



DEXTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

7643 Huron River Drive

Dexter, MI 48130

734-426-8480

To Know Him by Name: El Qanna

December 27, 2009

Rev. Stephen G. Bringardner

~ Scripture: Exodus 34:14 ~

Exodus 34:14 says: *“Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.”*

The Hebrew word here is *El Qanna* == *jealous God*. Sometimes translated “zealous”.

Names mean something. When the Bible says this is His name, it means something. What though? That word “jealous” conjures up some pretty negative images.

We think of jealous as the hostility one has toward a rival. Our jealousy says, *“You are taking something of mine. . .something that I value, treasure, love dearly—and I am furious.”*

Can that apply to the God of the universe, the God who has been revealing Himself to us by means of the names the Hebrew Scriptures attribute to Him? Is this the same God who is also called *El-Shaddai* (all-sufficient One; a term of endearment) or *Elohim* (all-powerful; creator)?

Indeed it is! When the Bible refers to God as El-Qanna, it is referring to the zeal that rises within Him when the relationship, the covenant He has with us is threatened—whether it be by sin or idolatry. Zeal means literally “to boil, to ferment”.

Deuteronomy 4:24 says: *“For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.”*

This says basically: “I burn with love for you.” There is such a ferocity to His love. . .such a burning intensity. Fierce love is part of who God is—as well as incredible tenderness.

You’ll never appreciate the love of God until you understand He is El-Qanna. Divine jealousy is not the petty emotion so often seen in fallen men & women. It is God’s justifiable intolerance to any and every rival (=idols / other gods). Jealousy is God’s rightful demand for our exclusive affection / loyalty. NOT because He is selfish or self-centered! NOT because He is needy! His jealousy is not driven by a concern for His needs, but rather a concern for our needs. God created us; He made us in such a way that only He can ever truly fulfill us. No one / nothing can take His place! He is not one among many. He is THE One; there is no other. So whenever we put something in His place so that the relationship is threatened, it evokes a very strong reaction.

Deuteronomy 6:13-15 says: *“Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you; for the LORD your God, who is among you, is a jealous God. His anger will burn against you. . .”*

This is the first name we’ve run across that shows the “severe” side of God. That last verse speaks of His anger burning. Let’s put it in a perspective we can understand.

Say you are in a covenant relationship (e.g.: marriage; parenting). Would you not do anything to ensure nothing comes between you and your partner? There are so many things that come between people these days—another person, an addiction, work. Wouldn’t you take some precautions to ensure that wouldn’t

happen, knowing any one of those things could ruin your marriage or your relationship? But we don't always, do we?

ILLUSTRATION> A few years ago, my family was down in Austin, TX getting ready for my first daughter Jennifer's wedding. One of her bridesmaids had just broken up with her boyfriend of many years. It had been one of those "tight relationships" everybody figured was destined to lead to marriage. We were all sitting around talking about what had happened, and Jill (fictitious name) said, "It boils down to this, Jack loved his beer more than he loved me." Here is something that had gotten in the way of an otherwise perfectly wonderful relationship.

There are many who have gone ahead and gotten married anyway, only to find the addiction takes over. It's like having a 3rd party in the marriage. Addictions shred families—I've witnessed it all too many times. It's a good example of something that comes between a husband and a wife OR parents and children OR friends OR a person and his/her job. It seems anything that has that much power—that could threaten or ruin a vital relationship—is something I would want to guard against with all my might—to ensure that breakdown wouldn't happen. The passion would rise up within me and drive me to take action to protect my marriage covenant. THAT is El-Qanna—and it is in the very nature of God. Would that it was more in our nature!

JESUS was filled with El-Qanna when he saw the profit motive instead of the worship motive operating in the Temple. He was filled with righteous anger and indignation toward those who had put themselves between God and the people. And He took action.

When you understand this part of the nature of God, you start to realize why He re-acted so vehemently in Biblical history:

- Why the Israelites were led into the desert for 40 years for doubting Him;
- Why such calamity hit when they built idols and didn't trust Him;
- Why they were constantly chided for marrying outside their religion.

