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<p><b>On the Fence - YHVH and Asherah • Prophets of Baal / Idolatry</b></p>	<p><b>Main Verses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">1 Kings 18:19</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">1 Kings 18:20</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">1 Kings 18:36</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">1 Kings 18:38</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">1 Kings 18:39</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">2 Kings 22:4</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Mark 11:15</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Mark 11:17</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Mark 11:18</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Watch on Youtube:</b> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ftGVjlscP9o">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ftGVjlscP9o</a></p> <p><b>Message Given:</b> Jan 21st 2023</p> <p><b>Podcast:</b> <a href="https://foundedintruth.podbean.com/e/on-the-fence-yhvh-and-asherah-%e2%80%a2-prophets-of-baal-idolatry/">https://foundedintruth.podbean.com/e/on-the-fence-yhvh-and-asherah-%e2%80%a2-prophets-of-baal-idolatry/</a></p> <p><b>Teaching Length:</b> 48 Minutes 1 Second</p> <p><b>Email us Questions &amp; Comments:</b> <a href="mailto:info@foundedintruth.com">info@foundedintruth.com</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Was this teaching a blessing?</b> <b><a href="#">DONATE</a></b></p>
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*Do you ever find yourself searching for something bigger than you? For a community to be a part of? A place founded on truth and love. A place to worship the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Son of God. Welcome to Founded in Truth, where we're more than just a fellowship. We're a family. So welcome home. Fair enough. Shabbat Shalom, everybody. Again, welcome to Founded in Truth Fellowship. Hopefully, it will be something that piques your interest about the depth of not only the narrative of the Bible, but also what we find when we take a shovel and dig around in the ground. Because we actually find stuff in the ground as it relates to the Bible, and it's really cool. Okay? That's what... Yeah. So... The huge emphasis I know with the Israel trip that we take is biblical archaeology and history, as well as just experiencing the land of our king. And so today, one of the topics that we're going to be talking about, we're going to be speaking on Elijah and the prophet versus prophet contest that takes place on Mount Carmel. We're going to talk a little bit about Josiah's reform. We may talk more about Josiah next week. But we're going to talk about his reform*

and why it was so important. And also the idolatry that took place in between the two in Israel and also Judah, where we found evidence that Judah gave God a wife as a part of their cultic worship. So, we spoke on Hezekiah last week and how Hezekiah was a good king, right? He was good. He was a righteous king in Kings and Chronicles. He is esteemed for building the massive broad wall around the residential areas of Jerusalem as well as rerouting the water supply into the city walls. And all this was, of course, to prepare for the oncoming siege of the Assyrian army. We spent some time in, as I said, those places when we went on the tour recently, and so they're still fresh in my mind. So that's why I kind of put them out there. I really wanted to go over them because it's really cool to read about something, read about something, and there's just something refreshing when you actually go and are able to touch it. It just gets you excited for the story of the Bible that has these things in them and calls you to be a part of it. But when we turn to the prophet Isaiah, we see Isaiah not necessarily esteeming Hezekiah and the leadership of Jerusalem for these great works that they did in the city. Well, we see Isaiah criticizing them because despite them building all these great things to protect the city, they failed to do the one thing that God really wanted, and that was to show humility, to get on their hands and knees before the Lord. Because Sennacherib, the Assyrian king... There was no siege to the walls. There was no poisoning or attempts to poison the water. There were no arrows shot out. All of these things that Hezekiah put up didn't get touched. Why? Because the Lord sent the plague of his angels over to the army and ran them off himself. And all he wanted to see was the citizens of Jerusalem humbling themselves before the Lord. So this week, again, I want to talk a little bit. We're going to lead up to Josiah, the esteemed, the absolute esteemed king of Judah. If you were to ask the question, who was the most righteous king of Judah? Josiah. Who was the best king of Judah? Josiah. Who was the king that absolutely honored God and pursued holiness? Josiah. Josiah. Josiah, King Josiah, had a heart to clean up the mess that Judah and Israel had become. They worshiped all kinds of gods alongside Yahweh, had images of Baal and Asherah in and at the temple in Jerusalem, and he tore those idols down. He called the people to repentance and centralized worship to Yahweh back to Jerusalem and only Jerusalem. No more altars scattered around, no more other temples built among the land or abroad the land of Judah. No, Jerusalem, this altar. This is the only altar that you're going to offer offerings to Yahweh on. Because the people had become confused about who their God was. They had began to distort their view of this Yahweh that brought them out of the land of Egypt. The Yahweh now, in their eyes, needed to be worshipped alongside other gods. They lost their confidence in the Lord. And so again, All this started, as we discussed last week, with the unified nation of Israel, all 12 tribes only surviving together under three kings and the monarch, David, Saul, and Solomon. And then there was a conflict with each other, and the entire kingdom of Israel split into how many pieces? Two, I know. Now, the northern kingdom of Israel, known as Israel or Ephraim, went to the north, of course. And the southern kingdom was known as Judah. And Judah was the desert area. If you ever hear about the Judean mountains, it's desert. There is some greenery, especially in the winter, right, when a lot of rains fall. The desert kind of blooms up. But it's a desert. This is where the Dead Sea was, right? This is Judea, Judah. But the northern kingdom, I think we have a map here. Do we? Maybe. Northern kingdom with all of us? Yeah. So we have kingdom of Israel on the top, and then Judah is that slightly red area at the bottom. So the kingdom of Israel had the Galilee, the Sea of Galilee, big lake there, Samaria. You have the northern territory of Dan. And these were the fertile areas of Israel, the best areas of Israel. Lizen, Judah is able to cultivate things, but in the northern parts of Israel, this is where you get the vegetation. This is where you get

