



# God's Chosen Fast

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Arthur Wallis

# Fasting

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tsûwm, tsoom; a primitive root; to cover over (the mouth); to abstain from food, fast

Matthew 6:2-when you give, Matthew 6:5-when you pray, Matthew 6:16-when you fast

Matthew 6: 16 “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. <sup>17</sup> But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup> so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

# Fasting

*a)* **of voluntary abstinence from food**, [Luk 2:37](#); [Act 14:23](#) (some mss. have it in [Mat 17:21](#); [Mar 9:29](#)); "fasting" had become a common practice among Jews, and was continued among Christians; in [Act 27:9](#) "the Fast" refers to the Day of Atonement, [Lev 16:29](#); that time of the year would be one of dangerous sailing;

*(b)* **of involuntary abstinence (perhaps voluntary is included), consequent upon trying circumstances**, [2Cr 6:5](#); [11:27](#).

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A- Noun      Strong's                      Greek: nesteia  
1              Number: [G3521](#)

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# Fasting

International Standard  
Bible Encyclopedia

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## International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

- fast, fast'-ing (tsum; ?innah nephesh, "afflict soul or self," i.e. practice self-denial; nesteia, nesteuein):

The theory that fasting, like many other ancient customs, had a religious origin, is in favor with scholars, but we must not assume a religious origin for all practices which in process of time came to be associated with religion.

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Robertson Smith in his Religion of the Semites advanced and defended theory that fasting was merely a mode of preparation for the tribal meal in which sacrifice originated, and came to be considered at a later stage as part of the sacrificial act. This hypothesis apparently accounts for the otherwise strange fact that both fasting and feasting are religious acts, but it does not give a satisfactory explanation of the constant association of fasting with the "wearing of sackcloth," the "putting of ashes on the head," and other similar customs. It is obvious that very different motives operated in the institution of fasting and of feasting religious observances.

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It is a matter of common observation and experience that great distress causes loss of appetite and therefore occasions abstinence from food. Hannah, who was greatly distressed on account of her childlessness, "wept, and did not eat" (1Sa 1:7). Violent anger produces the same effect (1Sa 20:34). According to 1Ki 21:4, Ahab, "heavy and displeased" on account of Naboth's refusal to part with his estate, sulked and "would eat no bread."

Fasting, originally the natural expression of grief, became the customary mode of proving to others the inner emotion of sorrow. David demonstrated his grief at Abner's death (2Sa 3:35) by fasting, just as the Psalmist indicated his sympathy with his adversaries' sorry plight in the same way (Ps 35:13).

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In such passages as Ezr 10:6; Es 4:3, it is not clear whether fasting is used in its religious significance or simply as a natural expression of sorrow (compare also Lu 5:33 and see below). This view explains the association of fasting with the mourning customs of antiquity (compare 1Sa 31:13; 2Sa 1:12

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As fasting was a perfectly natural and human expression and evidence of the subject's grief, it readily claimed a place among those religious customs whose main object was the pacification of the anger of God, or the excitation of His compassion. Any and every act that would manifest the distressful state of the suppliant would appeal to the Deity and move Him to pity. The interesting incident recorded in 2Sa 12:16-23 suggests the twofold significance of fasting as a religious act or a mode of appealing to the Deity and as a funeral custom. David defends his fasting before and not after the child's death on the ground that while the child was alive David's prayer might be answered. His fasting was intended to make his petition effectual (compare also 1Ki 21:27; Ezr 8:21; Es 4:16).



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Occasionally fasting was proclaimed on a national scale, e.g. in case of war (Jdg 20:26; 2Ch 20:3) or of pestilence (Joe 1:13 f). Fasting having thus become a recognized mode of seeking Divine favor and protection, it was natural that it should be associated with confession of sin, as indisputable evidence of penitence or sorrow for sin.

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- Fasting might be partial, i.e. abstinence from certain kinds of food, or total, i.e. abstinence from all food as well as from washing, anointing, sleeping. It might be of shorter or longer duration, e.g. for one day, from sunrise to sunset (Jdg 20:26; 1Sa 14:24; 2Sa 1:12; 3:35). In 1Sa 31:13 allusion is made to a seven days' fast, while Daniel abstained from "pleasant bread," flesh, wine and anointing for three weeks (Da 10:3). Moses (Ex 34:28) and Elijah (1Ki 19:8) fasted for 40 days. It is probable that these last three references presuppose a totally different conception of the significance of fasting.
  
