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POSTPONING ATONEMENT IS TOTALLY UNJUSTIFIED

During this century there have been great advances in our understanding of good health and the causes of sickness and disease. Modern medicine developed with a largely twofold focus: drug therapy (finding medicines that will cure a variety of symptoms) and surgery (cutting into the human body to resolve problems).

Already back in the 1950's and 1960's Mr. Armstrong understood that this focus is wrong. The focus was on dealing with the problems, while ignoring the causes. But many researchers and many doctors also saw the flaws in this approach. So they started to experiment with nutritional therapies, searching out components of our diets that would have a healing effect, the same effect which the synthetic drugs were trying to achieve.

By the mid-1960's one of the leading nutritional experts around was a lady by the name of Adelle Davis. She wrote several books, which presented the results of thousands of clinically-controlled experiments with nutritional supplements. Her books include titles like "Let's Get Well" and "Let's Eat Right To Keep Fit".

Medical doctors were experimenting with megadoses of various vitamins, as well as mineral supplements, to treat every conceivable illness, and then reporting their findings in the various prestigious medical journals. Adelle Davis' books brought this information to the attention of the man-in-the-street. There was no question but that in many cases doctors were achieving very impressive results with this approach.

So the "health food" industry was born! Instead of rushing off to the chemist or to the drugstore for a solution to some health problem, we started to search the shelves of these new "health food" stores.

Adelle Davis was very thorough in her research through the information available at that time. For example, in the 34 chapters of "Let's Get Well" I counted 2402 MEDICAL references; that's 15 medical references for every 2 pages of text in the book. Most of us are not aware of the information explosion that has been taking place and still is taking place on the health-front. For example, every single month approximately one hundred thousand new articles are published worldwide, which deal with some aspect of health/nutrition/diet/exercise. In many of these articles doctors are reporting the results in their specific areas of research.

The advice to treat many sicknesses with megadoses of vitamins was helpful in many cases, but it wasn't the whole answer. And Adelle Davis, who diligently practised what she preached about nutritional supplements, herself died of cancer while still in her 60's. She had only presented part of the answer.

Twenty years, and millions of more health-related articles later the picture is a bit clearer. More and more research projects were being conducted. Amongst other things, many studies demonstrated the healing powers of plain old fasting. For example, in the mid-80's one author, Leslie Kenton, wrote a book entitled "Ageless Aging", in which she devoted one of her 30 chapters to the subject of fasting. This book also contains many hundreds of quotes from the medical literature.

The point doctors and researchers were coming to understand is that it is not enough to just give the body all the essential minerals and vitamins in order to achieve and to maintain optimum health. The

body ALSO needs the opportunity to eliminate accumulated waste products. Without a means for such elimination our bodies become like the engine of a car that is driven for 100,000 miles without ever having an oil-change. [You can develop this analogy further.]

All of us are constantly exposed to many thousands of different chemicals. They are in the air we breathe and in the water we drink and in the food we eat. They are fungicides and herbicides, flavour-enhancers and food-colouring, preservatives and stabilizers, hormones and coagulants and anti-coagulants, car exhaust fumes and air pollution, etc.. These things are deposited in our tissues and they form a "sludge" in our bloodstream (that's a 'free-flowing' analogy). They are one of the main contributors towards the visible aspects of the aging process we go through. And they are also responsible for a great many of our health problems.

Time and again researchers have found that fasting enables the body to eliminate all or most of this accumulated "sludge", and that then the health problems largely disappear. Fasting has an incredible ability to rejuvenate the cells and tissues of our bodies.

[By "fasting for health reasons" I always mean abstaining from all food but taking unlimited quantities of plain water, or perhaps even some watered-down fruit juice. This enables the kidneys to flush out any toxins which are released into the bloodstream. This is not the same as a "religious fast", where we also abstain from all liquids. A religious fast will also achieve such a cleansing of the body, but it is somewhat more stressful for the body when we do not take any water; it is what the Bible calls "afflicting our souls".]

The value of fasting has long been known in Europe, and fasting is the key component in the treatment at most of the famous spas in Europe. Probably the leading expert on fasting in Europe, Otto Buchinger [he wrote "Ueber Moderne Heilfasten Kuren" in 1970, published by Turm-Verlag, Beitingheim; the English equivalent of this title is "Concerning Modern Healthfast Treatments"] has conducted many thousands of fasts in the treatment of such diseases as arthritis, rheumatism, high blood pressure, allergies, angina, vascular ailments, etc.. The results achieved speak for themselves. Fasting enables the body to eliminate released poisons through the kidneys, through the lungs and through the skin. And the elimination of these poisons often results in restored or at least improved health.

