

THE BOOK OF JOEL

Lesson 1, Introduction and Chapter 1

Welcome to our introduction to the Book of Joel. In the 2nd chapter of Joel, we read this:

CJB Joel 2:13-14 ***¹³ Tear your heart, not your garments; and turn to ADONAI your God. For he is merciful and compassionate, slow to anger, rich in grace, and willing to change his mind about disaster. ¹⁴ Who knows? He may turn, change his mind and leave a blessing behind him, [enough for] grain offerings and drink offerings to present to ADONAI your God.***

As we continue in our studies of the 12 books that form what is called The Minor Prophets (and "minor" simply means that the length of those 12 books are rather short when compared to those of other prophets like Isaiah or Jeremiah), I have grouped together Hosea, Amos, Jonah and now Joel for teaching purposes because they all propel us towards a common theme and governing dynamic of God that I call "If, Then". That is, in Yehoveh's dealings and relationship with humanity He operates nearly exclusively on a conditional basis. What do I mean by this?

Conditional means that God typically responds to the behavior of humans by reacting accordingly. God created human beings with something that we call free will. While there is much theological and philosophical debate over exactly what free will is, and to what extent our free will actually is "free", nonetheless humans have been given the ability to make choices. "If, then" reflects that ability for us to make choices, just as God has the ability to make choices. Human choices come in two basic categories: morals and preferences. God has given us His code of morality that carefully lays down the structure and boundaries of morality: what is evil and what is good. The first code was actually put within us as part of our DNA, and it goes by various names with the most recognizable being Natural Law. That is, all humans have naturally built-into us a general sense that there exists such a thing as morality (good vs. evil) and what is universally understood as the definition of good behavior versus evil behavior. The second code, the Law of Moses, took that intrinsically human Natural Law and wrote it out in much more detail (changing none of its principles). This second code was initiated with

the 10 Commandments, and then immediately followed by approximately 600 more laws (I call them "case" laws) each based upon one or another of those 10 Commandments.

Choices based on preference, on the other hand, have nothing to do with morality. No moral stigma is attached to preferences. God has never set down a Code of Preferences. However, by setting down a code of morality, we have divinely defined for us which of our free-will choices belong in the moral category, and which belong as preferences. Whether we prefer chocolate over vanilla, big cars to small cars, baseball to football, city living to rural living... this and infinitely more...these are choices we can make that have no divine consequence because they are not about morality. However, moral choices DO have divine consequences. Therefore, it can be said as a proverb that the governing dynamic of "If, then" applies ONLY to our moral choices. I'll try to make this easier to understand in a practical, more applicable way: obedience to God's moral code causes God to react in a positive way towards us (blessings), and disobedience causes Him to react in a negative way towards us (curses). His moral code together with His reaction towards our response to it equals His justice system. What makes God's justice system so wonderful and unique is that He adds to it the element of mercy. That is, God's justice system is not simply a mechanical, rigid, legalistic system of do's and don'ts with consequences for us written in stone. While our wrong behavior might well warrant a negative response from Him, He will... at His sole decision...at times give us mercy so that we don't suffer what we rightly deserve.

While it is not always so, when we recognize our bad behavior (the Bible calls this "sin") and we repent of it (we offer God our sorrow as well as a changed behavior to the good), this tends to trigger God's mercy upon us. Even so, sometimes His mercy comes **before** any repentance, and at other times He does NOT give us mercy even WITH our repentance. Now, what I just said greatly bothers much Christian doctrine on the matter of repentance and mercy (as well as fundamentally what is moral and what is not, and who decides). While not necessarily universal, Christian doctrine broadly states that when we come to trust in Yeshua (Jesus Christ), all of this conditionality...all "if, then"... ends and God's response towards our behavior becomes unconditional. That is, only mercy is shown and it is guaranteed no matter what. While that is a *pleasant* fiction...it

is still fiction! The Bible in no way says such a thing, but rather this is a created doctrine that came about later in Constantinian Christianity, sometime after its inception in Rome in the 4th century.

