

Epistle of Ya'akov ~ 4:1-10

Warning Against Weariness ~ Part 1

¹ *What is causing all the quarrels and fights among you? Isn't it your desires battling inside you?*

² *You desire things and don't have them. You kill, and you are jealous, and you still can't get them. So, you fight and quarrel. The reason you don't have is that you don't pray!* ³ *Or you pray and don't receive because you pray with the wrong motive, that of wanting to indulge your own desires.*

You pray with the wrong motive. There is a heresy current among **Believers**, which, feeding off the excessive individualism and greed rampant in popular Western ideologies, purports to give **God's** approval to selfish prayer. It beckons: "You are a child of **God**. He is a loving Father who would deny His children nothing. Therefore, you can pray for anything you want, and **God** will give it to you. Do you want a new car? A bigger house? Fancy clothes? Just 'ask, and it will be given to you' (Lk 11:10)." Besides misusing Scripture, raising false hopes, and making prayer a magic charm indistinct from witchcraft, this teaching ignores the fact that a truly loving father does not give his children whatever they ask for; fathers know better than their children what they need and act accordingly. The present verse refutes this selfish philosophy masquerading as biblical teaching.¹

We will learn more about **Ya'akov's** scathing condemnation of the arrogant rich when we dig into 4:13–5:6.

⁴ *You unfaithful wives! Don't you know that loving the world is hating God? Whoever chooses to be the world's friend makes himself God's enemy!*

You unfaithful wives! In the **Tanakh**, **Israel's** unfaithfulness to **God** her **Ba'al** (the Hebrew word means both "lord" and "husband") is often expressed in terms of adultery and whoredom; see Ezekiel 23; Hosea 1–2, 9:1. **Yeshua** means the same thing when He calls His generation **wicked and adulterous** (Mt 12:39, 16:4).

⁵ *Or do you suppose the Scripture speaks in vain when it says that there is a spirit in us which longs to envy?* ⁶ *But the grace He gives is greater, which is why it says,*

*"God opposes the arrogant,
but to the humble he gives grace."*

*Do you suppose the **Tanakh** speaks in vain when it says that there is a spirit in us which longs to envy?* Bible scholars have had difficulty interpreting verse 6 since it is not an exact quote from the **Tanakh**. David Stern opines that **Ya'akov** appears to be referring to **Genesis 4:7**, where **God** says to **Cain**, *If you are doing what is good, shouldn't you hold your head high? And if you don't do what is good, sin is crouching at the door—it wants you, but you can rule over it.* All understand this to be speaking about **HaSatan**, who is the evil impulse in man.

⁷ *Therefore, submit to God. Moreover, take a stand against the Adversary, and he will flee from you.*

Take a stand against the Adversary (HaSatan) who stalks about like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour ~ 1 Kefa 5:8–9. Although he is the **god of this world** (2Cor. 4:4), **Yeshua** has **overcome the world** (John 16:33). Therefore, if you use Scripture properly (2 Tim. 2:15, Matt. 4:1–11) and employ the other available means of spiritual warfare (2Cor. 10:3–5, Ephesians 6:10–18), **he will flee from you**. The verse carries the same message as **Genesis 4:7** (see above).

¹ Stern, D. H. (1996). **Jewish New Testament Commentary**.

⁸ Come close to God, and He will come close to you. Clean your hands, sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded people!

Come close to God, and He will come close to you, as in Zechariah 1:3 Therefore, tell them that Adonai-Tzva'ot says this: "Return to me," says Adonai-Tzva'ot, "and I will return to you," says Adonai-Tzva'ot. Here the initiative for reconciliation is ours; elsewhere, Scripture places it in **God's** hands, as at Lamentations 5:21 and Ephesians 2:4–10. Yochanan 3:16 expresses both sides equally.

Clean your hands ... purify your hearts. Compare Isaiah 1:15–16: ***When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even when you make many prayers, I will not hear—for your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.*** Also, Psalm 24:4(3): ***Who shall ascend into the mountain of Adonai? Who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart.***

⁹ Wail, mourn, sob! Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy into gloom! ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. ~ 4:1-10 (CJB)

Verses 9-10 explain what is meant by purifying one's heart in v. 8.

We will learn more from **Ya'akov** as we dig into what he says about **Warning Against Worldliness ~ Part 2.**