the vineyards. We wanted so badly to go to a vineyard on our tour, and I'm getting still upset faces from people who went. We didn't get to do it, and we waited too long to incorporate it in because we were already traveling down to the southern part of Israel. We were still in the north, but we were going to try to do it at lunchtime on a Friday, and And we thought we had it, but guess what Friday is? Friday's the day before, so you might as well shut down everything then too. And so everything in Israel shuts down very early Friday, usually completely 3, 4 o'clock. I mean, some things stay open, some close earlier. The vineyard we were going to go to closed at noon. I mean, you got so many hours until nightfall. You can't give us a cheese tray. The thing that was frustrating, but duh, is when we go down to Jerusalem, there's really no more vineyards down there because it's not the place where you would cultivate vines. It's not the lush part of Israel, right? Everything grows up north. And so because of that, what type of opportunities does this open up to the northern kingdom of Israel that the southern kingdom didn't really have available to them? Trade. They have goods, right? Trade. They have resources, and they can offer goods to trade with their neighbors. Their neighbors, the Ammonites, the Edomites, even the Philistines along the coastal region. We know a lot of trading through archaeology went on with them. It's so funny. We always think of... Whenever we see a conflict or hear about a battle, we always think that it's just broad-brushed, right? So we spent a lot of time in the West Bank on our tour, especially Bethlehem, and visiting Christian businesses there to support them. So Palestinian Christians, and we spent a lot of time over in the Israeli side of the land. And it's probably maybe 2% of the people that want war and conflict. Everybody wants peace. Everybody wants peace. But we look in the news, and depending on the news station, everything's broad brush. The Israelis versus the Palestinians, and everybody hates every... And that's just not the reality. Everybody wants peace. We know from archaeology, the Philistines and the Israelites got along pretty good, traded with each other, hung out with each other across the border and lines from the Gazan coast upward. People just have a knack for getting along despite... Always war being up. I just found that so interesting. So Israel and Judah were neighborly, as long as they had resources, with their neighbors. Now, you also had the Phoenicians. The Phoenicians, the Sidonians, occupied the northern coastal line of Israel. And they had a huge reputation for being the maritime traders, the manufacturer of goods. They were experts in shipbuilding, specifically pottery making, like glass making. And they were experts in creating fine art made of ivory. This is kind of neat, right? We found it's kind of neat. So where do you think the northern kingdom of Israel set their eyes to fund their own economy? To their closest neighbors, literally right over here. It's inevitable, though, after you begin trading and creating this relationship, it's inevitable that more long-term displays need to be made. And in the ancient world, let's say we're neighbors and we're trading and we have a good business relationship, but we want to become stronger allies with each other just to solidify this good thing that we have. What typically happens? Marriage, right? Especially marriage among royalty. It's inevitable, right? So King Ahab ends up marrying a Phoenician princess that goes by the name Jezebel. That Jezebel, right? So we have a people who are already in the midst of committing idolatry and walking away from God, even from the get-go with Rehoboam going up north or Jeroboam going north. But now their queen is from another nation and does not worship Yahweh. She brings with her the worship of Baal and Asherah. Now, Baal was an ancient god that was a storm god. He was the god of the weather, right? Brad Panovich, but a deity. And he was responsible for the rain and the thunder. I should have put a picture up there, but you see a lot of... He's always wearing bullhorns, strength. And he always has either... Usually a mallet or

