



## **Messages to the Seven Assemblies: Ephesus**

*A Study Developed in S.A.M. Sukkoth Community Study &*

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As we began with this first assembly, we were reminded once again that these assemblies were found in the area we'd recognize as Turkey today, and none of them remain today. Ephesus means "permitted" and we recalled that it was an area known especially for pagan worship in the first century. It is also the only one of the seven assemblies that has a letter included in the *Brit Chadasha* which seems significant to us as there is more background information available here than for others.

Through examining our list of seven's we saw these reminders of what is associated with the first of each of them:

Day One: *Alef* Pictographic meaning of number one: Strength/Ox

Spirit: Wisdom/*Chokmah*

Creation Event: Separation of Light and Darkness

Feast/*Moedim*: Passover/*Pesach*

Abominations/Things YHWH hates (*Proverbs 6:16-19*): Haughty eyes

It is difficult to briefly convey all the many layers of meanings of these simple phrases, but if you have done a study of the sevens you may be like us and find that these pictures begin to form quickly in your mind's eye.

As we considered these aspects, it seems clear that what is addressed first is foundational to all that comes later. Yeshua is the First and the Last, *Alef* and *Tav* in Hebrew though it is most often heard in the Greek, *Alpha* and *Omega*. The *Alef* is a pictograph of the ox and strength we see in Him. YHWH's wisdom is the strong foundation He desired for mankind to grow from and build on.

When His foundation is honored, there is strength from the beginning. We are reminded of the admonitions in Proverbs to not forget our mother's teachings, which we understand to be the foundations of character that must be in place in order to correct interpret Papa's teachings. These teachings are His Torah, used in the broad sense meaning His Word and instructions. Our Elohim is as both Father and Mother to us as He provided the physical picture in humankind to reflect His nature.

Through His wisdom, we can begin to see the difference between what is light and what is dark, what is holy or unholy, and then make our choices. We know that the Light is to be set up on a stand, not put under a bushel. His Light in us makes us light to the nations. It is a high vantage point, set apart, but if we do not heed it, there is room to fall.

Will we be set apart to Him or to something else? At Pesach, the Israelites and those who were beginning to understand this difference chose to honor the request to slaughter a lamb, put the blood on the doorposts and then stay inside the house while death passed over them. They accepted YHWH's wisdom and the picture He offered them then of what was to come when Messiah Yeshua, Himself was the Lamb. The Ephesians had also accepted His wisdom. They had His Light to be discerning. They were thus set apart from those who did not honor this direction. From this high position, they were permitted to walk in His authority which is strength; far above all powers, principalities, thrones, dominions and every spiritual force of wickedness!

Those who do not choose to honor Him and His ways are usually set on doing their own thing, what is right in their own eyes, thus showing what we might describe as haughty eyes in their pride. They are not listening to or tending to the Holy Spirit but giving ground in their mind, will and emotions that allows the forces of wickedness to influence them. Korah's Rebellion provided one picture of this in that first Exodus following the first Pesach. The book of Ephesians provides several descriptions of those who did not have His Light and how they walked.

Following and honoring our Elohim as we first do in the blush of first love is a joy. We find ourselves looking forward to spending time with Him and take delight in learning His ways and beginning to walk in them. The Ephesians who came to faith in Yeshua came from a very pagan background which influenced nearly every aspect of their daily lives so they had made some very definite changes. The blush of their first love would seem to include all the things for which they were commended here as they were permitted to enter the Kingdom of YHWH. They had accomplished things through their labors; they had shown patience in doing so and discernment in ferreting out those who were liars, falsely claiming to be apostles. Because they were now working on a firm, strong foundation of acceptance of Yah's wisdom and His ways, they were permitted to exercise the authority He gives.

Often the term "apostle" is considered to be only applicable to the time after Yeshua's death and resurrection. We see that it is defined as one that is "sent out" as with a message. The Hebrew "*shalach*" Strong's #7971 also has the meaning of being "sent out." We understand therefore that there have been those from the beginning of time who have been "sent out" with the message of our YHWH and His Word. So the liars here could be anyone in all time who is claiming to be sent by our Elohim but in fact were not rather than viewing it as only following Messiah's first time here.

