

**Shayla:** Does Colossians 2:23 argue against fasting?

**Meforshim:**

- Colossians 2:20-23 HCSB If you died with Christ to the elemental forces of this world, why do you live as if you still belonged to the world? Why do you submit to regulations: 21 "Don't handle, don't taste, don't touch"? 22 All these regulations refer to what is destroyed by being used up; they are human commands and doctrines. 23 Although these have a reputation of wisdom by promoting ascetic practices, humility, and severe treatment of the body, they are not of any value against fleshly indulgence.

Christians have always struggled with finding the balance between the liberty that grace provides and the discipline that "tzedekah" or personal holiness requires. As with everything spiritual, the important thing is the motivation of our heart. It is our heart that God is interested in after all.

The Judaizers emphasized the externals: circumcision and abstinence from non-kosher foods. However, Hashem (who looks not on the outward man but at the heart<sup>1</sup>) desires circumcised hearts. A circumcised heart is humble,<sup>2</sup> submissive,<sup>3</sup> repentant,<sup>4</sup> and loves God's Word.<sup>5</sup> This is something that can only be done by the Holy Spirit. Man's circumcision of his own heart is always temporary<sup>6</sup> whereas Hashem is capable of circumcising the hearts of His people permanently.<sup>7</sup>

Fasting is found throughout the Scriptures, in both the Old and New Covenants. Our Master Himself practiced fasting. Obviously, fasting can't be wrong. The vital difference that Paul argues against throughout the book of Colossians is when people try to gain their salvation through these external practices, or think that these will somehow get them some "pull" with the Lord God.

To my mind it is the same underlying principle that can be found in the role of works and salvation. There is no possible way to earn our salvation through works. However, salvation should inevitably result in works.

- Ephesians 2:8-10 HCSB For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift-- 9 not from works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are His creation--created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time so that we should walk in them.

So if you are fasting in order to impress others, or in order to impress Hashem, then you are going astray. If your motivation is to clear your mind and dedicate time to humbly seek His face, acknowledging His priority over your most basic needs, then fast.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Samuel 16:7

<sup>2</sup> Leviticus 26:40-42

<sup>3</sup> Deuteronomy 10:12-16

<sup>4</sup> Jeremiah 4:3-4

<sup>5</sup> Jeremiah 6:10

<sup>6</sup> Jeremiah 9:25-26

<sup>7</sup> Deuteronomy 30:1-8