

## Epistle of Ya'akov (Ya'akov) ~ 1:9-16

### Testing of Our Trust <sup>1</sup> (Faith) ~ Part 2

***<sup>9</sup> Let the brother in humble circumstances boast about his high position.***

The rich don't undergo economic **trials**. They experience **temptation**, while it is the poor who pass through economic suffering and **trials**. Their wealth too easily removes any sense of need or commitment to **God** and leads to a total dependence on the things of the world. The social stratification that stood between rich and poor was even more pronounced in the Roman world than it is in our modern world. **Ya'akov** emphasizes here that people are not superior just because they inherit wealth, but many of us act as if that is the case and deep down actually believe it is so. The teaching of all of Scripture is that before **God** all people are equal and must equally place their dependence on **God** rather than on their earthly resources. However, that is more easily said than done for the wealthy, who have so much of the world's resources at their disposal.

***<sup>10</sup> But let the rich brother boast about his being humbled; since, like a wildflower, he will pass away. <sup>11</sup> For just as the sun rises with the sharav and dries up the plant, so that its flower falls off and its beauty is destroyed, so too the rich person going about his business will wither away.***

The **sharav** is the hot, dry wind which blows across **Isra'el** from the deserts east of the Land in the spring and (less often) in the fall. Weather like this made **Jonah** faint and want to die (Jonah 4:8). Compare Isaiah 40:7 (**The grass withers, the flower fades when a wind from Adonai blows upon it.**); Psalm 102:4, 11.

The poor boast in the fact that **Yeshua** has exalted them above their earthly station. The boasting of the wealthy should rejoice in the opposite, that **Yeshua** will remove earthly glory and introduce justice. How can they rejoice in being humbled or brought low? They know that they are first **Believers** and only secondarily are they rich, and so they are thrilled that evil is destroyed and the poor people of **God** exalted to their true and proper estate. No wealthy person wants to lose riches, but all should want to use their riches to alleviate the suffering of the poor. Their goal is not to glory in their superiority but to use their advantages to help others.

In the previous ten verses (1:2–11) **Ya'akov** introduced the key motifs of his letter - the fact of **trials**, the need for **wisdom** in overcoming them, and the basic **trial** behind so many of the difficulties - namely, poverty. Now in the rest of the chapter, he will expand his coverage and develop them further. He begins with **trials**. In 1:2–4 he showed that **trials** were tests of **trust** designed by **God** to teach endurance; now we will see that **trials** are also **temptations** that can seriously harm us spiritually.

***<sup>12</sup> How blessed is the man who perseveres through temptation! For after he has passed the test, he will receive as his crown the Life which God has promised to those who love him.***

When you face **trials** and **temptations**, if you stay close to the Lord, you will hear Him say, "**Well done, good and faithful servant,**" (see Matthew 25:21) and you will receive the crown of life specifically reserved for those who don't walk away from Him in **trials** or **temptations**.

***<sup>13</sup> No one being tempted should say, "I am being tempted by God." For God cannot be tempted by evil, and God himself tempts no one.***

**HaSatan** tempted **Job** (Job 1–2) and **Yeshua** (Mt 4:1–11), but **God tempts no one**.

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<sup>1</sup> Recall that the Complete Jewish Bible translates the Hebrew word for **faith** as **trust**.

As mentioned in our previous post, *peirasmos* also means **temptation**, and **trials** become **temptation** when we approach them in our own strength rather than relying on **God**. When we accept them as **God-given tests** and address them through prayer and **trust** in **God**, they lead to spiritual victory and divine approval. When we encounter them in our own strength and blame **God** for them, we fall into **temptation** and **sin**. Every **trial** has two possible responses, and we must make our choice. Think of a pilgrim on a quest suddenly faced with an obstacle. They can turn to **God** for **wisdom** or to self in order to get around the obstacle on their own.

A primary **temptation** in difficult **trials** is to blame **God** for our misfortune. So the first thing we must realize is the truth that **God** is not tempting us. The last line of the Lord's Prayer is best translated, "Don't let us yield to **temptation**" rather than "Lead us not into **temptation**" (Matt 6:13). **God** never tempts his followers. He sends **trials** and tests but not **temptation**. Rather, the **trials** become **temptation** when we fail to seek **God's wisdom** in handling them. In **Yeshua's** confrontation in the wilderness (Matt 4:11), He was tested by **God** but tempted by Satan.

Regarding the entire arena of **trials** and **temptations**, understand this: **God** will allow a **trial**; Satan will come with a **temptation**. The **trial** may be financial; the **temptation** may be cocaine to escape the pressure. It's not **God** who brings the cocaine your way. It's not **God** who tempts you with pornography. No, **God** simply allows the **trial** to come. It's Satan who brings the **temptation**.

Never, ever be mistaken on this point. The **trial** of our **trust** is to prove the faithfulness of **God**. It is never a **temptation** or an enticement to **sin**. Therefore, if you're half-drunk in a bar, the guy offering you free drugs is not **God's** way of saying, "I'm going to prove how faithful I am by sending this guy your way." No! That's a **temptation** you brought on yourself by placing yourself in that situation in the first place.

<sup>14</sup> **Rather, each person is being tempted whenever he is being dragged off and enticed by the bait of his own desire.**

**His own desire**, known in **Judaism** as the *yetzer ra* ("evil inclination"). "One who commits a transgression has been seized by lust and incited thereto by the evil inclination."

<sup>15</sup> **Then, having conceived, the desire gives birth to sin; and when sin is fully grown, it gives birth to death.** <sup>16</sup> **Don't delude yourselves, my dear brothers.** (CJB)

**Sin gives birth to death**, an example of **Ya'akov's** striking manner of expression. **Sin** always brings forth death. Every time. **Sin** will kill relationships. It will destroy happiness. It will ruin health. When you want to tell kids how serious **sin** is and what **sin** does, the best thing you can do is take them to the Cross of Calvary and say, "Look at this wonderful, perfect, loving Person and see Him on the Cross in agony and pain and blood. It was when Jesus became **sin** for us that He died, for **sin** always brings death."

**Don't delude yourselves**, **Ya'akov** says. **Sin** always results in death and tragedy. **Sha'ul** would put it this way: **Don't delude yourselves: no one makes a fool of God! A person reaps what he sows.** ~ Galatians 6:7 (CJB)

We will learn a little more about **Ya'akov** as we dig into what he has to say about the **Testing of Our Trust** ~ **Part 3.**