- (Da 10:2). The close connection between fasting and insight-intellectual and spiritual-between simple living and high thinking is universally recognized.

# Different Kinds of Fasting

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- Food:
  - Normal (no food)- Luke 4:2 **4** Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, <sup>2</sup> where for forty days he was tempted<sup>[a]</sup> by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.
  - Absolute- Acts 9:9, Ezra 10:6, 9:3, Esther 4:16, Deuteronomy 9:9, 18, Exodus 34:28
  - Partial-Daniel 10: 3, 1:15, 1 Kings 17

# Different Kinds of Fasting

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- Food:
  - Normal (no food)- Luke 4:2
  - Absolute- Acts 9:9, <sup>5</sup> “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked. “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. <sup>6</sup> “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”<sup>7</sup> The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. <sup>8</sup> Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. <sup>9</sup> For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.
  - Ezra 10:6, 9:3, Esther 4:16, Deuteronomy 9:9, 18, Exodus 34:28
  - Partial-Daniel 10: 3, 1:15, 1 Kings 17

# Different Kinds of Fasting

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- Food:
  - Normal (no food)- Luke 4:2
  - Absolute- Acts 9:9, Ezra 10:6 <sup>6</sup>Then Ezra withdrew from before the house of God and went to the room of Jehohanan son of Eliashib. While he was there, he ate no food and drank no water, because he continued to mourn over the unfaithfulness of the exiles., 9:3, Esther 4:16, Deuteronomy 9:9, 18, Exodus 34:28
  - Partial-Daniel 10: 3, 1:15, 1 Kings 17

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- Food:
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  - Absolute- Acts 9:9, Ezra 10:6, 9:3, Esther 4:16, Deuteronomy 9:9, 18, Exodus 34:28
  - Partial-Daniel 10:3 <sup>2</sup> At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. <sup>3</sup> I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over., 1:15, 1 Kings 17

# Different Kinds of Fasting

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  - Absolute- Acts 9:9, Ezra 10:6, 9:3, Esther 4:16, Deuteronomy 9:9, 18, Exodus 34:28
  - Partial-Daniel 10:3, 1:15 <sup>15</sup> At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. <sup>16</sup> So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead., 1 Kings 17

# Different Kinds of Fasting

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- Food:
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  - Absolute- Acts 9:9, Ezra 10:6, 9:3, Esther 4:16, Deuteronomy 9:9, 18, Exodus 34:28
  - Partial-Daniel 10:3, 1:15, 1 Kings 17 <sup>2</sup>Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah: <sup>3</sup>“Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. <sup>4</sup>You will drink from the brook, and I have directed the ravens to supply you with food there.”



# Private vs Corporate Fasting

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- **We fast unto God**
  - Zechariah 7:5, Acts 13:2, 2 Corinthians 5:15, Isaiah 58

# Zachariah

## 7

### Justice and Mercy, Not Fasting

7 In the fourth year of King Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, the month of Kislev. <sup>2</sup> The people of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regem-Melek, together with their men, to entreat the LORD <sup>3</sup> by asking the priests of the house of the LORD Almighty and the prophets, “Should I mourn and fast in the fifth month, as I have done for so many years?”

<sup>4</sup> Then the word of the LORD Almighty came to me: <sup>5</sup> “Ask all the people of the land and the priests, ‘When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months for the past seventy years, was it really for me that you fasted?’ <sup>6</sup> And when you were eating and drinking, were you not just feasting for yourselves?’ <sup>7</sup> Are these not the words the LORD proclaimed through the earlier prophets when Jerusalem and its surrounding towns were at rest and prosperous, and the Negev and the western foothills were settled?”

# Zachariah

## 7

8 And the word of the Lord came again to Zechariah: 9 “This is what the Lord Almighty said: ‘Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. 10 Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.’”<sup>11</sup> “But they refused to pay attention; stubbornly they turned their backs and covered their ears.<sup>12</sup> They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the LORD Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. So the LORD Almighty was very angry.