It seems, however, that in more ancient times... the 8th century B.C. and earlier... among the Israelites there evolved a belief that because Yehoveh was Israel's God and because Israel was God's chosen and set-apart people, that they, too, had something near to an unconditional promise of mercy for their bad behavior. That is, God would always accept whatever was offered as repentance, and therefore brought no negative consequences...and even if their repentance was slow to come or not particularly sincere... God still would withhold His wrath upon them. Just as Christian doctrine has it wrong on this subject, so did Israel and it cost them dearly. Hosea, Amos, Jonah, and now Joel seemed to be God's vehicle to communicate to Israel (and to us) in order to correct this dangerous misperception that gives us a false sense of security. After Israel split into 2 separate kingdoms in the mid -10th century B.C. (they split into the Kingdoms of Judah and Ephraim/Israel), Ephraim/Israel felt so certain of this doctrine of God never offering anything but His mercy that they felt free enough to create new worship practices and rituals and societal rules that were far more pagan in nature than reflective of their Torah-based Scriptural faith from the time of Moses. Christianity has mirrored this mindset, and it shows up especially in solidifying the idea that God will show Jesus-followers only mercy with the once-saved-always-saved doctrine. This erroneous doctrine essentially completely removes our behavior (even our thoughts) from having any tangible effect on our relationship with God...thereby assuring a good and peaceful relationship with Him regardless of anything evil that we could ever do or think. Again; this flies in the face of all biblical principles as found in both the Old and New Testaments.

God used these 4 minor prophets that we have studied (or are about to study) to correct this theological error that came from manmade doctrines. Listen again to Joel 2:14:

CJB Joel 2:14 ¹⁴ Who knows? He may turn, change his mind and leave a blessing behind him, [enough for] grain offerings and drink offerings to present to ADONAI your God.

Almost the same words were used in the Book of Jonah in order to make the same point:

CJB Jonah 3:9 *Who knows? Maybe God will change his mind, relent and turn from his fierce anger; and then we won't perish."*

So, did this dynamic of "if, then" change after the time of Yeshua? Did the conditional change to the unconditional? Not according to Paul:

CJB Romans 9:18 *So then, he (God) has mercy on whom he wants, and he hardens whom he wants.*

The bottom line is that while Joel is nearly always used to speak about an Apocalyptic End Times scenario (especially in the last 50 years or so), repentance and how God responds to us is equally present in what Joel teaches. "If, then" has, since Adam, been at the heart of how God deals with mankind. And...and this is the part that can hurt our heads... there is **no** iron-clad guarantee of mercy. There are always conditions and only God knows for certain when mercy will be offered and when it won't. Don't misunderstand me: maintaining a sincere trust in Yeshua...demonstrated in our fruit...our good works and deeds... **is** the path to an eternal relationship of good with God. However, it is not based on a momentary or short-lived experience with God or a promise to God (such as praying the sinner's prayer), that quickly fades to black for the remainder of our lives. We all continue to live under the "If, then" divine governing principle because, saved or not, we all continue to have free will, and God also continues to make choices concerning us based on His perfect knowledge and justice.

The Book of Joel contains fewer than 1000 words. In the Greek Septuagint, and therefore in most English Bibles, Joel consists of only 3 chapters. However, from the Hebrew Masoretic text (such as used by the CJB), Joel consists of 4 chapters. The contents are the same, either way, so don't worry whether your Bible uses 3 or 4 chapters. I'll be operating from 4 chapters, so when I quote chapter and verse numbers it might be different in your Bible.

We know nothing of the circumstances of Joel's life; only that he is the son of someone called **Pethuel** (of whom we also know nothing). For many centuries some Rabbis have decided that **Pethuel** is an alternate spelling for **Sh'mu'el** (Samuel), and therefore Joel was the Prophet Samuel's son. This holds no water at all and is but a fanciful imagining. Some ancient Jewish legends attach him to the tribe of Reuben; again, there is no evidence for this. So, we know little more about Joel than that he lived, He prophesied concerning primarily Judah, and that he was a Prophet of God. One of the great debates about Joel is **when** he lived and prophesied. This debate tends to fall into one of two camps: pre or post exilic. That is, before the Babylonian Exile of Judah, or after their return to the Land from their exile. Modern scholarship leans towards it being written after the return of the Judean exiles, while older scholarship places it before. The reason for the difference is primarily that modern scholarship tends to give a lot of weight to supposed literary patterns and vocabulary found in the text that can identify when a document was written. There is, of course, no way to prove or disprove this method of dating ancient literature; it is subjective and theoretical, and is decided only by a consensus of language scholars. Bible scholars, Jewish and Christian, up until early in the 20th century generally dated Joel to the same time as Hosea, Amos, and Jonah...the 8th and 9th centuries B.C. Some date Joel as the earliest of the 4, others as the latest. As some of the proof of this being the general era, it is offered that essentially a few identical words and passages are used among these 4 books. The only real debate here is who influenced whom. That is, did Joel write first, and these other books borrowed from him? Or was it Amos that wrote first, and Joel and others borrowed from him...and so on. I'll not offer an opinion because nothing about this is settled. However, I think there is little reason to deviate from what the earlier scholars agree on, in that Joel lived and prophesied some time between the late 9th and late 8th century B.C. For me, this obvious "if, then" theme of Joel is the give-away to when it was written, because we know that during this time period God's Prophets were trying to drag Israel away from a false doctrine that had arisen that God obligated Himself to always show love and mercy toward Israel (regardless of their behavior), and equally always showed hate and wrath towards Israel's gentile enemies, simply because they were gentiles and political enemies of Israel.

