20 And he answered and said unto him: Rabbi, all these have I observed from my youth. 21 Then Yahusha beholding him loved him and said unto him: One thing you lack: go your way, sell whatsoever you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven: and come, take up your cross, and follow me. 22 And he was sad at that saying: and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. 23 And Yahusha looked round about and said unto his Talmidiym: How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of Elohiym! 24 And the Talmidiym were astonished at his words. But Yahusha answered again, and said unto them: Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the Kingdom of Elohiym! 25 It is easier for a rope to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Elohiym.

Now consider the addition taken from fragments gathered by Eusibeus known as the gospel according to the Hebrews:

[The other of the rich men said to him: Adonai, what good thing shall I do and live? He said unto him: Man, perform the Torah and the prophets. He answered him: I have performed them. He said unto him: Go, sell all that you have and divide it to the poor and come, follow me. But the rich man began to scratch his head, and it did not please him. And Yahusha said to him: How do you say: I have performed the Torah and the prophets, seeing that it is written in the Torah: You shall love your neighbor as yourself, and behold many of your brethren, sons of Avraham, are clad with dung, dying for hunger, and your house is full of much goods, and there goes out from you nothing at all unto them. And he turned and said to Shimon, his Talmidi, sitting by him: Shimon, son of Yonah, it is easier for a camel to enter through the eye of a needle than a rich man into the kingdom of the heavens.]

So, we see righteousness in its ultimate definition; yet, this is different than holiness. In the Hebrew, the word righteousness is tsedeqah, while the word holiness is qadosh. Tsedeqah means in its first instance lawfulness

– acting rightly with the instruction of Yah. Qadosh, on the other hand is being set apart in sacredness. Let us consider more of the words of Pa'al:

> **Galatiym (Galatians) 5:5-9**
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> For we through the Ruach wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. 6 For in Yahusha Ha'Mashiach neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith in fervent love. 7 Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the Truth? 8 This persuasion comes not of him that calls you. 9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump.

Therefore, the substance of things hoped for by the Am Qodeshiym (the set apart people, or sacred people) is that which is driven by the Ruach – not apart from the brit chadashah – the breathing of the Torah into the heart, mind and soul by the Ruach Ha'Qodesh. Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 31:31; Ivriym (Hebrews) 8:8.

So Pa'al declares that we wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. Consider our studies so far: righteousness is lawfulness to the instruction (Torah) of Yah, and faithfulness is our moral fidelity to his ethos. He then goes on to declare that our faith in Yahusha Ha'Mashiach is in works by love. Yahusha discusses the nature of this love with particularity:

> **Marqus (Mark) 12:29-31**
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> And Yahusha answered him: The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Yashar'el; Yahuah Elohaynu, Yahuah is one: 30 And you shall love את Yahuah Elohayka with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength: this is the first commandment. 31 And the second is like, namely this, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

We see now that the hope of lawfulness to the instruction (Torah) of Yah is by our moral fidelity to Yahusha Ha'Mashiach and his ethos in works by the love of Yahuah Elohaycha with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength, and by the love of your neighbor as yourself.

Pa'al however, gives us further details in his discussion, a writing where we may find a portion of the roster of those things which are the substance of things hoped for. But first, let's consider those things which are not intended to be on the list:

> **Galatiym (Galatians) 5:19-21**
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> Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery (moicheia), fornication (pornea - whoredom), uncleanness (akatharsia), lasciviousness (aselgeia), 20 Idolatry (idololatriah), witchcraft (pharmakeia), hatred (echthra), variance (eris - quarrelsome), emulations (dzelos - jealous zeal), wrath (thumos), strife (eritheia), seditions (dichostasia - division), heresies (hairesis), 21 Envyings (fthonos - ill will), murders (fonos), drunkenness (methay), revellings (komos), and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of Elohiym.

Reflect, for just a moment, on those values that are promoted by Hollywood. In fact, consider these as a checklist to take to the movies the next time you attend, and see how many of them are promoted in a favorable light.

We can take the time to review a preliminary list of the substance of things hoped for in the Ruach. The Scriptures give us again the sevenfold doctrine of His whole creation.

> **Chanoch (Enoch) 93:12**
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> Afterwards, in the seventh week, a perverse generation shall arise; abundant shall be its deeds, and all its deeds perverse. During its completion, the righteous shall be selected from the everlasting plant of righteousness; and to them shall be given the sevenfold doctrine of his whole creation.

