

Shayla: Is the charismatic idea of “holy laughter” biblical?

Meforshim:

Some Charismatic people practice what they call “holy laughter”, “falling out”, or being “slain in the Spirit”. In some of their services you will see them staggering around uncontrollably, a practice they refer to as being “drunk in the Spirit.” Being entirely based on emotions and characterized by lack of control, these have now digressed to congregants, roaring, barking, quacking, clawing the air like lions and even vomiting!



They claim their actions are based on passages such as...

- **Psalms 2:4 HCSB** The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord ridicules them.
or...

- **Ephesians 5:17-19 HCSB** So don't be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. (18) And don't get drunk with wine, which *leads to* reckless actions, but be filled with the Spirit: (19) speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music to the Lord in your heart,

However, they completely miss the fact that David's Psalm refers to God and not God's people and that Paul's admonition to the Ephesian believers was warning against foolish and reckless behavior and urging them to instead practice a self-controlled and disciplined style of worship.

By the way, the word “drunk” in Ephesians 5:18 is “methusko” (Strong's #3182) and the word used for the indwelling of the Spirit is “pleroo” (Strong's #4137). Claiming that the contrast of “drunk with wine” is to instead be “drunk in the Spirit” reveals an abysmal ignorance of the original languages of the Bible.

They also completely miss the point that if their mode of behavior was the point the Bible was trying to make, why is it that we see none of these behaviors in the early church? Point to a single Biblical example of God's Holy Nation rolling in the aisles completely given over to convulsive laughter and I'll eat my hat. Show me anywhere where paroxysms of shaking and stammering are a sign of the Spirit in the Scriptures. Instead, the prophet Isaiah predicted that when Christ rules the earth...

- **Isaiah 32:4 HCSB** The reckless mind will gain knowledge, and the stammering tongue will speak clearly and fluently.

It was a demoniac who screamed and whom no one could control. Once Jesus got a hold of him we see him seated, dressed, and in his right mind.

- **Mark 5:15 HCSB** They came to Jesus and saw the man who had been demon-possessed by the legion, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid.

To speak in a babbling manner, attempting to draw attention to oneself through a multitude of meaningless words was described by the Messiah as characteristic of idolaters.

- **Matthew 6:7 HCSB** *When you pray, don't babble like the idolaters, since they imagine they'll be heard for their many words.*

Paul specifically warned that even if believers were given the gift of tongues (which by the way was not senseless babbling but actual “glossia”, languages like French or Italian) that the gift should not be practiced universally because it would bring reproach to Christ's church.

- **1 Corinthians 14:23-25 HCSB** (23) Therefore if the whole church assembles together, and all are speaking in *other* languages, and people who are uninformed or

unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your minds? (24) But if all are prophesying, and some unbeliever or uninformed person comes in, he is convicted by all and is judged by all. (25) The secrets of his heart will be revealed, and as a result he will fall down on his face and worship God, proclaiming, "God is really among you."

It is when we prophesy, which he defined as revealing the secrets of the human heart, that unbelievers will be convicted and proclaim "God is really among you." How do we prophesy in that manner? Where can the secrets of the human heart be revealed?

- **Hebrews 4:12-13 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. (13) 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.

I find it interesting (and more than a little ironic) that they choose a verse that describes Adonai laughing derisively at those who would throw off the disciplinary chains of the Almighty and His Anointed One on which to base their wild, crude behavior.

- **Psalms 2:2-3 HCSB** The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers conspire together against the LORD and His Anointed One: (3) "Let us tear off their chains and free ourselves from their restraints."

I wonder why they don't choose verses like...

- **Luke 6:24-25 HCSB** But woe to you who are rich, because you have received your comfort. (25) Woe to you who are full now, because you will be hungry. Woe to you who are laughing now, because you will mourn and weep.

Or...

- **James 4:8-10 HCSB** Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, sinners, and purify your hearts, double-minded people! (9) Be miserable and mourn and weep. Your laughter must change to mourning and your joy to sorrow. (10) Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you.

On which to base their services?

They claim that this wild and often violent behavior is a manifestation of the Spirit.

However, there is only one place in the Bible that actually describes "manifestations of the Spirit:

- **1 Corinthians 12:7-10 HCSB** A manifestation of the Spirit is given to each person to produce what is beneficial: (8) to one is given a message of wisdom through the Spirit, to another, a message of knowledge by the same Spirit, (9) to another, faith by the same Spirit, to another, gifts of healing by the one Spirit, (10) to another, the performing of miracles, to another, prophecy, to another, distinguishing between spirits, to another, different kinds of languages, to another, interpretation of languages.

Where is quacking like a duck or convulsing on the ground mentioned? Paul devoted an entire chapter to ordering and disciplining the Corinthian church's worship service. In that chapter he said:

- **1 Corinthians 14:32-33 HCSB** (32) And the prophets' spirits are under the control of the prophets, (33) since God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints,

He said that each one who prophesied should be in control of themselves and that manifestations of the Holy Spirit will result in peaceful order. It is an entirely different spirit that produces chaotic disorder, wild, loud, and uncontrolled manifestations of animalistic behavior. Having spent years in Africa, I can tell you that the devil worship services there (called "Yondo" in my particular area) were also characterized by uncontrollable laughter, shaking, convulsions, drunken behavior, and people "manifesting" animal spirits.

There was one man whom God caused to behave like an animal: Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws. It was viewed as a form of insanity and a direct curse from Hashem for the sin of hubris.

- **Daniel 4:31-34 HCSB** While the words were still in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven: "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared that the kingdom has departed from you. (32) You will be driven away from people to live with the wild animals, and you will feed on grass like cattle for seven periods of time, until you acknowledge that the Most High is ruler over the kingdom of men, and He gives it to anyone He wants." (33) At that moment the sentence against Nebuchadnezzar was executed. He was driven away from people. He ate grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with dew from the sky, until his hair grew like eagles' *feathers* and his nails like birds' *claws*. (34) But at the end of those days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up to heaven, and my sanity returned to me. Then I praised the Most High and honored and glorified Him who lives forever: For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation.

Man was created in the image and likeness of God to exercise authority over the animal kingdom.

- **Genesis 1:26 HCSB** Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the animals, all the earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth."

For humans to become animalistic, cawing, quacking, roaring, grunting, and laughing like hyenas is demeaning. That is not Adonai. That does not come from the One Who made us.

- **Psalms 8:4-8 HCSB** what is man that You remember him, the son of man that You look after him? (5) You made him little less than God and crowned him with glory and honor. (6) You made him lord over the works of Your hands; You put everything under his feet: (7) all the sheep and oxen, as well as animals in the wild, (8) birds of the sky, and fish of the sea passing through the currents of the seas.

We need to remember Isaiah's warning to the people concerning occult behavior. His solution was...

- **Isaiah 8:20 HCSB** To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, there will be no dawn for them.

Let's return to the law and to the testimony. Let's make sure that our practices are biblically approved. If we do not speak Scripturally there will be no dawn for us.

- **1 Corinthians 4:6 HCSB** Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the saying: "Nothing beyond what is written." The purpose is that none of you will be inflated with pride in favor of one person over another.

We must learn and practice the saying: "Nothing beyond what is written." It is a grave error to add to the Word of God. It is good to be open-minded and to flex with new technologies or new challenges. However, every solution offered by our elders must be ultimately compared to the Scriptures to determine their validity.

- **Acts 17:11 HCSB** The people here were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, since they welcomed the message with eagerness and examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

We need to sniff these doctrines and these so-called anointed prophets with a certain godly suspicion.

- **1 John 4:1 HCSB** Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to determine if they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.