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No Pleasure on the Sabbath - Isaiah 58

Does Isaiah 58:13-14 mean that we cannot have any pleasure on the Sabbath?

Isaiah 58:13-14

If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, **from doing your pleasure** on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord (YHWH) honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or **seeking your own pleasure**, or talking idly; then you shall take delight in the Lord (YHWH), and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the Lord (YHWH) has spoken.

It appears rather clear, doesn't it? We are not to do our own pleasure on the Sabbath. Playing Monopoly with the kids, going for a walk with your wife, playing with your dog, or doing anything pleasurable outside of Biblical study or related activity is not to occur on the Sabbath.

We are not to do our own pleasure, right?

Well, just maybe some are being too quick in their understanding of these couple of verses. We need to test everything, and to test everything, we need to test it back to Torah. Why? Because Isaiah is a prophet, and how do we test prophets? We test prophets by using Deuteronomy 13.

In Deuteronomy 13 we learn that a true prophet is a prophet that teaches Yahweh's commandments. Anyone that adds to the commandments or takes away from the commandments is considered a false prophet. (For more on this, please see the teaching "[The Deuteronomy 13 Test](#).”) We also find such instruction elsewhere in the Torah.

Deuteronomy 4:2

You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you.

We see this commandment repeated just before we enter into Deuteronomy 13.

Deuteronomy 12:32

Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it.

It is not a coincidence that this commandment is being repeated just before we enter into the context of Deuteronomy 13. As Deuteronomy 13 concludes, no true prophet from our Creator will add to or take away from His Torah. That being said, we must test Isaiah to the very same criteria. Isaiah must go through the Deuteronomy 13 test.

What are the instructions surrounding the Sabbath in the Torah? How do we keep the Sabbath holy, or “set apart?” They are fairly simple, right?

1. Do not work on the Sabbath. You rest.
 2. Do not have any of your servants work on the Sabbath. They rest.
 3. Do not have any of your livestock work on the Sabbath. They rest.
- (Exodus 20:8-11; Exodus 23:12)

So, in summary, the 7th day is all about no work, just rest... right? And that is how our Creator set the day apart, and thus that is the very definition and example of how we are to set the day apart.

Genesis 2:3

So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all His work that He had done in creation.

So where in the Torah do we find any instruction to not do our own pleasure? Well, actually nowhere. So then, what is Isaiah talking about? He is not a false prophet, so how does this all make sense?

Isaiah 58:13

If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord (YHWH) honorable;

The ESV makes a note that the word for pleasure may be best understood as “business.” This would mean that we are not to do “our business” on the Sabbath day. Usually, or the way it is supposed to be, your “business” is something, such as a trade or skill you have, that you are good at and you love to do... while also a means to provide you income. Often, today, that is not so much the case. In fact, most people today take vacations from their job, just to get away from it.

In Biblical times, you would do a job that you loved, and you would not want to take a vacation from it. It is a completely different perspective. Your business gave you pleasure. It was what you loved to do day in and day out. Does that make sense in the context? Actually, it does. Let’s read the prior verses.

Isaiah 58:3

“Why have we fasted (*tsowm*), and you see it not? Why have we humbled (*anah*) ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?” Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, and oppress all your workers.

You can see here that people were fasting for Yahweh, but missing the point as they were still working and causing their employees to work. If done on a Sabbath, that would be “oppressing the workers” because on that day, they are supposed to have rest, and we are, too. When you force someone to work on a day that they are supposed to have rest, that is oppression and bondage.

To explain the context a little more, we need to reveal something. With the exception of the repeating 7th day Sabbath, for whatever reason, the Day of Atonement is the only Biblical holiday called an actual

Sabbath. There are possible reasons for this that are reserved for another teaching. The other holidays are called rest days, but they are not called Sabbaths according to the Torah. That may or may not, mean anything.

Leviticus 23:26-32

And the Lord (YHWH) spoke to Moses, saying, “Now on the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. It shall be for you a time of holy convocation, and you shall afflict yourselves and present a food offering to the Lord (YHWH). And you shall not do any work on that very day, for it is a Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the Lord (YHWH) your God. For whoever is not afflicted on that very day shall be cut off from his people. And whoever does any work on that very day, that person I will destroy from among his people. You shall not do any work. It is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwelling places. **It shall be to you a Sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict yourselves. On the ninth day of the month beginning at evening, from evening to evening shall you keep your Sabbath.**”

What we should note, however, is that this day is a day of affliction, or *anah*.

“*Anah*” simply means to afflict yourself. Fasting (in Hebrew, “*tsowm*”) is the denying of food, which is a form of affliction. However, affliction simply means to humble yourself, or to bring yourself low or under the authority of another. So, when Yah asks us to afflict ourselves, it really means to be like Yeshua, and to fully obey the Word of God. (For more on this, see the teaching “*Is Yom Kippur a Day of Fasting*”)

The point is this: God’s people began to fast on the Day of Atonement, when Yah simply asked for affliction - to obey - and He points out that during YOUR fast, (not YHWH’s fast) that they were still disobeying Him by causing their servants to work on His day, likely the Day of Atonement being the Sabbath in context here in Isaiah 58.

Isaiah 58:3

“Why have we fasted (*tsowm*), and you see it not? Why have we humbled (*anah*) ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?” Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your **own pleasure, and oppress all your workers.**

Notice here how “own pleasure” is defined, in context, as being literally oppressing all of your workers; or more specifically, causing them to work on the Sabbath.

Do you see what is going on here? Does this not help bring clarity to the type of pleasure that we are to refrain from in verse 13?

Isaiah 58:13

If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord (YHWH) honorable;

Yah then proceeds to explain to them that it is not their fasting that is important on this day, what is important is obedience. What is important is that they bow and humble themselves, obeying the Word of God, by not working or causing others to work on His set apart day.

Watch how Yah brings the focus to humbling oneself (*anah*) and what that means, as opposed to just

fasting (*tsowm*).

Isaiah 58:4-7

Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high. Is such the fast that I chose, a day for a person to humble (*anah*) himself? Is it to bow down his head like a reed, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast (*tsowm*), and a day acceptable to the Lord? Is not this the fast (*tsowm*) that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

Nowhere in the Torah does it forbid that we cannot have pleasure on the Sabbath. If Isaiah was saying that in Isaiah 58, he would be adding to the Word of God. So we hope that brings clarity to Isaiah 58. It appears that Isaiah 58 is about the Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur as a Sabbath His people were not obeying correctly. They were focused on a form of affliction as fasting, instead of the true repentant humbling of affliction Yah calls for as obedience to His Word. They were breaking the Word of God by causing others to work on His set apart day, which Yah called, doing your own pleasure. Doing your own pleasure then, in context, is limited to just that. Thus, Isaiah is not adding to the Word of God here or taking away from it.

We hope that this teaching has blessed you, and remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

EMAIL: Info@119ministries.com

FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/119Ministries

WEBSITE: www.TestEverthing.net & www.ExaminaloTodo.net

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