We begin then the seven manifestations of the Ruach:

> **Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 11:2**
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> And the Ruach Yahuah shall rest upon him, the Ruach Chokmah and Biynah, the Ruach Etsah and Gevurah, the Ruach Da'ath and of the Yir'ah of Yahuah.

In the Hebrew, this reads as follows:

U na'tsah Aylev Ruach Yahuah, Ruach Chokmah u biynah, Ruach etsah, u gibburah, Ruach da'ath u yir'ah Yahuah

Therefore the Ruach is manifest in seven pluralities:

1. Ruach Yahuah
2. Ruach Chokmah (wisdom)
3. Ruach Biynah (understanding)
4. Ruach Etsah (counsel)
5. Ruach Gibburah (might)
6. Ruach Da'ath (knowledge)
7. Ruach Yir'ah (reverence)

Here, then, is the first roster of things about which we might have hope. The substance of things hoped for in the first instance is the Spirit of Yahuah, the Spirit of Wisdom, the Spirit of Understanding, the Spirit of Counsel, the Spirit of Might, the Spirit of Knowledge and the Spirit of Reverence – or the fear of Yahuah (which is the beginning of Wisdom).

Pa'al continues with this roster, telling us of the Gifts (מַתָּנָה mattanah) of the Ruach:

> **Qorintiym Rishon (I Corinthians) 12:7-11**
>
> But the manifestation of the Ruach is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Ruach
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> 1. the word of wisdom (chokmah); 2. to another the word of knowledge (da'ath) by the same Ruach; 3. to another faith (emunah) by the same Ruach; 4. to another the gifts of healing (מַרְפֵּא marpe') by the same Ruach; 5. to another the working of miracles (מוֹפֵת mowpheth); 6. to another prophecy (נְבוּאָה nevu'ah); to another discerning of ruachoth; 7. to another diverse kinds of tongues (לָשׁוֹן lashon); to another the interpretation of tongues:
>
> But all these works that one and the selfsame Ruach, dividing to every man severally as he will.

And finally, Pa'al gives us the fruit of the Ruach:

> **Galatiym (Galatians) 5:22-26**
>
> But the fruit of the Ruach is love (agape), joy (chara), peace (eirene), longsuffering (makrothumia), gentleness (chrestotes), goodness (agathosune), faith (pistis), 23 Meekness (praotes), temperance (egkrateia): against such there is no law put in place. 24 And they that are Yahusha Ha'Mashiach's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. 25 If we live in the Ruach, let us also walk in the Ruach. 26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

English	Greek	Hebrew
Love	Agape	Ahav
Joy	Chara	Simcha
Peace	Eirene	Shalom
Longsuffering	Makrothumia	Chesed
Gentleness	Chrestotes	Anavah
Goodness	Agathosune	Tov
Faith	Pistis	Emunah

In the Ruach, then, these are the substance of things hoped for:

The Ruach Ha'Qodesh Yahuah, wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, reverence, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, tongues, love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, and goodness.

Compare with the etz chayim (the tree of life):

The substance of things hoped for in the tree of life are knowledge, wisdom, understanding, beauty, longsuffering, might, majesty, victory, the Torah, and the Kingdom.

The Evidence of Things Not Seen

> **Ivriym (Hebrews) 11:1**
>
> Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

It is time to discuss those things not seen, and what constitutes the evidence thereof. It is one of the great ironies that the most important things are those that are not seen.

> **Yochanon (John) 20:29(b)**
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> Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

Thomas's doubt is of such great instruction, for he will not believe until he has seen and until he has touched. His belief requires sensory data at the perceptual level to register as valid. So we journey into the realm of epistemology – the study of the nature of thought – for just a moment, and for the benefit of the non-believers and those whose soul remains as a nefesh – unborn in the second womb – whose belief is predicated upon sensory and perceptual data.

The mind works in methodical ways. We begin with the input of sensory data to the brain – to touch, smell, taste, see, and hear. These senses provide the brain with sensation, which on its own has little information, yet all that is needed for the mind to begin to understand reality, for the sensations when recognized – cognized again – are then perceived, and perception is the beginning of identification which assigns a word to the perception that such perception might become a concept – a wholly independent intellectual construct that can be considered without benefit of sensory input or perceptual data.