From a panoramic viewpoint, Joel consists of two halves; the first half talks about Judah's distress and the suffering it is undergoing because of God's wrath upon

them. The second half of the book describes deliverance from these woes, but it is a future deliverance. And by its nature, this deliverance is non-specific in timeframe, but also has the tone of something well into the future from the day of Joel. Therefore, exactly when this book was written isn't all that important. It especially isn't all that important because of the End Times apocalypse and then restoration that is being prophesied (one that Jews and Christians generally agree is still future to us, today).

Something we must pay special attention to is that like with all the biblical prophets...and especially with this group of 4 Minor Prophets we've been studying recently... the message (the oracles) from God revolves around the Covenant of Moses, and particularly its curses. When we hold Deuteronomy 32 side-by-side with Joel 1:1 through 2:17, we see the connection that is parallel. I draw this out because late 20th and early 21st century Christian Bible scholarship wants to distance themselves from this Torah connection. The earliest Church scholar who professed such a view (at least the earliest I could find) was the known anti-Semitic Martin Luther. He stated that God moving away from the Torah (in Joel) was in preparation for the coming of Christ when a whole new justice dynamic would come about. Hans Walter Wolff...another German Bible scholar... writes this that well sums up Luther's, and the modern Christian scholar's, attitude about Joel.

Joel can hardly belong to the circles that take their stand upon the canonized Torah and see it in liturgical compliance with it the ultimate will of the God of Israel. Instead, one has the impression that he belongs to those "eschatological groups" who are still expecting completely new acts of Yahweh.

In other words, Wolff says that Joel is part of a group of Prophets that is separating themselves from the Torah and is expecting God to do something new and different. This would be a pretty startling statement coming from anyone; however, it very much reflects a troubling modern viewpoint of Bible academics. Where is he drawing this conclusion from? It begins with the idea of Darby's Dispensationalism doctrine that has history divided up into eras, with God changing things...sort of like evolution... as we go. And this changing includes what His justice system looks like. It plays well into the fundamental Church doctrine that God abolished the Torah for something new. Frankly, we see this

doctrine of the New Testament succeeding and replacing the Old Testament being spun in a hundred inventive ways as time moves on. Today, the spin has infected the Christian faith so thoroughly that even some of the Gospels are being held suspect and therefore discounted (especially Matthew's) because when being intellectually honest about it, there are things in the Gospels that are said by Yeshua that just don't jibe with some embedded Christian doctrines. Therefore, just as the Old Testament was some time ago deemed irrelevant by the Church, there is now a subtle but growing movement to put the Synoptic Gospels into a "lesser" category, relying more on Paul's Epistles for clarity. Again; this concept of Joel moving away from the idea of God responding to Israel's behavior based upon the Covenant of Moses, is quite new but is also clearly agenda-driven. Rather, as is self-evident from Hosea, Amos and Jonah...and now here in Joel... Israel's behavior based upon their obedience to the Covenant of Moses **is** the criteria for how God is judging them. In Joel, Israel's (mainly Judah's) disobedient behavior is causing the Covenant curses to fall upon them. Otherwise, if this didn't happen, God would hardly be a just God. If God didn't react to evil, how can that be called justice? Not only that, if God's wrath upon Israel was not based on the Covenant of Moses, then on what other known standard was it based? Having NO standard would make God arbitrary and capricious, and judging on some subjective standard Israel doesn't even know about. And, this notion is, of course, exactly how Christianity bases its doctrines. God's justice is now seen as a subjective and evolving standard, with each person having virtually their own customized moral code according to what the Holy Spirit tells each person is right or wrong...for them.