Now we have come to the mid-90's and further research has shown that instead of taking vitamin supplements in megadoses (the thing the whole health-food industry is built on), it is even more beneficial to take these substances in their natural state in the foods in which they occur. Many FOODS (!) have been shown to have the identical medicinal effects which man-made drugs are supposed to achieve. In fact, the benefit of various foods has been shown to be greater than the benefit derived from the administration of substances extracted from those foods. God provided the right means for dealing with numerous health problems all along, in the foods He created for us.

One leading British health and nutrition authority, Jean Carper, is the author of sixteen books. Her books include "Food Your Miracle Medicine" and "The Food Pharmacy". In the book "Food Your Miracle Medicine" Carper writes: "MORE THAN 10,000 SCIENTIFIC STUDIES were consulted for this book; thus it is impossible to list them all. However, here are some of the most important and interesting published scientific sources that are available in medical libraries." She then lists several hundred different source documents. That is an impressive amount of scientific information which she consulted. In her book she then proceeds to show, from medical studies, how illnesses can be treated with common foods instead of with synthetic drugs.

The point is that the medical literature has now shown that COMMON FOODS (like garlic, onions, olive oil, fatty fish, numerous fruits and vegetables, oats, nuts, beans and berries, etc.) eaten in their natural state, will achieve a reversal or a remission in the case of many states of ill-health. They are just as effective, and in many cases even more so, than the most sophisticated medical preparations. And they

have been available to us all along. There is nothing mysterious about eating a wholesome diet of natural foods and avoiding junkfoods.

So the way to regain and to maintain good health has two main parts to it:

1) Eat natural and wholesome foods. Avoid junkfoods.

2) Occasionally fasting for several days (taking water if it is not a spiritual fast) gives the body an opportunity to eliminate poisons that have been ingested in one way or another.

That's the way God designed our bodies! To avoid getting sick we should avoid consuming things that God did not create for our consumption (the thousands of chemicals we have produced and added directly or indirectly to our foods). Furthermore, God provided such a large range and variety of foodstuffs for us human beings that, when we do become ill in some way, in very many cases there will be some food item God has created which will contain the ingredients needed to facilitate the healing process. And since we are inevitably going to ingest a certain amount of toxic material, God provided fasting as a method for eliminating such toxic material. Fasting is something God ENCOURAGES us to do. We don't really like fasting, but it is without doubt good for us. And it certainly is a way of removing toxic substances from the body.

NOW WE COME TO THE HEBREW CALENDAR AND THE POSTPONEMENT RULES.

Rule #1 states that the Day of Trumpets may not fall on a Sunday, a Wednesday or a Friday. The reason for not permitting it to fall on a Wednesday or a Friday is specifically to avoid having the Day of Atonement (a commanded FAST day) fall on a Friday or a Sunday ... i.e. immediately before or after a weekly Sabbath day.

Now the point is this:

A one-day fast is really not a big deal before God! When the Bible refers to examples of fasting, the fasts commonly involved SEVERAL days: 40 days in the cases of Moses, Elijah and Jesus Christ; 3 days in the case of Esther and the Jews in Shushan; 7 days in the case of the men who buried King Saul (1 Samuel 31:13), and in the case of King David before Bathsheba's child had died (2 Samuel 12:18); up to 3 weeks in the case of Daniel (Daniel 9:3; 10:2-3); 3 days in the case of the multitude that had followed Christ (Matthew 15:32); in the case of the widow Anna who was well beyond eighty years of age fasting was a way of life (Luke 2:37); 14 days in the case of the sailors on the ship with Paul (Acts 27:33); and for Paul himself fasting was also a way of life (2 Corinthians 11:27).

Look at those examples ... 40 days, 21 days, 14 days, 7 days, and 3 days. Very likely the people of Nineveh fasted for more than one day, and very likely even Ahab fasted for more than one day after Elijah had spoken to him (1 Kings 21:27-29). And very likely Job's three friends fasted for 7 days as well (Job 2:13).