Conceptions, from an epistemological view, are the methodology that allows us to consider the evidence of things unseen, because without conceptualization we depend wholly on sensory data and perceptual

information – the stimulus we have before us at this particular time. Memory is completely discounted, as is imagination.

An example of evidence unseen is your own great-grandfather. Your life is evidence of things unseen (assuming of course that your great-grandfather has already passed), as you simply could not exist without your great-grandfather having existed first. This claim is a claim that is based in empiricism; i.e., the practice of relying on observation and experiment to make determinations as to the validity of a proposition.

Conceptualization is the core of what it means to be human. It is the ability to convey concepts in language that distinguishes man from the beasts of the earth – for we are capable of understanding the Word. The mere existence of language is evidence of things unseen, for the implications of just speaking are enormous.

Language is capable of conveying concepts from one person to another by means of guttural and lingual noises, the capturing of a schwa between a lingual explosion and a finishing sibilance. Yet, with deliberate and proper presentation, other human beings are capable of comprehending that which is being communicated.

Therefore, the use of language gives evidence of innate understanding, knowledge and wisdom on behalf of both the speaker and the hearer. Your reading this particular article is also evidence of things unseen, as your eyes are merely viewing an array of darkened pixels over a white background displayed on a screen – yet your conceptualization is being processed even as you read these words.

Which has the greater reality then, the blackened pixels on the screen, or the information conveyed therewith?

In the human body, there are few things more complex than the process that results in blood clotting to seal a wound. In theology, there are few concepts more complex than the idea of propitiation.

Now, in the Greek, the words interpreted as propitiation are ιλαστηριον hilasterion (Strong's 2435) which means an atoning victim, or (specially) the lid of the Ark (in the Temple); i.e., the mercy seat (Romayim [Romans] 3:25), or propitiation, and its root, ιλαμος hilasmos (Strong's 2434), meaning atonement, i.e. (concretely) an expiator: propitiation (Yochanon Rishon [1 John] 1:22; 4:10).

Propitiation means, does it not, Yah acting on the mercy seat as an atoning victim!

> **Shemot (Exodus) 25:21-22**
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> And you shall **put the mercy seat** above upon the Ark; and in the Ark you shall put the Testimony that I shall give you. 22 **And there I will meet with you, and I will commune with you from above the mercy seat**, from between the two Keruviym which are upon the Ark of the Testimony, את (eth) of all things which I will give you in commandment unto the children of Yashar'el.

When I consider some of these scriptures, I still hear the voice of Yah calling to me as a Leviyim (Levite). So the blood of my forefathers, from Aseph through the diaspora of the ages to the present, speaks to me about the capture of the Leviyim as a firstborn offering for the house of Yashar'el in the temple of Yah for all time. Baroch Shemo, Adonai, Yahuah Elohai, El b'aviym, al ha'qadosh echad Yashar'el!

> **Vayiqra (Leviticus) 16:15**
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> Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the veil, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat:

The communion of Yahuah is such that the blood of Mashiach would then be sprinkled on an eternal mercy seat, the eternal propitiation.

Romayim (Romans) 3:19-25

Do we not know that whatsoever the Law says in the Torah it speaks in order that all mouths are stopped, and condemns? It does so in all the world by Yahuah. 20 Therefore by the works of the Law, no flesh is justified in his sight: for by the Law is the knowledge of sin. 21 But now the righteousness of Elohiym without the Law is manifested, being witnessed by the Torah and the prophets; 22 Even the righteousness of Elohiym which is by faith in Yahusha Ha'Mashiach unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of Elohiym; 24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Mashiach Yahusha: 25 Whom Elohiym has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of Elohiym;

The intent, the grace, and the mercy of Yahuah Elohiym is such that the sprinkling of blood on the mercy seat as the ultimate redemption in Yahusha Ha'Mashiach was intended by Yahuah at the very beginning (bere'shiyth) and demonstrated with the giving of the Torah to Mosheh, the giving of the Menorah and the Ark of the Covenant, and the appointment of the Leviyim.

Do we have empirical evidence of this propitiation?

Chazon (Revelation) 7:9-10

After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; 10 And cried with a loud voice, saying: Yeshu`ah to our Elohiym which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

Amein, amein.

This blog was compiled from a Four-Part Series originally published in 2014:

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