like a big... What's it called when you hit people with it? It's not a sharp, blunt object. A club. A club. Usually held in a big baseball bat above his head. And the reason why is because how else do you make thunder than swinging a bat down and hitting stuff, right? Very good imagination. So Baal was responsible for sending the rain. And why would that be an attractive thing for the northern kingdom of Israel? What does the rain do? produces everything that they survive on and has made them wealthy. So it's a very attractive deity for them to put their faith in, especially when Queen Jezebel, probably trying to make the nation the best she can, she's saying, listen, this is the God you worship. This is who gives you all of this greenery lush. This is who he is, right? And of course, Asherah was this mother goddess who brings forth blessing and fertility as well. Very high up status goddess. In Canaanite myth, they were consorts to one another. And Jezebel brings this organized worship of these gods to Israel. And so then she goes to war. Because she sees the prophets of Yahweh, the remnant that is left, as a threat to what she's trying to introduce. So she goes to war and she begins killing off all of the prophets of Yahweh. Can you imagine? The people are already vulnerable. They've already separated themselves from Jerusalem, from the worship of God. They've set up altars. They set up golden calves in Dan and Bethel. And here comes their new leader, Yahweh. Baal, Asherah. She even brings prophets over. She brings the priesthood, the teachers, the educational system for the cult into Israel and begins to indoctrinate the people. And then she sees the prophets of Yahweh, the remnant, and begins killing them off. This is the stage where we are introduced with the character known as the prophet Elijah. This is everything that's going on. And Elijah stands up against Ahab, the king, He stands up against Jezebel. He stands against the worship of Baal and Asherah. And what does Elijah end up doing? He instigates a boxing match, prophet versus prophet. Him as the prophet of Yahweh, he kind of insinuates he's the last one left, even though we know there's a couple others. Him versus the prophets of Baal. We're going to see who's the big prophet, who's the actual prophet of the most supreme God. And you know the story. It takes place in 1 Kings 18, verse 19. And he says this. He says, So Elijah here calls all the prophets to meet him at Mount Carmel. And while there, Elijah calls the people out. And he says this in verse 20. So Ahab sent word throughout all of the Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. Elijah went before the people and he said this, How long? How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, then follow him. Commit. Just commit. If Yahweh is your God, follow him. But if Baal is God, then follow him. Commit. Do it. But don't do this mixing. So in Hebrew, it literally says, it's a word play, if you will. It literally means, how long will you hobble between two crutches? I have no idea what the author had in mind when he wrote, or what Elijah had in mind when he wrote, how long will you wobble between two crutches? But I kind of think it's like sidestepping. And then you're going to lean on this one when you need to. And the people responded by saying nothing. Nothing. Nothing. How long will you resist giving complete allegiance to the God who saved you, the God who redeemed you, the God that has given you such blessing? But now you simply use this God, this Yahweh, as a crutch to lean on whenever you feel you need that support, but then hop to the other crutch, Baal, because that's really the things that you want in your life. These are the things that entertain, these are the things that you go after. And so Elijah takes two bulls. And the prophets of Baal choose one and he chooses the other. And the deal is they're going to cut up a cow and put it on these altars with wood. And they're going to cry out to their gods to see who sends fire down. I mean, Baal has the lightning thing. Like, he can do that. So we can do this. Let's see who actually does it. And the prophets of Baal cry out and they cry out and they cry out. And nothing happens. And then Elijah, he takes 12 stones for the construction of the altar. 12