Because El-Qanna is a jealous God, and He reacts to anything that threatens the existence or quality of His relationship with His people.

We are to worship Him and Him alone. Does that make me intolerant of people of other faiths? NO! I am glad for the great principle of religious freedom in our land==the right for people of different faiths to co-exist. We should always be respectful and non-judgmental. But that does not mean we mix a little of *this* faith with a little of *that* faith to come up with a "spiritual stew".

Suppose you walked into church this morning, and saw what you see every Sunday morning—a cross (center) / instruments (to either side) / banners with Christian symbols. But you happened to notice small voodoo dolls along the window ledges; and above them, crystals hanging. . .and then, next to the Bibles on the seats, Tarot cards. Would it not send a cold chill down your backs? If you could travel in time and space back to Moses' day + Elijah's + Isaiah's + Ezekiel's + Daniel's, you would see that exact same "mixing" of things together.

God's heart burns with jealousy! He's been so faithful to us; He's asked us to be faithful to Him. He asked us to not mix it up with the world's religions, but to pursue Him and Him alone with all the passion we can generate—to love God with all our heart-mind-strength.

Idolatry is a problem of every human heart. Sophisticated idols are still idols—whether graven images or electronic ones, hobbies, or addictions (as mentioned earlier). Just about anything can put God in 2nd place in our lives. We hurt Him when we let anything come in the way of loving Him fully, of making Him our all in all. [Yes, believe it or not, God does experience pain.]

What is it that gets in the way? What is it that we put in front of God—that makes Him #2 instead of #1? What separates you, what diminishes your fellowship with your Heavenly Father (or cuts it off altogether)? Is there a sin in your life that threatens the covenant relationship you have with Him?

Whatever it is, El-Qanna should arise within you. Just as God's jealousy caused Him to take action whenever anything disrupted the relationship He had with His people—it should prompt us to take some decisive action whenever anything threatens to rob us of intimacy with Him.

Same is true in our marriages and our primary relationships. Something of El-Qanna should arise within each of us whenever any of these relationships are threatened—even if the threat comes from you (e.g.: something you're doing or not doing) more than the person you're in relationship with. El-Qanna never lets us off the hook; it never says "Oh, that's OK, it doesn't matter." We need to rise up to action—not to destroy but to correct.

There is "good jealousy" and "bad jealousy" ≈ good/bad cholesterol.

It is "GOOD JEALOUSY" to expect our marriage partner to be faithful. However, there should be trust there, so that you're not checking every night when he/she comes home. In the 12-Step program, they talk about the "Alanon kiss" (i.e.: trying to detect if your partner's been drinking). ☺ That's "BAD JEALOUSY". It is unhealthy in that much of it is based on faulty perceptions + our own insecurity + basic lack of trust + exaggerated fear that you're going to lose your partner to something / someone more attractive. Always the focus is on ME (i.e.: very self-centered).

On the other hand, those of us who are married: we should not give our partner any reason to fear or be concerned. As a general rule, if a relationship has to be secret, you shouldn't be in it.

At all costs, we need to guard our covenants. Consider this. . .

The opposite of on-fire love is NOT always hostility, alienation, or unfaithfulness (i.e.: going "outside" the marriage to have needs fulfilled). . .BUT more subtle things like isolating, distancing, drifting apart so that you become strangers to one another. I urge you to guard your hearts. . .to guard your relationships with each other and with Him WITH A HOLY ZEAL. The Bible says we are to have a GODLY JEALOUSY (=HOLY ZEAL) for one another and for Christ. . . that we are not to allow ourselves to "be led astray from sincere and pure devotion" to Christ and to one another. [cf. II Corinthians 11:2-3]

So, whether it's your covenant relationship with your spouse OR with your God (which, by the way, is like a marriage in that we are described in the New Testament as *the Bride of Christ*)—be careful to let nothing come between you to separate you or create a rift, or in any way diminish the covenant relationship you are in today.

I'm so glad that my Father in heaven is El-Qanna—and that He is jealous for our love. Because God's jealousy always leads Him to take action; He always rises up when sin threatens my relationship with Him; and takes action when anything gets in the way.