Taking Pesach as the first of His annual cycle of Feasts, we are reminded every year in our holy rehearsal of the sacrifice He made for us, His People, as He brought them out of bondage to the world system. Yet as we rehearse and remember this each year, we also have seen the significance of the symbolism of the covenant relationship He has established with us. When we drink the cup with Him, we have confirmed

our relationship with Him as in a betrothal and enter into another year of waiting with and for Him when He returns in the flesh.

As we realize Who He is, what He has done for us and that He desires us for Himself there is an amazing realization! A transformation in us, knowing that we are loved! That this Being through Whom all things were created would want relationship with us is humbling, amazing, liberating! Every year in our *Haggadah* we come to the portion that reads: **The Bride is now veiled, and must begin preparing herself for her Husband's return.**

Ezekiel wrote of the veil that our Elohim will tear off those who have been in bondage as He restores them to Himself. Veils are related to the idea of being “joined” with something as we were joined with the world system. The veils that were over us as they are over the nations like the scales on our eyes have been removed, as Sha’ul/Paul experienced, and are no longer between us! (KJV renders it as “kerchiefs”)

How amazing this is! The veil between Messiah and us has been removed but now-- ***now*** we have been chosen to choose and we have chosen Him as He has chosen us so we are set apart for Him alone! **Now we are veiled FOR Him, no longer FROM Him.** Set apart for His purposes.

There is no other husband who could offer what He offers us so we are certain that we will not go after any other, no spiritual whoring around, as we wait for Him! We enjoy that first blush of relationship and eagerly enter into our preparation for when He comes to take us to the Home He has prepared for us. There is joy in taking time to learn His ways and enter into them as fully as possible, nothing is too much to ask since we know that we are our Beloved’s and He is ours! Our time in prayer and study of His Word is a delight and we are hungry to be more intimate with Him. Other things in the world pale in significance to the importance of this relationship now and for all eternity. He is our priority.

But oh, the days and weeks and years pass and like the Ephesians, we too, can too easily fall away and lose that first love. The cares of the world, our fleshly desires, the enemy of our soul all are there to rob us of the joy we have found if we allow them to do so. So as we examined this message to the Ephesians we saw a chiasmus that brings us to the central admonition.

- A 2:1 He who is holding the seven stars, walking **in the midst** of the seven golden **lampstands**
- B 2 You are **not able to bear evil ones**, and have tried those who say they are emissaries and are not
- C 4 You left your **first** love
- D 5 remember from where you have fallen**
- C 5 repent and do the **first** works or I will remove your lampstand
- B 6 yet this you have, that you **hate the works of Nicolaitans**, which I also hate
- A 7 to him who overcomes, I shall give to eat from the **tree of life** which is in **the midst** of the garden.

They were advised to remember from where they had fallen, not meaning their past lives, but rather that first love characteristic of the beginning of a cherished relationship. Remember all that they had felt and done in the joy of that position when they were permitted to enter into relationship with Him. Repent! Turn around! Go back and do what you did at the first or you will no longer have My Light!

The admonition is timeless and clearly for those who have professed faith, not the world at large. These matters are not relevant to anyone who never had faith or who now overtly denies faith, but to those who believe they are or see themselves still in a faith walk. How little things have changed! Oswald Chambers often commented, in my brief paraphrase, that the Jesus of the Scriptures had been pushed aside and no longer resembled Who He really is while people developed one or another program they were interested to pursue in His Name. If we get more interested in doing FOR Him than being WITH Him, we have pushed Him aside and are no longer walking after Him in that first love state. When we become complacent and no longer earnestly contend for the faith given once for all to the saints, we have left our first love. When we consider our prayer or study time to be a chore that must be completed, we have left our first love. When appearances become more important than substance, we have left our first love. When we consider that He is there for us at our convenience whenever we need a refreshing time, like a dip in the lake, but we are not guarding our time with Him, both our personal spiritual disciplines and His moedim, and cherishing our relationship with Him we have left our first love.

We have asked ourselves if there is anywhere we have left our first love. More importantly, we have asked Him to show us if this is so and then grant us the overcoming faith to return. He is showing Himself faithful. We advise all to do the same as we draw so near to the time of His return and the pressures of the world system, the flesh and the evil one grow ever more bold.

***Repent! Turn around! Go back and do what you did at the first or you will no longer have My Light!***