stones for the 12 tribes of Israel. And then he makes reference to Jacob naming Israel, being renamed Israel. And then he tells the people to pour 12 jars of water onto the stones and dig a trench around it. Fill that with water too. 12, 12, 12. The altar represents Israel. It's calling back to the people. Come back to the place where God is going to meet you. Remember who you are, not who you've become. Because if they can remember who they are, they will remember whose they are. And I love how he dumps water all over the altar. Like, it's a taunt almost. He's like, I'm going to dump water on mine. It's as if, I guess you do it in golf, a little ball across all the ground. I've never really played it, putt-putt, but it's a handicap. Is that what it's called? I know in video games you can increase the handicap. Elijah's turning up the handicap on God in this contest. I just, here, let's have Yahweh fight with one hand behind his back. We'll dump some water on the altar just to give you guys, you know, some, I just, he's trying to handicap God knowing full well God cannot be handicapped. But there's something wrong to that sense of zeal or zealous faith Elijah demonstrates here. When we do try to handicap God, God can't be handicapped. And we love feeling like God needs us to defend him, don't we, sometimes? If you want to invert the attitude that Elijah has here. We love feeling like God needs us to defend him sometimes. And I don't believe that's what Elijah is here doing. He's just here to call people to repentance. I know we have to be careful not to spend our entire lives Thinking that God needs us to defend him whenever we walk out into the world. Because in the churches that I grew up in, that's what I was taught my job was. As if on a subconscious level, that God could not possibly be this powerful. Because he needs me to speak up. He needs me to rush to his defense whenever there are critics of him or their faith or me. And that's not a bad thing. We need to stand for truth. We need to stand for the authority and the power of the Holy Spirit that resides in this God that we serve, Yahweh. But because that was the only thing I was ever taught as a very young child in church, I grew up with this mentality of looking to conquer other people as a part of my faith instead of following what Jesus taught me to do and how to respond to these types of people. And that's something that we need to be aware of. Because when you have an Elijah faith, you are not threatened by mere people or their opinions. Because God always makes his appearance in the most unexpected ways. And there's nothing but victory on his resume. Elijah understood the power of God. So let's toss some water on it. Come on, toss some water on it. God is going to make a spectacle out of this situation, just like he always tends to do, whether you like it or not. But you better move out the way. The prophets cry out, To Baal, no answer. They get knives. So they begin slashing themselves as a form of worship to God, their God. Nothing. They're mourning, lamenting. Please help us, Baal. Like, this is embarrassing. Can you please? And Elijah, some of you today would call him rude and say he's being inappropriate. He starts asking them, maybe he's busy. Maybe your God went away. Some commentators, which I don't think it's that crude in the text, maybe he's going to the bathroom and he cannot come to your rescue. I don't know. So in the Baal cycle, Baal dies for like five to six months out of the year during the hottest seasons of the year because that's when it stops raining during the whole territory, right? So in order to to conflate his myth or build his myth up. They say that he gets trapped in the underworld for a couple months out of the year because obviously there's no rain, so he must have his powers taken away from him because he's dead for a couple months. Maybe he's doing his annual death thing that he does and he can't help you right now, right? That's what Elijah's saying, a little passive-aggressive hand. Then Elijah prays to be vindicated as his prophet, and the power of Yahweh is about to be seen. And he prays and puts forth this prayer, Yahweh, come here, please, and do this so that the people may see your power. And then he ends his request,