So when God has commanded a ONE DAY fast once a year, that is really not a very heavy demand or a major imposition or burden of some kind. Yes, it is a Holy Day; and yes, it has a very powerful meaning ... showing that Satan will be bound and removed so that we may be reconciled to God and have our sins covered over before God. But being required to FAST for 24 hours is not really so unusual and so different from anything else people may be expected to do, that it has to be very strategically placed, like never on a Friday or on a Sunday.

Fasting is something that people in biblical times easily took in their stride! Would YOU consider fasting for 7 days because your national leader has died or because your friend was filled with grief? Would

YOU fast for two weeks because of a continuing storm? Would YOU fast for 3 days to listen to a powerful speaker? Would YOU fast for a whole week when a family member is close to death? Would YOU fast for 3 days to ask God to give a leader of the Church favour in the eyes of some government official?

Most of us really wouldn't consider fasting for this length of time, certainly not for 7 to 21 days (David's and Daniel's examples). But if you are going to fast for perhaps 2 or 3 days, what are you going to do about Fridays and Sundays? Are you going to plan very carefully to make sure your fasts don't end on a Friday or start on a Sunday? What if you fast for 3 days from a Wednesday to a Friday; when do you prepare for the Sabbath?

Is it really important to God that we don't conclude a fast on a Friday evening? Does God tell us anywhere that we shouldn't fast on a Friday? Is God really concerned that our fast may possibly "INTERFERE" with our ability to "PREPARE" for the weekly Sabbath?

Wasn't it God Himself who designed our bodies in such a way that fasting is actually GOOD for us, that our health BENEFITS from fasting? This benefit is being substantiated by modern medical research, though the benefit from just one single day of fasting is obviously very minimal.

Here are all of the biblical instructions relating to the Day of Atonement:

Also on the tenth [day] of this seventh month [there shall be] a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD. And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it [is] a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the LORD your God. For whatsoever soul [it be] that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people. And whatsoever soul [it be] that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people. Ye shall do no manner of work: [it shall be] a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It [shall be] unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth [day] of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath. (Leviticus 23:27-32)

Thus we are told:

- 1) We are to fast (afflict our souls).
- 2) The priests were to offer a sacrifice (work for them).
- 3) We are not to do any work on Atonement.
- 4) This instruction is IDENTICAL to that for the Sabbath, as found in Exodus 20:10 and Leviticus 23:3. The wording at this point is still identical.
- 5) People who don't fast will be "cut off" from God's people.
- 6) People who work on that day will be "destroyed" by God. This obviously excluded the priests who were instructed to work.
- 7) We are not to do "any manner of work".
- 8) It is to be a Sabbath of rest to us.

9) And we are to afflict our souls.

ALL OF THESE INSTRUCTIONS CAN BE FULFILLED ON A FRIDAY AND ON A SUNDAY
JUST AS WELL AS ON ANY OTHER DAY OF THE WEEK!

There is NOTHING in those instructions which cannot be fulfilled on a Friday.

And so the reasoning which is put forward for not having Atonement on a Friday goes as follows:

"It is not that having Atonement on a Friday is the problem. The problem is that in that case there is no 'preparation day' for the Sabbath which follows Atonement. And God wants us to and expects us to prepare for the weekly Sabbath. To not have the Friday available for preparing for the Sabbath would constitute a genuine hardship, something God would not really want us to experience. It would detract from our enjoyment of the weekly Sabbath day."

Notice carefully what happens with this reasoning.

The problem is the weekly Sabbath that follows Atonement, not the Day of Atonement itself. And it is because they saw no realistic way to shift the Sabbath by one day, that therefore the Jews felt the only thing they could do is shift the whole year to start a day later. It means that the Sabbath is given a greater importance than the Day of Atonement; the Sabbath cannot be shifted, but the Day of Atonement CAN be shifted in order to fit in with perceived "Sabbath requirements".

So consider what happens in a year when Atonement SHOULD have fallen on a Friday. BECAUSE that would have eliminated Friday as a preparation day for the Sabbath, therefore Atonement is postponed to the Sabbath. THE RESULT? NOW YOU NO LONGER NEED FRIDAY AS A PREPARATION DAY, since the Sabbath is going to be a fast day, right? So you shift Atonement away from Friday in order to have it available for "food preparation", only to find that you no longer NEED any preparation day, since you aren't going to eat anything anyway! So what was the whole point in shifting it away from Friday in the first place? Now you have an idle Friday, with no food at all needing to be prepared for the next day!

