

All In: Remember, We Won, Let's Eat

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Back when I was in high school, I used to play some friendly poker games with some of my classmates, primarily for inexpensive entertainment on an occasional weekend night when we were not involved in athletic contests for our school.¹ It was not an intense exercise, but merely a way to avoid some of the trouble rambunctious teenagers can attract. The stakes were mostly nickels, dimes, and quarters, with a fifty cent limit, so no one ever lost much money—especially because none of us had much to lose! It was not until recent times, when channel surfing through my cable company options, that I came upon a program that was broadcasting what they labeled, “high stakes poker,” that I got acquainted with the concept of going “all in” when playing poker. “All in” was something no one in my penny ante-era would have ever dreamed of during my misspent youth. After all, if someone goes “all in” on a bet in “seven card stud” and loses, he is not only out of money, but can no longer play. The possibility of being eliminated from the game would defeat the whole purpose of getting together to play cards. Hence, from my rusty recollection of those carefree days, I can never recall anyone going “all in” on a bet. *That total commitment was just not a part of our dilettante distractions.*

However, in recent days in anticipation of the Festival of *Purim* and with the remembrance of the Passover *seder* and Festival of Unleavened Bread, the concept of going “all in” in a serious way about one’s commitment to the Holy One of Israel, percolated up in my thoughts, for two reasons. First, for those who are staying up with current events, we are all processing the reality that a modern-day Iranian regime (2015) is vying to achieve nuclear status, in order to wipe Israel and the Jewish people off the face of the Earth, with Western civilization soon to follow. By their statements and the fanatical

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tenets of Islamic jihadism, it certainly sounds like the Iranian mullahs are “all in,” or at the very least, they have convinced some of their adherents to be their proxies with suicidal belts strapped to their waists. Secondly, I was reminded of a clever quip I heard years ago by a Jewish friend who was relaying an expression of what traditional Jews do on certain holiday celebrations. In a jovial way expecting a laugh, he stated that every Jewish feast day could be remembered with this satirical prayer: **They tried to kill us, we won, let’s eat!**

Admittedly, I laughed and actually committed “the prayer” to memory, because it was funny at the time. But as lighthearted as it made me feel when I first heard it, and even repeated it a few times—the more I pondered it **recently**, the more I realized that *genocide is not a laughing matter*. In fact, at this current time in world history, as we are hearing, reading, and watching not only Jews, Christians, and even other Muslims, being beheaded, burned, crucified, tortured, and killed for their heritage or faith—the reality of man’s inhumanity to other people is tangible. It is quite revolting and reprehensible to even know it exists in the modern era! Perhaps I have been too anesthetized or sheltered, by not being exposed to some of these realities in my life. But now that they are being broadcast on readily available mediums, it is difficult to avoid the facts that these tragedies are occurring on a daily basis at different locations around the globe.

So without trying to be a downer and bring unpleasant thoughts into the reader’s mind, I thought it would be helpful to imagine the reality of someone attempting to destroy not only me, but my family, loved ones, friends, neighbors, or just people who share a common faith with me in the God of Israel. For sure, I would much rather *boo and/or hiss Haman* at a play about the Book of Esther, or *sing dayenu* during the relative comfort of a Passover *seder*. But the thought came to me, of how a vital part of remembering these attempts to destroy the children of Israel, is simply an opportunity to remember the harsh reality that **the enemy of our souls does indeed want to annihilate God’s people here on Earth**. It should therefore be imperative for us to soberly note, for the sake of our children and grandchildren, that there is an incessant spiritual battle raging throughout the world which gives license to the spirit of murder to literally massacre untold numbers of people day in and day out. Most importantly, I believe it would be very beneficial if those we influence know beyond a shadow of doubt, that we are each personally “**all in**” when it comes to our commitment to the Messiah of Israel. This can be displayed much more effectively, with outward actions reverberating much louder than our words or proclamations.

Events like *Purim* and *Pesach* are prime seasons and annual opportunities to share some of the harsh realities of life with those in our circle of influence (family, friends, acquaintances, co-workers, neighbors, etc.). Just the simple

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fact that Messiah followers have the occasion and privilege to remember these historical events, is something that can be shared with others. In a subtle sort of way, a *Purim* play or Passover *seder* gathering, can be used to testify that you, as a true Believer in the Root of Jesse, or the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, or the Jewish Messiah, or the King of the Jews—identify with Yeshua as the Savior of sinners. By telling people about what occurred in the Book of Esther, with the salvation of the Jews according to the sovereign will of the Most High God, you can boldly share that **if** that did not occur, there is the distinct possibility that the Messiah's time on Earth, short of God intervening, might never have occurred. (For that same matter, you could do the same with the Maccabean revolt against the Seleucid Greeks, which is remembered during the Feast of Dedication or *Chanukah*.)

On the other hand, when it comes to the remembrance of the Passover *seder*, you just might explain what you are doing, by quoting a Bible passage which refers to the permanence of this ordinance:

"It is a night to be observed for the LORD for having brought them out from the land of Egypt; this night is for the LORD, **to be observed by all the sons of Israel throughout their generations**" (Exodus 12:42, NASU).