<sup>13</sup> “‘When I called, they did not listen; so when they called, I would not listen,’ says the LORD Almighty.<sup>14</sup> ‘I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations, where they were strangers. The land they left behind them was so desolate that no one traveled through it. This is how they made the pleasant land desolate.’”

# Private vs Corporate Fasting

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- **“personal sanctity”** - Psalms 69:10, Ezekiel 16:49, Deut 8: 2-3, 8:11-14, Hosea 13:6
- “to be heard on high” - Ezra 8:23, Isaiah 1:10-15, Isaiah 58:9
- “to change God’s mind”; mercy- Jonah 3:5, 10, Jeremiah 18:7-8, Numbers 23:19, 2 Samuel 12:16, 22, Joel 2:12-14
- “to free the captives” - Isaiah 58:6, Luke 4:18,
- “revelation” - Daniel 9: 2-3; 21

# Psalms

## 69:1-13

Save me, O God,  
for the waters have come up to my neck.

<sup>2</sup> I sink in the miry depths,  
where there is no foothold.  
I have come into the deep waters;  
the floods engulf me.

<sup>3</sup> I am worn out calling for help;  
my throat is parched.  
My eyes fail,  
looking for my God.

<sup>4</sup> Those who hate me without reason  
outnumber the hairs of my head;  
many are my enemies without cause,  
those who seek to destroy me.  
I am forced to restore  
what I did not steal.

<sup>5</sup> You, God, know my folly;  
my guilt is not hidden from you.

<sup>6</sup> Lord, the LORD Almighty,  
may those who hope in you  
not be disgraced because of me;  
God of Israel,  
may those who seek you  
not be put to shame because of me.

# Psalms

## 69:1-13

- <sup>7</sup> For I endure scorn for your sake,  
and shame covers my face.
- <sup>8</sup> I am a foreigner to my own family,  
a stranger to my own mother's children;
- <sup>9</sup> for zeal for your house consumes me,  
and the insults of those who insult you fall on me.
- <sup>10</sup> When I weep and fast,  
I must endure scorn;
- <sup>11</sup> when I put on sackcloth,  
people make sport of me.
- <sup>12</sup> Those who sit at the gate mock me,  
and I am the song of the drunkards.
- <sup>13</sup> But I pray to you, LORD,  
in the time of your favor;  
in your great love, O God,  
answer me with your sure salvation.

# Hosea 13:6

When I fed them, they were satisfied;  
when they were satisfied, they became proud;  
then they forgot me.

\*\*reference Sodom/Gomorrah Ezekiel, Israelites Manneh  
Duet 8

# Private vs Corporate Fasting

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- “personal sanctity” - **Psalms 69:10**, Ezekiel 16:49, Deut 8: 2-3, 8:11-14, **Hosea 13:6**
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Ezra  
8:21-23

<sup>21</sup> There, by the Ahava Canal, I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions. <sup>22</sup> I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to protect us from enemies on the road, because we had told the king, “The gracious hand of our God is on everyone who looks to him, but his great anger is against all who forsake him.” <sup>23</sup> So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer.

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# Jeremiah

## 36:1-7

In the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD: <sup>2</sup>“Take a scroll and write on it all the words I have spoken to you concerning Israel, Judah and all the other nations from the time I began speaking to you in the reign of Josiah till now. <sup>3</sup>Perhaps when the people of Judah hear about every disaster I plan to inflict on them, they will each turn from their wicked ways; then I will forgive their wickedness and their sin.”

<sup>4</sup>So Jeremiah called Baruch son of Neriah, and while Jeremiah dictated all the words the LORD had spoken to him, Baruch wrote them on the scroll. <sup>5</sup>Then Jeremiah told Baruch, “I am restricted; I am not allowed to go to the LORD’s temple. <sup>6</sup>So you go to the house of the LORD on a day of fasting and read to the people from the scroll the words of the LORD that you wrote as I dictated. Read them to all the people of Judah who come in from their towns. <sup>7</sup>Perhaps they will bring their petition before the LORD and will each turn from their wicked ways, for the anger and wrath pronounced against this people by the LORD are great.”