answer me, Yahweh. Answer me, Yahweh, is how Elijah ends his request. And the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice. It burned up the wood. It burned up the stones. It burned up the soil and licked up every drop of water in the trench. How did the story start? Elijah is asking the people a question, and they did not answer. And so here, Elijah is asking Yahweh a question, and he gets an answer. And the point was always to prove to the people, not the prophets of Baal, that Yahweh was alive and the supreme God here, and he can be counted on. And here's how this whole event concludes. 1 Kings 18, verse 36, it says, At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed, Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your prophet and have done all these things to your command. Answer me, Lord, answer me, so that these people will know that you, Lord, are God and that you are turning their hearts back again. If you ever find yourself in any form, shape, or way of conflict in the name of God, that better be your intention, or else you're taking up the war hammer away from God. Verse 38, then the fire of the Lord came down, burned everything up, licked the water up. In verse 39, when all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, the Lord, he is God, the Lord, he is God. So the point was always to prove to the people, not the prophets, that Yahweh was alive and the supreme God. It was the people Elijah wanted to show the power of God to. It was the people he asked the question to. How long will you be on the fence concerning your commitment to God? It was the people God prayed for. It was the people that fell on their faces toward Yahweh. He is God. Always know what your prize is. Always. And so Elijah and the people who were now on the side of Yahweh, they put one crutch down, hobbled, I guess, with one, how the wordplay works, and they grab the prophets of Baal and they take them down to the river Kishon, Kishon Valley. There's a river there. You guys want to see it? Okay, I think we have a next photo that's up here. There we go. You see it? See the valley? The Kishon Valley. So we're standing on top of Mount Carmel right now. This is on somewhere on the mountain. Not the exact spot, but this is the spot traditionally where this contest took place. Isn't it gorgeous? So there's the Kishon Valley and the river that runs through it. Do you see the river? Let's go a little bit further. Let's go to the next. Let's see the river. River. You guys see it? The river? No? All right. Well, let's go one more further. Let's go. All right. You see the river now? Yeah. That's the highway. The river is right there beside it. You see it? All right, let's go a little bit closer. There's the river, the Kishon River. You see it? The big river that they got the water from it and everything. You see it? All right, let's put an arrow on it. Let's see here. There you go, that thing. There's the river. Is it? There we go. used to be a lot bigger, used to flood the whole area. But since Israel has taken, or the state of Israel is there, they're pumping water from underneath the ground to provide for all the residents and everything. And so it's this itty-bitty little underwhelming, like that's where it took place. So down there somewhere is where all those prophets got killed. But this is the view from on top of Mount Carmel. So I thought that was pretty cool, right? Yeah. Wouldn't it be nice if that was the end of it, right? This is it. All the worship of all the other gods are now purged out of Israel. But it wasn't. Far from it. Why? Because people are people. Israel continues worshiping other gods. But not just Israel is involved in idolatry. Israel is the northern kingdom. Judah is also very heavily wrapped up in the worship of other gods, despite having Jerusalem, despite having the Temple of Solomon, the priesthood. Again, we spoke on Hezekiah and how he attempted a type of reform with tearing down high places, getting people back to the temple to worship God. Why was he trying to do that? Because it was a problem. There was a temple in Jerusalem, the temple, the temple of Solomon. But Judah also started building other temples around the area, other places of worship outside of Jerusalem. And it was totally cool and accepted by the people.

Like, totally cool. Not only that, they worshiped other gods at the temples and even alongside Yahweh. One of the temples that we found is on a hill known as Tel Arad. It's south of Jerusalem and east of Beersheba. And we excavated it, I think in the 1960s is when we found it. And I think we're definitely hitting there next year. But we found this temple. It's a Judahite temple like the one in Jerusalem. A cultic place of worship. And inside the holiest of holies...

Here is what we found. Here we go. This is a photo from the Holiest of Holies there. Here's what we found. We found two stele, or two of these standing stones, and two altars of incense in front of each one of them. Now, the larger stone in the back, likely dedicated to Yahweh, and of course, he gets the bigger incense altar. And the other, smaller one, is, all the evidence tends to point to, dedicated to Asherah. his consort, or to put it bluntly, his wife. Crazy, huh? Crazy. Judah decided, or at least some people, I mean, I can't say it's all widespread. We're still

learning about this stuff, but Judah was confused about who their God was, and at least some of the inhabitants thought it was appropriate and decided that God needs a wife. We need a mother goddess as well, and so they incorporated that into their worship plan. We have another stone. It's the Corbet El Khom burial stone, and it has this inscription on it. Oh, so leave this one up. This is good. This is a reconstruction of the holiest of holies at the Israel

