

MESSIANIC

FALL HOLIDAY HELPER

edited by Margaret McKee Huey

MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS
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Messianic Fall Holiday Helper

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Day Eight

Psalm 145; Job 42:1-17; Exodus 20:15

The Eighth Commandment prohibits stealing. Stealing or kidnapping people is a capital offense in the Torah (Exodus 21:26; Deuteronomy 24:7), but when someone steals goods, then restitution is often possible on various levels (i.e., Exodus 22:1). One proverb describes the mercy extended by those who understand that stealing is sometimes necessary for human survival:

“Men do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy himself when he is hungry; but when he is found, he must repay sevenfold; he must give all the substance of his house” (Proverbs 6:30-31, NASU).

Stealing, even in order to eat, is still forbidden. The Lord has simply stated that one should not steal because He knew that its proliferation would upset the order of labor, as people are rewarded by the fruit of their work. Yet, even in Judeo-Christian influenced cultures today, the amount of crime which falls into the category of “stealing” is mind-boggling. For many reasons, there appears to be a hardening of hearts toward this command, as the free enterprise system stimulated by capitalism strives to encourage people to have more and more things, which are often beyond the earning capacity of most. The ability for the market to promote a perceived “need” for products and services, has been indirectly responsible for stimulating thievery on many levels.

Before focusing on what you lose by stealing, perhaps another reading of Psalm 145 will remind you once again about the God we serve, and His mercy toward us.

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The Eighth Commandment

“You shall not steal” (Exodus 20:15, NASU).

There exists in every society the innate understanding that stealing is wrong. Somehow wired into the conscience of human beings (cf. Romans 1:20), a person knows that stealing something from someone else is off limits. Yet, when we consider the prohibition Adam and Eve originally received in Eden, when they were told not to eat the fruit of one particular tree, they still exhibited their will and partook of the forbidden fruit. This defiant act required expulsion from the Garden:

“Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. The LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.’” (Genesis 2:15-17, NASU).

Eve had looked upon the beauty of the forbidden fruit. Being deceived by the serpent, **she stole** the fruit from the tree and ate it, perhaps believing that she could get away with her indiscretion:

“When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate” (Genesis 3:6, NASU).

It seems that stealing, a result of eating the forbidden fruit, could be considered the first larcenous act ever committed by humans. It certainly can reflect what is in the heart of those who venture to take something from someone else—even if the prohibition has been clearly understood and spoken directly by God. Eve looked upon what obviously looked good for food. It must have looked *especially good*, because it delighted her eyes. She knew that the fruit would make her wise, or at least improve her status. She freely grabbed one of the pieces of fruit and ate it. In like manner, her husband Adam chose to be her accomplice, and he took what she gave him and ate it. Without getting into all of the theological implications and theories about what

Day Eight Yom Teruah and the Ten Days of Awe

was going on between Adam and Eve and who was specifically at fault, suffice it to say they willfully stole something which was not theirs.

All human beings born since, inherit the nature and characteristics of fallen Adam (Romans 5:12). Since Adam and Eve were able to so readily choose to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the propensity to want to take things which do not belong to you is inherent in the makeup and behavior of their descendants. Hence, by extension, it became imperative for the Holy One to prohibit His creatures from stealing, knowing that a tendency to steal is endemic from the very Garden of Eden.

Wanting something which is not yours, and then executing the act of stealing, can actually complete a cycle whose root is covetousness (discussed further in Day 10). When you find yourself stealing something—if you are spiritually minded—then you should be convicted to the core.

Is it possible that the Holy One of Israel is keeping an account of every time we break His laws, and that one day we will be held accountable for those we have not confessed and repented of? I am not sure how it will all work out, but during this season of repentance I am asking Him to bring to mind even the smallest of indiscretions which might be present in my thought life. I want to be able to confess my sin to Him, and avoid His displeasure. Without any reservation, I am reminded of the proverb which says so much regarding our station in life, and how we should each be thankful for where the Lord currently has us economically, which incidentally is one of the primary reasons for stealing:

“Keep deception and lies far from me, give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is my portion, that I not be full and deny *You* and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’ Or that I not be in want and steal, and profane the name of my God” (Proverbs 30:8-9, NASU).

Rather than be profane through any improper actions, we need to let our lives instead be a sweet savor of prayer, seeking righteousness before His holy throne! May He purify us, and let us “steal” only moments of time when we can seek to commune with Him from the bottom of our hearts.