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PREFACE

Originally written as a stand-alone e-book, this publication is now also contained within the e-book, “Women In Ministry,” also published in 2015 by Torah For Women Ministries.

This book, “Should Women Keep Silent?” deals with just the basic topic of whether women are to remain silent in church, based on Paul’s letters in the New Testament. Some use this interpretation to state that women are forbidden to teach in church, especially when it comes to instructing men.

This basic book can be used as a study guide for individuals, families or groups. It explores the concepts presented by the Apostle Paul and his reasoning for declaring certain rules. We also discuss historical aspects of the need for Paul to speak up about certain issues with women during that era.

For a more extensive study on the topic of women serving in church callings, please see our free e-book “Women In Ministry.” We hope that both of these publications will assist in establishing stronger assemblies and congregations which will be more able to assist sisters in their God-given callings in life and in the church.

Did Paul Actually Tell Women to Keep Silent?

Allegation: "Let your wives keep silent in the assemblies, for it has not been permitted for them to speak; but let them be in subjection, as the law also says. If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home, for it is shameful for a woman to chatter in the assembly. What? Was it from you that the word of God went out? Or did it come to you alone?" 1 Corinthians 14:34-36 WEB

The Scripture Explained: This is a very controversial passage of scripture One which biblical scholars have argued over for ages. In one camp, people take this as a very literal command that women must keep absolute silence in the church and are not permitted to utter a single word, sing, or worship during a church service. In the other camp, people will say that this passage was not written by Paul but was actually inserted much later by a scribe copying the text. In between these two extreme positions you have many variations as well. But - what IS the truth?

Let's let the scriptures interpret scripture in order to lead us to the truth.

#1. People who hold to the position that Paul ordered all women to keep silent in the church like to point out that the Greek word for "silent" in 1 Corinthians 14:34 is "sigaó". This Greek word is Strongs #4601 and basically means a harsh "keep quite!!!" With this interpretation in mind, some church leaders have suggested that women are not permitted to utter a single word and have a lifetime restriction on speaking in the church.

However, this same Greek word is also used in 1 Corinthians 14:28:

"But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent [sigaó] in the assembly, and let him speak to himself, and to God,..." and we see it again in 1 Corinthians 14:30: *"But if a revelation is made to another sitting by, let the first keep silent [sigaó]."*

So, will these same advocates for perpetually silent women in the churches also advocate that men "keep quite!!!" [sigaó] when there is no interpreter or someone else has a revelation? Does this mean that Paul is telling men who receive a revelation from God that they may no longer teach, preach or prophesy in the church? It's doubtful men would interpret "sigaó," or Paul's letter to the Corinthian church in a manner that would put a lifetime restriction on any **man** from ever speaking in the church, as they demand women to obey.

In regards to 1 Corinthians 14:28, I think it's clear that Paul was stating that it is in proper order and decorum for two or three prophets to work together and to be respectful with a brief period of silence, which means one prophet or interpreter may need to quickly yield and keep silent [sigaó] to allow another to speak. But why do people twist this same Greek word to make a rule which applies only to women having a lifetime restriction from ever uttering a word in church?

#2. To answer this last question posed at the end of point #1, let's continue to look within 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, which states: *"For it has not been permitted for them to speak; but let them be in subjection, as the law also says. If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home, for it is shameful for a woman to chatter in the assembly."*

Here we see Paul repeating this demand for women to remain silent in the church by saying it is not permitted for women to speak and that it is shameful for a woman to chatter in the assembly/church. Paul further repeats how women need to be in subjection as the law says, and if a married woman wants to learn anything, she needs to ask her husband at home.

However, where in the Torah or even in the entire Old Testament/Tanakh does it say women must be silent, or women must be in subjection to men?