Once again, Messianic Believers have the Divine privilege to share how the Spring festivals foreshadow the First Coming of the Messiah to fulfill the role as the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53), the sacrificial Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world. This can lead to conversations or dialogue about the late Spring feast of *Shavuot*/Pentecost, and inevitably the Fall Feasts that speak to Yeshua's Second Coming as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. In many regards, by sharing your testimony, those who you come in contact with are going to soon discover that you and your family are **"all in"** when it comes to wanting **to do everything you can to celebrate and remember** your unique connection to the Holy One of Israel. While you might share the cute prayer about feasting at these traditional and appointed times of the Lord, you can assure your listener that **only by the sovereign providential will of the Creator God** have His chosen Jewish people been preserved down through the ages. The testimony of God's faithfulness to His own, and all who have joined themselves to Israel's God, is a wonderful, faith generating reality. One certainly can include that even in these trying times, with all of the wickedness that is being discussed and displayed for one and all to see, that we do have a loving Father! He is One who is ultimately watching over us, as the Psalmist clearly states:

"A Song of Ascents. I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; from where shall my help come? My help *comes* from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to slip; **He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.**

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The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand. The sun will not smite you by day, nor the moon by night. **The LORD will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul. The LORD will guard your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forever"** (Psalm 121:1-8, NASU).

This comforting Psalm contains more than just nice words written to calm the soul in troubling times, because it is the Word of God which can be relied upon and trusted when evil arises, as we are being more and more aware by daily media accounts. Here, the Psalmist declares that the Lord would protect him from all evil. Yet, one has to wonder if the martyred Coptic Christians, of recent memory, were meditating upon this Psalm when they were brutally beheaded on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. **Did the Lord through the Holy Spirit give them peace, when those led by the Evil One murdered them?** For most assuredly, the Lord did keep them, and they were welcomed into His presence upon their execution (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:6-8). These martyrs surely had to be courageously focused on the Messiah, they walked by faith, and they meditated upon words from the Scriptures which promise that crimes committed against God's people will be vindicated in the future.

In the following passage from the Book of Revelation, there is a wonderful, almost glorious destiny for those saints who are murdered for the testimony of Yeshua. These martyrs—along with many others—will be part of the first resurrection, and be among those who will be priests, reigning with the Messiah during His Millennial Kingdom:

"Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Yeshua and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Messiah for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Messiah and will reign with Him for a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4-6, NASU).

Without deviating too far into the macabre and gruesome realities of the modern era, which is difficult to spend much time contemplating, I want to conclude with some profound teaching from Yeshua as recorded in John 10. Here, in much the same way that the Psalmist reminded the reader that the Holy One watches over Israel and never slumbers or sleeps, Yeshua presented Himself as not only the door of salvation, but the good shepherd, and one who would lay down His life for the sheep. **Yeshua was "all in" in His capacity as the Savior of the world!** Yeshua contrasted Himself with the thief who

came to steal and kill and destroy, which is usually underemphasized in many teachings, because the focus is generally on the next sentence that speaks about the abundant life, a much more appealing topic for conversation. The following passage quoted for contextual purposes includes the time and location of the teaching, which just happened to be at another of the annual celebrations, the Feast of Dedication (*Chanukah*) at Solomon's portico, indicating that Yeshua was participating in this annual convocation. Providentially, this is the passage where Yeshua **initially made some of His strongest categorical statements** about not only Him being the door to salvation and the good shepherd, but also that He, **on His own initiative**, was going to lay down His life for the sheep:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and **the sheep hear his voice**, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.' This figure of speech Yeshua spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them. **So Yeshua said to them again, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.** All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. **I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved,** and will go in and out and find pasture. **The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.** I am the good shepherd; **the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.** He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters *them*. *He flees* because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. **I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.** I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock *with* one shepherd. **For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.** This commandment I received from My Father.' A division occurred again among the Jews because of these words. Many of them were saying, 'He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?' Others were saying, 'These are not the sayings of one demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?' **At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; it was**

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winter, and Yeshua was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon” (John 10:1-23, NASU).

As noted, invariably when this passage is read and taught, there is an inherent tendency for teachers to emphasize the concept of the abundant life available to all who come to the good shepherd. While this is a wonderful, comforting reality to consider, let us instead focus on the agenda of the thief to steal, kill, and destroy—because we commonly overlook and avoid how people ignore the fact that down through the ages, *the thief*, the enemy of our souls or the accuser of the brethren, the Devil, Satan, or any number of titles, *is incessantly trying to destroy God’s people*. This is why we all need to be reminded of the demonic attempts to annihilate Ancient Israel and the Jewish people by celebrating *Purim*, Passover, and even recollect the Maccabean revolt at *Chanukah*. When one takes the time to study what **steal and kill and destroy** means in terms of the thief’s objectives to do as much damage to the children of God as possible, it is extremely sobering. But quite candidly, many, if not most people, do not want to think about these life altering and even life threatening realities, when one can instead contemplate the abundant life and pleasantries afforded by the blessings of the Holy One of Israel.

Personally, I can appreciate such a tendency, but because we all have to deal with reality, we must each individually, and also corporately as families, adopt the mindset of going **“all in”** with the Messiah Yeshua. In so doing, when it comes to the opportunity to celebrate the feasts of the Lord and other traditional remembrances, you can not only look at them soberly, but rejoice in the victories which have been sustained by the God of Israel. Unlike perhaps losing your place in a card game, because you lost all your chips, this is far more important, because it literally becomes a decision of eternal life or condemnation. Being **“all in”** with the Lord means that you have willfully chosen to cling to Him, given the vagaries of life which are unknown, but inevitable. You can take comfort in knowing that there will be challenges in life that are a result of the Fall of humanity—and the attempts of the thief to steal, kill and destroy—but are nonetheless outweighed in this summary statement:

“For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:17-18, NASU).

I want to wish one and all an introspective *Purim* and *Pesach* celebration this year. Consider the opportunity to once again choose to be **“all in”** with the Messiah and His commands to not only be a light to the world—but take

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and share that light to others, by making them disciples of Him (Matthew 28:18-20). And of course, given the right opportunity, keep this joyful prayer in mind: **"They tried to kill us, we won, let's eat!"** *Chag Sameach!*