What we need to watch for in Joel is his primary theme, which is "The Day of the Lord". I want you to be acutely aware that even though the phrase "The Day of the Lord" is standard in Christian End Times doctrines and in most English Bibles, in fact that isn't accurate. The phrase used throughout Joel is actually "The Day of Yehoveh". Joel goes into more detail than any other OT source as to exactly what The Day of Yehoveh is. We'll delve into that more as it appears in each chapter of Joel; however, I'll say this about that for the moment. The best understanding of the Day of Yehoveh is in its connection to Holy War. It begins with an ancient Middle Eastern cultural thought that a great sovereign could win any battle of conquest in a single day. While in reality a single-day victory is a hyperbolic fiction, it is meant to express the supreme, unmatched power of a

great king. So, in Joel (as in other Bible Prophets) the Day of Yehoveh pictures God in the role of a great divine warrior king, fighting a Holy War and winning overwhelmingly. Biblically, any war God involves Himself in is by definition a Holy War; and any war He doesn't involve Himself in, is not. Knowing this, it is important to notice that there are a number of Day of Yehoveh (Day of the Lord) events in the Bible. Some involve Israel, some involve the gentile nations, some are in the past, and some are in the future. So, while there are of course similarities and perhaps a level of pre-figuration of the great End Times Day of Yehoveh in comparison to these other and earlier ones, let's not take it too far nor should we look at the earlier events as but veiled references to the End Times one.

With that, open you Bibles to Joel chapter 1.

READ JOEL CHAPTER 1 all

As with Hosea and Jonah, Joel opens with the phrase: "The Word of Yehoveh came". What I taught in those books about this opening is, therefore, also appropriate for Joel. It is that The Word doesn't refer to speech; it is referring to a named entity of God. The Word is the name of a spiritual entity...a manifestation of God...just as is the Holy Spirit. So, it was through a visitation of The Word that Joel got his information.

The Book of Joel lends itself to much preaching and application. So, while we will, as always, focus mostly on a word-by-word exegesis of Joel, it is unavoidable that we shall also delve into how this all applies to us very personally as individuals, as part of a corporate body of Believers, as citizens of whatever nation we belong to, but also as part of global humanity.

The first people that Joel is to address are Israel's national leaders. The oracle begins with the word that the leaders are to **shema**. They are to listen and to obey. This powerful word **shema** is essentially like a summons in which those who are summoned are there to receive an instruction to do something. To simply listen to the words of the summons and not obey it is to make a conscious choice to disobey. This is because since one hears the decree they cannot plead ignorance if they don't do what is commanded; they cannot say "but, I didn't

know". So, this is a call to action, not merely to gain knowledge. Then to everyone else of the land, we are told that they are to listen. While **azan** (listen) technically doesn't carry the weight that **shema** does, as used here this is not meant that the elders are to listen and do, but everyone else is just to listen and remain passive. Rather, this is used in a poetic way as prophecies typically do. That is, **azan** is here meant to be parallel with **shema**. In this context, "the land" means Judah, so the idea is that everyone in Judah, without exception, is to hear what God says through Joel and to obey it.

Next is a series of words intended to say that everyone should pay attention because the event being spoken of has never happened before. While this may be an exaggeration, nonetheless the point is that the event is enormous and devastating in Israel's history; even in the lifetimes of Judah's ancestors such a thing has not happened to such an intensity. Verse 3 continues with the hyperbole by saying this event is so unparalleled that those who live through it are to tell their children about it, and those children are to tell their own children about it. This event is explained in dramatic fashion beginning in verse 4. It describes a succession of attacks from swarms of locusts that devour every green growing plant in Judah. When in verse 3 the people of Judah are ordered to tell this story to every future generation because of its great meaning to the nation of Israel, it harkens back to things of the past in the Torah. So, there are numerous places in the Torah and in other Old Testament teachings with the same kind of thought of passing down to the generations a witness to a momentous event caused by the God of Israel. Why is it so important to remember it? Because those who disregard the lessons of history are bound to repeat the same mistakes. This same thought is expressed much earlier in the Bible.