People will often quote Genesis 3:16, which says: *"To the woman he said, 'I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth. In pain you will bring forth children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you'."* However, the problem with using this verse as proof text is that this is not a commandment from God, this is not God's perfect will, but only a statement God makes about the consequences of Adam and Eve's sin. Furthermore, there is no mention in Genesis 3:16 about women keeping silent. I cannot see this being a verse Paul would refer to when he says: *"For it has not been permitted for them to speak; but let them be in subjection, as the law also says."*

So, the question needs to be asked again, where in the Torah or the Old Testament/Tanakh does it say: *"For it has not been permitted for them to speak; but let them be in subjection?"* I can't find it anywhere in the Old Testament. In fact, scholars for centuries have searched for the scripture that Paul might have been referring to and still have not found it either. So what is Paul talking about?

Could it be that Paul was quoting what people in the Corinthian church were arguing over? In 1 Corinthians 7:1, Paul states that the church wrote to him concerning questions they had: *"Now concerning the things about which you wrote to me..."*, so could these questions include multiple topics, disagreements and quotes from both sides of the argument that Paul was addressing? I believe this is very possible, and along with many biblical scholars, I believe that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is not a command by Paul. Paul quoting teachings from misinformed people in the Corinthian church, which Paul later rebukes in verses 36-39 as we can see here:

"What? Was it from you that the word of God went out? Or did it come to you alone? If any man thinks himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him recognize the things which I write to you, that they are the commandment of the Lord."

Scholars also point out that Paul dealt with many false teachers outside the Corinthian church, many of them tried to turn the church toward rabbinic/Pharisaic teachings, because of the statement in chapter 14:34: *"Your women in the assemblies let them be silent, for it hath not been permitted to them to speak, but to be subject, as also the law saith"* YLT. As stated earlier, we can't find anything in the law (Torah) or even in the Old Testament to agree with the statement of verse 34. However, we can find agreement with these statements in Rabbinic /Pharisaic oral teachings, which were later compiled in print form in the Talmud around 200 AD.

The Talmud states: *"A woman's voice is prohibited because it is sexually provocative"* (Talmud, Berachot 24a).

This and many other teachings in the Talmud show a heavy restriction upon women. Even today, these same restrictions exist in many parts of Judaism. We know the Talmud was not written at the time of Paul's writing. However, rabbinic Judaism claims that the oral law existed from the time of Moses, but more accurately it only existed 200 years before Yeshua was born. In the scriptures, Yeshua preached against and rebuked these same oral laws and man-made traditions in the Gospels, which are the same laws Paul and the early church had to refute.

We can see that rabbinic Judaism believed women must be silenced. We also know by Acts 15 and the writings of Paul, that rabbinic Judaism often crept in the churches to corrupt the freedom of the believers and attempted to put churches under man-made legalism. Therefore, this explanation makes it clear that the phrase in verse 34: *"as also the law saith,"* could likely mean the oral law from the Pharisees, which Paul never promotes but always rebukes. A second possibility is that some people in the church misinterpreted the scriptures and added a man-made interpretation to God's laws or introduced a local custom and made it a law in the church.

We can't be 100% certain of this explanation, but either way, it's logical to conclude that Paul fought against "judaizers", false teachers and paganism in the churches and he probably quoted their error before he rebuked them. However, even with this explanation, there are still those who stand firm that Paul himself demanded women keep silent in the churches and that Paul banned women from ministry. If this is true about Paul, these people need to have answers for the questions and statements discussed in items #3 thru #7.

#3. If Paul is telling the churches that women may not prophesy then isn't he going against the gifts God gives to the church?

"He gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, shepherds and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, to the work of serving, to the building up of the body of Christ..." Ephesians 4:11-12 WEB

[Later in the book we will see that women filled these positions along with the men]

"And some, indeed, did God set in the assembly, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, afterwards powers, afterwards gifts of healings, helpings, governings, divers kinds of tongues..." 1 Corinthians 12:28 YLT

"Having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us, if prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of our faith; or service, let us give ourselves to service; or he who teaches, to his teaching; or he who exhorts, to his exhorting: he who gives, let him do it with liberality; he who rules, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness." Romans 12:6-8 WEB

Can a man stop what God is doing in the church? Can Paul stop what God is doing in the church?

