

PERFECTION

It is one of the ironies of life that many people are striving for perfection in their professions, their education, their preparations for retirement and in the way they decorate their houses, but when it comes to the requirement to be perfect in their walk before Yahweh, they reject it with the excuse that it is impossible for any man to be perfect! There is no doubt whatsoever that it is the straightforward requirement of Scriptures that those who wish to please Yahweh, should be perfect in all their ways. Why does the Almighty have such a high standard that is put before his followers? Why is He expecting so much of them? Simply because He is perfect, because His Ways are perfect and because the portion that He is preparing for his people, is so absolutely perfect. His desire is for man - the crown of his creation - to reflect the same kind of perfection that is characteristic of his own being.

This is confirmed in a most convincing way in Wayyikra / Leviticus 11:44 "For I am Yahweh your Elohim, and you shall set yourselves apart. And you shall be set-apart, for I am set-apart"; Devarim / Deuteronomy 18:13-14 "Be perfect before Yahweh your Elohim, for these nations whom you are possessing do listen to those using magic and to diviners. But as for you, Yahweh your Elohim has not appointed such for you"; Yahushua / Joshua 24:14 "And now, fear Yahweh, serve Him in perfection and in truth, and put away the mighty ones which your fathers served beyond the River and in Mitsrayim, and serve Yahweh"; 1 Melachim / Kings 8:61 "Let your heart therefore be perfect to Yahweh our Elohim, to walk in His laws and guard His commands"; Yechezkel / Ezekiel 36:23-25 "And the gentiles shall know that I am Yahweh," declares the Master Yahweh, "when I am set-apart in you before their eyes. And I shall take you from among the gentiles, and I shall gather you out of all lands, and I shall bring you into your own land. And I shall sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean - from all your filthiness and from all your idols I cleanse you"; Tehillim / Psalms 18:25-26 "With the kind You show Yourself kind; With the perfect one You show Yourself perfect; with the clean You show Yourself clean; And with the crooked You show Yourself twisted"; MattitYahu / Matthew 5:48 "Therefore, be perfect, as your Father in the heavens is perfect"; 2 Corinthians 7:1 "Having, then, these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and spirit, perfecting set-apartness in the fear of Elohim"; 1 Kefa / Peter 1:15-16 "As the One who called you is set-apart, so you also should become set-apart in all behaviour, because it has been written, Be set-apart, for I am set-apart."

It should be noted, however, that the perfection required by Scriptures is not a perfection to boast about, but a perfection to pursue and to go after until the end of one's life. Someone once said that he who boast of being perfect is perfect in folly. When we are urged by the Word of Yahweh to be perfect and to live set apart lives, it is by no means a statement that the true believers are supposed to be completely without fault or blemish, and if they are not, they would be unacceptable in Yahweh's sight. With reference to the well-known proverb "It is a good horse that never stumbles, and a good wife that never grumbles" Charles Spurgeon once said: "Such horses and wives are only found in the fool's paradise". This is also thoroughly confirmed in Scriptures: 1 Melachim / Kings 8:46-49 "When they sin against You - for there is no one who does not sin - and You become enraged with them ... and they shall turn ... and make supplication to You ... saying, 'We have sinned and acted crookedly ... then shall You hear in the heavens Your dwelling place their prayer and their supplication'; Tehillim / Psalms 51:4-5 "Against You, You alone, have I sinned, And done evil in Your eyes ... see, I was brought forth in crookedness, And in sin my mother conceived me" (said by Dawid, the anointed of Yahweh, the type of the Messiah, the one being filled with the spirit of Yahweh, the man after Yahweh's own heart, the one whose heart was said to be perfect with Yahweh his Elohim - 1 Melachim 15:3); Mishleh / Proverbs 20:9 "Who says, 'I have cleansed my heart, I am purged of my sin?'; Qoheleth / Ecclesiastes 7:20 "For there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and does not sin"; Romans 7:21 "I find therefore this law, that when I wish to do the good, that the evil is present with me"; Ya'acov / James 3:2 "For we all stumble in many matters. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the entire body"; 1 Yahuchanan / John 1:8 "If we say that we have no sin, we are misleading ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

One of the reasons why it is most essential that we recognise our own imperfections in the light of Yahweh's Word, is to motivate us to grow in our knowledge of the Word and in our application of the directives coming from the Word. The danger of becoming proud and self-righteous and spiritually over-comfortable is very real, indeed. We should heed the warning given to the assembly of the Laodiceans in Revelation 3:17 "You say, 'Rich I am, and I am made rich, and need none at all,' and do not know that you are wretched, and pitiable, and poor, and blind, and naked". This same kind of attitude was seen in the Messiah's parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector who went to the set apart place to pray. Luke 18:11-13 "The Pharisee stood and began to pray with himself this way, 'Elohim, I thank You that I am not like the rest of men, swindlers, unrighteous, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. 'I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I possess.' But the tax collector standing at a distance would not even raise his eyes to the heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'Elohim, show favour unto me, a sinner!'" The Messiah was quite clear in his evaluation of the two men's prayers: Luke 18:14 "I say to you, this man (the tax collector) went down to his house declared right, rather than the other. For everyone who is exalting himself shall be humbled, and he who is humbling himself shall be exalted."

Another reason why we should be clear about our own shortcomings, is so that we would not be too "holy" and too "high" to reach out to, and help those who stumble. Those who reject and turn their backs upon others who make mistakes, may one day find out that they were so blinded by the splinter in someone else's eye that they did not even notice the planks in their own eyes (MattitYahu / Matthew 7:3-5). It is only one who knows and grieves over the fallen nature of mankind, and who realises how desperately people are in need of forgiveness and restoration, who cares enough about sinners to become involved in their lives and share with them the wonderful possibility of being healed and accepted again.

In Tehillim / Psalms 119:96 we find these words "I have seen an end of all perfection; Your command is exceedingly broad." This reminds us of the fact that we are living in a imperfect world but that we are offered something much better by the Perfect One, Yahweh, the Almighty. There is an end to all efforts towards perfection in this world - "end" in the sense of "limit" or "boundary", but also in the sense of "time": it does not last forever. Man will always try to become perfect in some area or to attain perfection with his inventions and his achievements. But, no matter how hard he tries, he will always be disappointed, because in this world everything comes to an end. Everything has its limitations. Everything is temporary. Everything is fragile and imperfect. Only Yahweh can offer us something that will outlast and outclass everything else in this world. How is this possible? It is possible because He is the Eternal One. His Name suggests that He is the One who was and who is and shall be - without interruption and without limitation and without termination . He is the Aleph and the Tau - the beginning and the end. Therefore it is within his power to bestow upon the objects of his favour, something that is essentially superior to anything else that one may find in this world. In Scriptures, this "something" is called "perfection". At the end of time as we know it now, the true believers will be presented before the Almighty, perfect in every way - this is revealed (among other Scriptures) in Ephesians 1:4; 5:27; Colossians 1:22 and 1:28. In the meantime, until that day, we have been called to trust with our lives upon the command of Yahweh, which is "exceedingly broad" and will enable us to grow more and more towards a life of set-apartness and perfection. In doing so, we shall not only have a foretaste of the age to come, we shall also reflect something of the character of the Almighty in this world and thus bring honour and esteem to his wonderful Name!