Remember, it is NOT for the sake of preparing for ATONEMENT that this postponement is invoked; it is invoked in order to supposedly have time to prepare for THE WEEKLY SABBATH. But Atonement does not require anything to be prepared in advance. So if Atonement is postponed to a weekly Sabbath, what are you planning to "PREPARE" on the Friday? Would you use the Friday --- horror of horrors! --- to prepare for TWO DAYS IN ADVANCE? For the day AFTER Atonement?

Look! If you can use the Friday to prepare food for the Sunday, the day after Atonement, then what is wrong with using THE THURSDAY to prepare food for the weekly Sabbath day?

And make no mistake about it: in a year when Atonement falls on a Saturday without any postponements (that will be the case next year, 1997), then YOU, as well as the religious Jews, will use the Friday to prepare some food for AFTER the Day of Atonement has ended. In a year like that the Jews have no problem at all with preparing some food for TWO DAYS in advance.

So what is the real problem with using the Thursday to prepare for the weekly Sabbath (i.e. preparing on Thursday the meal which will be eaten Friday evening after sunset, as well as the meal or meals for Saturday)? Note that the Friday evening meal will be prepared barely more than 24 hours before it is eaten, if it is prepared on Thursday afternoon.

Is there REALLY a problem with using a Thursday to prepare TWO meals, the Friday evening meal and the late Saturday morning brunch? After postponing Atonement to the Saturday that is EXACTLY what will happen anyway, the Friday will be used to prepare for the Saturday evening meal, and possibly even for the Sunday morning meal (it was a common practice for women to bake bread for several days at a time).

Let's look at the justification for postponing Atonement away from a Sunday. How do you work this one out?

You have the Friday available and so you prepare for the weekly Sabbath. Then, on the Sabbath, you eat the things you prepared on the Friday, the same as in any other week. Then, as the sun sets and the Sabbath ends, the Day of Atonement starts. But Atonement does not require ANY food preparation; you will not be eating anything, right? So WHY would it be a hardship to have Atonement start on a Saturday evening? There is nothing to prepare! Then, when Atonement ends on Sunday evening, THEN you can prepare some food for the evening meal. I don't believe that God is concerned that you have a full 5-course meal waiting for you the minute the sun has gone down at the end of Atonement on a Sunday evening. It is quite okay to spend an hour after sunset to then prepare some food.

The reasoning that it would be a hardship to have Atonement on a Sunday is simply not correct. That argument is in fact totally hypocritical! Atonement simply does not require any food preparations. And after Atonement ends, it is an ordinary workday, on which food can certainly be prepared. How much notice did Sarah have to prepare a meal for Jesus Christ and the two angels in Genesis 18:6? Not very much time at all. So how quickly can we prepare a meal if we all work together in preparing it, if need be? It wouldn't have to take long at all.

There is no problem in having a double Sabbath as far as God is concerned. It happens every year with the Feast of Pentecost, as well as sometimes with the First Day of Unleavened Bread, and sometimes with the Seventh Day of Unleavened Bread.

So why should it be a problem with the Day of Atonement? As we have seen, there is NOTHING in the biblical instructions for Atonement that demands or justifies a postponement.

And a one-day fast was really not something that required major considerations as to when it could occur, in an age when people would readily fast for A WEEK OR LONGER AT A MOMENT'S NOTICE!

The Jewish reasons for postponing Atonement are not valid at all. The claim that Friday is NEEDED to prepare for the Saturday Atonement is not valid. And a Sunday Atonement does not require any preparations in the first place. When you stop fasting on Sunday evening, then it is a common workday.

The reasons for why the Jews postpone the Day of Atonement away from a Friday and from a Sunday are SHALLOW, FLIMSY, UNBIBLICAL and HYPOCRITICAL! This postponement rule is nothing more than a totally unbiblical human tradition, totally devoid of any kind of biblical support!

The people who insist on adhering to the Jewish calendar with its postponement rules are NEVER willing to face up to THE SHALLOW JUSTIFICATIONS FOR SUCH POSTPONEMENTS.

And furthermore, even though fasting is a form of "afflicting yourself", it is really good for us. As Psalm 119:71 states ...

[IT IS] GOOD FOR ME THAT I HAVE BEEN AFFLICTED; that I might learn thy statutes. (Psalms 119:71)

There is no reason to postpone 'the good times'.

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