Museum. So if you're in Jerusalem, you can kind of see the same thing here. This is the reconstruction that I snapped a photo of. But let's go to this burial stone that was found. I think it's dated around the time of Hezekiah. And burial stone, right? And it's a man that's praising God for the blessings that he has received. Either he's asking for blessings for his family or he's thanking God for the blessings he received when he was alive. And they put their hand on it as kind of a seal. I thought that was pretty cool. And here is what it says in that inscription over the top. You see all the proto-Canaanite looking things? Some people call it paleo-Hebrew inscription on the top. And here's what it says. It says, This seemed to be common. Seemed to be common. We also have the Kutelet al-Jarud inscription, and this was this excavation of this fortress or this town, and they found, I think it's part shards, if you will, so pieces of pottery that were broken, but they wrote inscriptions on them. And we don't know a whole lot about this piece of pottery. It's a big pot, but as you can see, it has these figures on One of them looks like a bull, has bull horns, and we'd like to think that's a tail. Okay? And so he's a man, and then there's a female in the background. Okay? And so there's a dispute

upon the inscription on the top. So some scholars believe the inscription is reflecting the figures on the pot. Others believe it was written later because, as you can see, it goes over the top of this figure. But what it says is basically, from what we can make out that little piece, it's talking about Yahweh and his Asherah. And this was found right in the Sinai Peninsula, right over the border as well. Crazy, huh? Like, can we, like, shocking. We always talk about people worshiping and mixing idols, but we're discovering pulling it out of the ground now. This is the mixing that Elijah asked the people. When do you commit? When? When? This is the mixing that takes place in Israel's history. The mixing that Solomon incorporated into his kingdom. The mixing that Israel took hold of. The mixing that Elijah pleads with Israel, how long will you hobble between two opinions? How much longer will you continue to be on the fence of where your allegiance actually lies? That is until Josiah became king. Josiah was the one who really pursued Israel. We have got to stop this mess. Very strict, all centralized worship is now coming back to Jerusalem. No more of this. I'm just going to put a high place up here. We're just going to build another temple that's a replica of the one in Jerusalem over here. No, no.

We need to bring it back. We need to recommit ourselves to the covenant of Yahweh. Recommit ourselves of who we are and who we belong to. And here's what he says, kind of a glimpse. And again, we'll probably elaborate on this a lot more next week. But 2 Kings 22

verse 4, here's what it says. It says, He did away with the idolatrous priests appointed by the kings of Judah before him to burn incense at the high places of the towns of Judah, as we just saw in Tell Arad, and of those around Jerusalem. Those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun and the moon and the constellations and all the hosts of the sky. He took the Asherah pole, some type of image that represents Asherah or represents Asherah as their image. He took the Asherah pole from the temple of the Lord and So this was in the Jerusalem temple, all of this virus that had infected like mold. And Josiah is the one that says, we're going to knock all this out. Take it all out. Take it all out. Big deal. Such a big deal. Baal or Yahweh? This is Elijah's frustration because they represent totally opposite ideals and ways of life. Baal was the storm god that brings the rain to the crops. In northern Israel, it would have been very easy to introduce him as the reason for the bountiful, fertile wealth that they were experiencing. If you want to worship Baal, go ahead, Elijah says. Do it. It will look like a luxuriant, materialistic life. It will look like a life where your money, which represents your heart, are constantly going in to things that reflect back toward you and lifting you up. So go for it. Worship, though. Live this lifestyle where it's all about you and the blessing that comes to you in the way that you want it to come to you. Where worship of Yahweh consists of living a life of submission and obedience to God, to his commandments and his pursuit of justice and righteousness, his whole thing, justice and righteousness, will pour out of his people. And that's only exemplified by Yeshua himself. Two completely different ways of life. One of abundance and get it however you can. And one of sacrifice and loyalty and allegiance. Yeshua showed us what true worship and devotion looks like, and he was killed because of it. That's the result that you will have on the world when you authentically walk after Yeshua. Because the people of Jerusalem had taken the pure worship of Yahweh and mixed it, even at the time of Yeshua. And it wasn't mixed with different statues or idols or gods in the first century. No, it There were no Asherah incense altars in the temple during the time of Jesus, no Asherah pole, no Baal associations. No, but what Yeshua did see disgusted him all the same, so much so that he began destroying and disrupting the structured, mixed worship of Yahweh in the temple. And this takes place in Mark chapter 11 when Yeshua enters into Jerusalem and Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving those out who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. The doves, the poorest of sacrifices, like one of the lower sacrifices that would be offered, exploiting the poor. And he would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple's courts. And as he taught them, he said, is it not written, my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations, but you have made it a den of robbers. Verse 18, the chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and they began looking for a way to kill him. That's all it took, all it took, for they feared him because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching. The religious at this time had taken the faith of God, the intentions of God's call to his people to be a blessing to others and to be his images on earth, showing forth his mercy and grace and justice and righteousness. The religious elite had taken these things and mixed them with the worship of Baal, ultimately the worship of money, wealth, the worship of themselves. They made God in their image, and they created a system where instead of the temple representing heaven on earth, the place where God communes with humans, it became the place where people with the title of the most righteous worship And the most faithful and the most religious used their status to control other people, exploit them, and profit off of them. And when their sense of farce righteousness and obedience toward God was called out, they became angry and they wanted to kill him. The most holy and set-apart righteous people, the ones who demonstrated their relationship with God



