

**Shayla:** Is it a sin to resist a spiritual urge to fast?

**Shayla in full:** I just want you to know that I recently considered fasting and my first thought was about the discomfort and how it would mess up my routine, etc. I had been wrestling with this when I happened to read your article *Joyful Fasting*.

However, fasting is not commanded is it? I always felt that it is one of those things which, while being a good practice, is not required like “do not lie” and such. Is it sin for me to hear a thought to fast (which comes in the form of a command) and not do it?

**Meforshim:**

We must be very careful that our hearts do not deceive us.

- Jeremiah 17:9-10 HCSB The heart is more deceitful than anything else and desperately sick--who can understand it? 10 I, the LORD, examine the mind, I test the heart to give to each according to his way, according to what his actions deserve.

In some cases, resisting the urging of the Holy Spirit to fast concerning a specific concern would be a sin. However, someone who struggles with anorexia could have compulsions to fast and for them, to give in would be equally sinful!

There is a saying that goes “God’s will is a highway, not a tightrope.” This saying is clearly taught by Paul on two occasions.

- Romans 7:6 HCSB But now we have been released from the law, since we have died to what held us, so that we may serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old letter of the law.
- 2 Corinthians 3:6 HCSB He has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit produces life.

God doesn’t tell us what color socks to wear; He simply tells us to dress modestly. He doesn’t tell us, “Marry a 5’6” brunette with hazel eyes”; He tells us to marry a Believer. He gives us guidelines to follow. There are few hard and fast rules we must follow. For instance, generally it is wrong to lie but Rahab was actually blessed for lying!<sup>1</sup>

I have found that if I follow the spirit rather than the letter of the law, Hashem’s principles always have an application, even in such modern issues like the formulation of human/animal hybrids called chimeras!

We must be sure that our resistance to a specific prompting does not come from a sinful spirit that will end up hardening our hearts.

- Hebrews 3:12-13 HCSB Watch out, brothers, so that there won't be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart that departs from the living God. 13 But encourage each other daily, while it is still called today, so that none of you is hardened by sin's deception.

So, how do we determine what to do? First, notice that Jeremiah 17:10 says that the Yahweh Shaphat (God our Judge) examines and tests human hearts. Though even we may be confused about our own motivations, He knows perfectly well what we’re up to.

- Hebrews 4:13 HCSB No creature is hidden from Him, but all things are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account.

So, we must ask El Emet (God of Truth) to reveal to us what we need to know.

Secondly, the thought or action must never transgress Hashem’s Word.

- Hebrews 4:12 HCSB For the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating as far as to divide soul, spirit, joints, and marrow; it is a judge of the ideas and thoughts of the heart.

The Word of God clearly teaches that we should sometimes fast. It is less clear as to the timing. For a fuller treatment with multiple examples of situations warranting fasting, go to [www.fromthebible.net](http://www.fromthebible.net) and look up fasting under the topical studies. Generally speaking, however,

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<sup>1</sup> Joshua 2:3-6 cp James 2:24-26

fasting is done in response to a specific need, or to demonstrate remorse for a specific sin. There are no examples that I can think of in the Scriptures that demonstrate fasting being done in a regular manner (i.e. once a week, or every other Tuesday, or whatever).

In our attempts to clarify things, we should seek the advice of the godly to help us. We should encourage each other toward good works and holy living. After all, if we deliberately sin after being given the truth, how awful is that?<sup>2</sup>

We also must be careful that our desire for personal holiness does not breach the conscience of others. Everything we do, including prayer and fasting, must line up with God Word and our conscience. Everything that does not originate from submissive faith is sin.<sup>3</sup>

So, if you are confident that it is the Holy Spirit Who is telling you to fast, you need to fast.

- James 4:17 HCSB So, for the person who knows to do good and doesn't do it, it is a sin.

However, trust Hashem to be patient with you. When you transgress, understand that all sin (save one) is forgivable.

- 1 John 1:8-9 HCSB If we say, "We have no sin," we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- 1 John 5:17-18 HCSB All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin that does not bring death. 18 We know that everyone who has been born of God does not sin, but the One who is born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him.

The only truly unforgivable sin is the refusal of the Holy Spirit's urging to accept Christ as Savior. That is the only sin that brings forth death; the only truly unpardonable sin.

Oddly enough, seeking specific revelation and knowledge concerning behavior is an amazingly appropriate time to fast.

- 2 Chronicles 20:3 HCSB Jehoshaphat was afraid, so he resolved to seek the LORD. So he proclaimed a fast for all Judah,

- Judges 20:26-28 HCSB The whole Israelite army went to Bethel where they wept and sat before the LORD. They fasted that day until evening and offered burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to the LORD. 27 Then the Israelites inquired of the LORD. In those days, the ark of the covenant of God was there, 28 and Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, was serving before it. The Israelites asked: "Should we again fight against our brothers the Benjaminites or should we stop?" The LORD answered: "Fight, because I will hand them over to you tomorrow."

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<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 10:24-27

<sup>3</sup> Romans 14:20-23