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Isaiah  
58: 6-7

<sup>6</sup> “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:

to loose the chains of injustice  
and untie the cords of the yoke,  
to set the oppressed free  
and break every yoke?

<sup>7</sup> Is it not to share your food with the hungry

and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—

when you see the naked, to clothe them,  
and not to turn away from your own  
flesh and blood?

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# Daniel

9:2-3;

21-23

<sup>2</sup> in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. <sup>3</sup> So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.

— <sup>21</sup> while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice. <sup>22</sup> He instructed me and said to me, “Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding. <sup>23</sup> As soon as you began to pray, a word went out, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the word and understand the vision:

# Corporate Fasting

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## Joel 1: 13A Call to Lamentation

<sup>13</sup> Put on sackcloth, you priests, and mourn; wail, you who minister before the altar. Come, spend the night in sackcloth, you who minister before my God; for the grain offerings and drink offerings are withheld from the house of your God.

<sup>14</sup> Declare a holy fast; call a sacred assembly. Summon the elders and all who live in the land to the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD.

<sup>15</sup> Alas for that day! For the day of the LORD is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty.<sup>[c]</sup>



# Corporate Fasting

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<sup>16</sup> Has not the food been cut off before our very eyes—  
joy and gladness from the house of our God? <sup>17</sup> The seeds are shriveled beneath the  
clods. <sup>18</sup> The storehouses are in ruins, the granaries have been broken down, for the grain  
has dried up. <sup>18</sup> How the cattle moan! The herds mill about because they have no pasture;  
even the flocks of sheep are suffering. <sup>19</sup> To you, LORD, I call, for fire has devoured the  
pastures in the wilderness and flames have burned up all the trees of the field. <sup>20</sup> Even  
the wild animals pant for you; the streams of water have dried up and fire has devoured  
the pastures in the wilderness.

# Private/Corporate Fasting

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## Acts 14: The Return to Antioch in Syria

- <sup>21</sup> They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, <sup>22</sup> strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,” they said. <sup>23</sup> **Paul and Barnabas appointed elders<sup>[a]</sup> for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.** <sup>24</sup> After going through Pisidia, they came into Pamphylia, <sup>25</sup> and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

# Private/Corporate Fasting

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## Matthew 17:21 A Boy Is Healed

<sup>14</sup> And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, <sup>15</sup> “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is <sup>[c]</sup>an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. <sup>16</sup> So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him.”

<sup>17</sup> Then Jesus answered and said, “O <sup>[d]</sup>faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me.” <sup>18</sup> And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour.

<sup>19</sup> Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?”

<sup>20</sup> So Jesus said to them, “Because of your <sup>[e]</sup>unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. <sup>21</sup> <sup>[f]</sup>However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”

# Private Fasting

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Deuteronomy 9:9 The Golden Calf

7 Remember this and never forget how you aroused the anger of the Lord your God in the wilderness. From the day you left Egypt until you arrived here, you have been rebellious against the Lord. 8 At Horeb you aroused the Lord's wrath so that he was angry enough to destroy you. 9 When I went up on the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant that the Lord had made with you, I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights; I ate no bread and drank no water.

# Private Fasting

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Deuteronomy 9:18

18 Then once again I fell prostrate before the Lord for forty days and forty nights; I ate no bread and drank no water, because of all the sin you had committed, doing what was evil in the Lord's sight and so arousing his anger. 19 I feared the anger and wrath of the Lord, for he was angry enough with you to destroy you. But again the Lord listened to me. 20 And the Lord was angry enough with Aaron to destroy him, but at that time I prayed for Aaron too. 21 Also I took that sinful thing of yours, the calf you had made, and burned it in the fire. Then I crushed it and ground it to powder as fine as dust and threw the dust into a stream that flowed down the mountain.

# Private Fasting

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Matthew 4:1

Satan Tempts Jesus

4 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2  
And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.

# Be Practical

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- Consult your physician
- Decide what fast is right for you
- How to start a fast
- How to end a fast
- Journal
- pray, worship, read/study, be accountable