through outward appearances only, they were willing to become murderers in the blink of an eye when their mixed religion was threatened. Either choice must produce action. And so the question still haunts us today. How long will you stay on the fence? And it may not even be sin in your life. Areas where you want to hold on to this pleasure or this morality or fill in the blank. It could just be you've lowered the status of Yahweh so much that he's just become another statue in your temple among all the rest. Be devoted. Be devoted. full in your loyalty. Give your full allegiance because you cannot break your allegiance among many. There can only be one, only one, because the love of God cannot flow through you into the world if you're not fully devoted to who God is in the first place. Following Yahweh looks like mercy. Following Yahweh looks like a zeal for true justice, no matter how unpopular it is, no matter how many people yell at you or get mad at you, no matter how many people want to kill you because you're standing up for what godly justice actually looks like and not some political farce that's being fed to you. This is what God calls his people to be. Following Yahweh looks like picking up the false gods we've taken in in our lives and throwing them away. And saying, God, you are it. You, Yahweh, are our God. As the people responded. And so I don't know where you're at today. But I'd invite the worship team to come up as we conclude services. There's lessons in the history of Israel. And these lessons are becoming more and more exciting every time we dig around in the dirt. Because they testify that there always has been a remnant that has been crying out and calling us back. And so... Maybe you're an Elijah. Maybe you're full of faith. Maybe you're so zealous you toss water on all of things, knowing God's going to break through. But if you're not there, if there is another little incense altar somewhere in there, it's not supposed to be there. If there is another stele, dedication stone somewhere, smaller than God's, it's smaller, I encourage you, identify that. Identify that. Because all of these temples, all of these altars, Buried for a reason. It will not last. So choose this day. Alvina Malkinu, our Father, our King, Father, we thank you for this opportunity to dive into your word, to be reminded of the transgressions of the past so that we will not take them on in the present. Your word says the same spirit that dwelled in Yeshua and gave him resurrection life is the same spirit that is within us even now, even now in this place. And I ask, Father, that you would allow each and every one of us to release and allow that Holy Spirit to do the work that you've called it to do within each and every one of us. That if there is a part of our lives that is not fully dedicated and loyal to you, Father, that you would bring that to our attention and allow us to make the choice whether we want to leave it behind or keep holding on to it. We thank you, Father, for your grace and your mercy and your love, and we thank you for King Yeshua. In Yeshua's name we pray. Amen. Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one. Blessed is the name of his glorious kingdom for all eternity. May the God of patience and encouragement grant you to be like-minded with one another in the manner of Messiah, so that together with one voice, you glorify the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah. And may the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and give you, be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance towards you and give you peace. One God, let us hear you today and obey. One God, the one thing we need. We bless you. We thank you. Amen, amen. Shabbat shalom.

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