CJB Deuteronomy 32:7 *"Remember how the old days were; think of the years through all the ages. Ask your father- he will tell you; your leaders too- they will inform you.*

CJB Exodus 12:26 ²⁶ *When your children ask you, 'What do you mean by this ceremony?'*

CJB Psalm 78:3-7 ***³ The things which we have heard and known, and which our fathers told us ⁴ we will not hide from their descendants; we will tell the generation to come the praises of ADONAI and his strength, the wonders that he has performed. ⁵ He raised up a testimony in Ya'akov and established a Torah in Isra'el. He commanded our ancestors to make this known to their children, ⁶ so that the next generation would know it, the children not yet born, who would themselves arise and tell their own children, ⁷ who could then put their confidence in God, not forgetting God's deeds, but obeying his mitzvot.***

When adding back in the original Hebrew, verse 4 says this about the invasion of these voracious insects:

CJB Joel 1:4 ***What the gazam left, the arbeh ate; what the arbeh left, the yeleq ate; what the yeleq left, the chasil ate.***

We find 4 different words describing these ravaging bugs. So, what do the 4 different words indicate? Over the centuries Bible academics have attempted to identify the terms used here to describe the particulars of the eating insects. Some say they are about 4 different species. Others say they are 4 stages of locust development from infant to adult. Entomologists, however, say there are 6, not 4, stages of locust development. The Talmud uses 20 or more words for locusts. The bottom line is that nearly for certain what is happening is not an insect biology lesson from Joel, but rather it is a most dramatic way to say that a series of 4 swarms of locusts invaded Judah, one after the next, leaving absolutely nothing behind.

In reality, locusts are just grasshoppers, regardless of the many different words used for them. When their eggs hatch under occasional ideal conditions, the swarms are almost beyond what we can imagine. They can be miles and miles across. The worst part of a locust plague is not only that they are sudden and unstoppable, but that they affect people **and** animals, and for more than one planting season. Here in Joel the description is such that even that portion of a crop that might be used for seed the next year is eaten-up, so famine is sure to follow for more than one year. Biblically, in some ways a locust invasion is considered worse than an invasion by enemy forces so there is little above a

locust plague to describe utter, complete devastation and consequent suffering of people and livestock and even of the wild animals.

But: is this a literal grasshopper infestation, or is this a metaphor for an attack by an enemy army? The academic community...Jewish and Christian... is pretty evenly divided on it. There are a few places in the Bible where a locust invasion is clearly a metaphor for an invasion by an army. On the other hand, as in Exodus 10, a locust plague can be literal. That said, in the biblical accounts comparing locusts to human armies it is made clear that this comparison is what is happening. That is, locusts are NOT symbols of something else... it's that their characteristics can be used to dramatically describe the effects of an invasion of enemy forces. But here in Joel, that is not the case. This is not used as a comparison or a metaphorical description. Neither in Egyptian or Assyrian records are locusts used as symbols of enemy armies. So, it is my belief that in Joel this particular locust invasion is just that; an invasion of grasshoppers.

Starting in verse 5 begins an appeal for a lamentation concerning the gravity of the devastation that has fallen upon Judah. What is a lamentation? It is a passionate expression of grief or of sorrow. What we read here is actually a rather classic Hebrew approach to the offering of prayers of lamentation that were usual and customary not just in the Bible, but throughout the Middle East of that era. Typically, a national proclamation was issued that would summon the people to a ceremony when a national emergency of some sort erupted. Usually, the emergency had to do with an invasion by a foreign entity or with a food supply issue. Thus, there is a recognizable form of literary structure that was common and standard for such calls. Usually, the king would be the one who instigated it and then the Elders would see to it that the word spread to the people at large. So, Joel is only the latest example of this call to lamentation; it is not at all unique.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if, in modern times, at the moment of national distress or looming catastrophe that we had leaders that sincerely instructed the people to come together and pray to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob for His mercy and help? Sadly, about the closest we get today is but carefully crafted, politically correct words that call for a moment of silence, or to pray to our personal god (should we believe in a god) whomever that might be. I can

promise you that such a call is not only meaningless and ineffective, but that it is actually offensive to Yehoveh; and because that is the case, as Believers in the God of Israel we ought not allow such a thing to go unchallenged. Knowing who we are praying to is everything; praying to anyone other than Yehoveh is but idolatry. And we need to say so out loud and quit worrying if we might offend someone. This fearful silence has been displayed for far too long, and what we see happening to our crumbling society is the result of not standing up for the truth.

Essentially, then, verse 4 announced the cause of the tragedy (the locusts), and then verse 5 begins a long response of lamentation to that tragedy. It might seem odd that the first people called to lament are drunks! However, I think the point of it is that in many ways they represent the mindless unawareness of Judah's citizens in general about what is going on and why. A drunk has only one thought: acquiring more drink. They have an attitude of complete carelessness. Whatever happens outside of their tiny little sphere of living a life of intoxication in order to avoid real life, simply doesn't concern them. This was Judah in general. They may not all have been intoxicated with alcohol, but they were intoxicated with obtaining as many comforts of life as they could accompanied by a willingness to water down their biblical faith to obtain peace and security with their pagan neighbors, but also to avoid internal conflicts among their countrymen. How does that resonate with you? Does that not well describe the Western world in general, and so much of the modern-day Church? We are so absorbed into our daily lives of gaining material possessions, and going about our business; carping about the latest disruption to our personal plans, gripping because we have to work too hard at our jobs or we that don't have enough leisure time, that we put God on the shelf for all but an hour or two on Saturday or Sunday. Like Joel's drunkards, an entire new Church doctrine has arisen called the Prosperity Doctrine that seeks to make our intoxication, if not addiction, with wealth and material pleasures as though it is something The Lord desires for us. In fact, the more addicted we are to it, and the more we obtain from it, is actually God showing us His favor and pleasure for our supposed faith. So just as the drunkards in Joel are representative of Judah in their casual attitudes towards God, so is the Prosperity Doctrine representative of the casual attitude of too many Believers towards God and we need to think long and hard about this, and see if this might apply to us individually.

What are the drunkards to wail and weep about? Their wine supply is about to dry up. This sudden invasion of locusts has disrupted Judah's, and especially Jerusalem's, complacent way of life. The locusts are God's wake-up call, and what is happening is out of the control of the people or their leaders because it is God's judgment upon them. We must not look at this and think: well, locust infestations happened from time to time, so let's not make too much of it. The thing we learned in studying the Torah is that God will usually use the natural, as opposed to the supernatural, to deal with humanity. It's just that when God ordains it as a judgment, the intensity of it is far greater than normally happens in nature. And it also demonstrates God's control over all nature that He command it to action at His will and His timing.

I cannot help but feel that the Covid pandemic that the world faced was the locust plague only in modern terms. We have had pandemics before; but rarely as intense and rapidly globally felt as Covid. The pandemic has exposed the weaknesses and vulnerability of human society everywhere. Little has changed the world so universally, and permanently, in such a short time as Covid. What ought to be another clue for us that this was anything but a natural occurrence that happened accidentally or on its own, is that to this day medical science cannot agree on its source. Freedoms and prosperity that so much of the world was enjoying...based on increasing technology and expected entitlement to not only basic living but also fun and convenient things... was curtailed virtually overnight. Things we felt we could count on without the least thought or concern....even toilet paper... suddenly became scarce if not unobtainable. Our freedoms even to gather together for communal worship were taken from us. We tend to want to blame chance or bad luck or incompetent (perhaps authoritarian) government intervention for it. But, might it actually have been God's wake-up call to us all? Just like the locusts were for Judah? A slumbering people, many of whom claimed a faith in Him, but actually displayed little of it? In many ways such a thought goes against a Christian belief that God would never cause calamity or evil to befall us. But in fact, the Bible teaches the opposite. And, the reality is that our faith in Yeshua doesn't immunize us from it. I tell you frankly that I **do** believe that Covid was and is God's judgment and that He directed it. I don't know this with absolute certainty, but I do know what God's Word teaches us, and I think an honest assessment of the world as it is, and of those who

currently claim allegiance to Him but whose life and desires demonstrates something quite different, it can be nothing else. God wants we, the intoxicated, to arise from our coma-like spiritual sleep. So, let us respond accordingly; with lamentation and prayer and mostly with a renewed devotion to God and to active obedience to His Commandments.