"But if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow it, and you would be found even to be fighting against God!" Acts 5:39 WEB

"There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against Yahweh." Proverbs 21:30 WEB

Can Paul or any man in the church deny the fact that women are given gifts and ministries? If you believe women cannot have spiritual gifts then you go against the scriptures which, clearly show women in prophetic ministry and gifted by the Holy Spirit:

"Now this man [Philip] had four virgin daughters who prophesied." Acts 21:9 WEB

"There was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher (she was of a great age, having lived with a husband seven years from her virginity, and she had been a widow for about eighty-four years), who didn't depart from the temple, worshipping with fasting and petitions night and day. Coming up at that very hour, she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of him to all those who were looking for redemption in Jerusalem." Luke 2:36-38 WEB

Notice how Anna was a prophetess that operated on the temple grounds. The Sadducees who operated the temple did not chase her away, which means it was a normal occurrence for women to prophesy, and we can confirm this with other Old Testament scriptures. In fact, even Paul admitted that women did prophesy in the church:

"and every woman praying or prophesying with the head uncovered, doth dishonour her own head, for it is one and the same thing with her being shaven" 1 Corinthians 11:5 YLT

If Paul wanted all women to be silent in the churches, why would he even get into a discussion about women praying and prophesying in the churches with their uncovered heads? Why not just skip over this topic and tell the women to

just keep silent period? The clear truth is that Paul never restricted women from exercising their gift of prophecy. In fact, he even ranked the office of a prophet second to the apostle. This means the role of a woman gifted by the Spirit of God held an important role in the church. Any man who suppresses this gift and calling is only doing harm to themselves and to the assembly/church.

#4. If Paul is telling the church that women must be silent wouldn't he be going against bible prophecy?

"All these with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer and supplication, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers... Now when the day of Pentecost [Shavuot] had come, they were all with one accord in one place... They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other languages, as the Spirit gave them the ability to speak... But this is what has been spoken through the prophet Joel: 'It will be in the last days, says God, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions. Your old men will dream dreams. Yes, and on my servants and on my handmaidens in those days, I will pour out my Spirit, and they will prophesy.'" Acts 1:14; 2:1, 4, 16-18 WEB

If this prophetic promise was fulfilled by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church during Shavuot (Pentecost), and God said he would bless men and women, then who is Paul to deny women a promised blessing? Can a man say that God did not bless women with the Holy Spirit or spiritual gifts when the word of God clearly said women would be gifted by the Spirit?

According to the Ephesians 4:12, a prophet in the church is *"for the perfecting of the saints, to the work of serving, to the building up of the body of Christ,"* but if *"Your sons and your daughters will prophesy,"* then why would Paul deny the church this precious gift by telling the "daughters" (women) they cannot prophecy in the church? The truth is he didn't deny women their gifts and callings.

#5. If Paul is telling the church that women must be silent, then he goes against his own actions.

Although many will not see past their personal bias about women in ministry, we can clearly see by the scriptures, that Paul was in favor of women ministers and that many of his "co-laborers" were women. Paul openly praised a woman who delivered his letter to the churches of Rome:

And I commend you to Phoebe our sister -- being a ministrant (diakonon) of the assembly that is in Cenchrea--that ye may receive her in the Lord, as doth become saints, and may assist her in whatever matter she may have need of you -- for she also became a leader of many, and of myself." Romans 16:1-2 YLT

It should be noted that typically the messenger of a letter would also read the letter, which means Phoebe, a woman, probably read Paul's letter before the whole church, which would also allow them to ask her questions being she is the messenger. Not only was Phoebe a minister and deacon, but she was also a patron who supported Paul's work and the church of Cenchrea.

If we look further in Romans chapter 16, we will see a list of people that Paul mentions and gives praise for their work in the ministry. Within this group you will find men, but also many women. In fact, in this list of co-laborers, Paul broke ancient customs when he mentions a man's wife, Priscilla, before naming her husband Aquila when he praised this husband and wife team. Priscilla and Aquila ran a church from their home and even instructed the Apostle Apollos (Acts 18:26), which made them both pastors and teachers.

Speaking of fellow apostles, Paul also mentions a woman apostle named Junia, in Romans 16:7. Many scholars have tried to refute the possibility of a woman apostle by claiming her name was short for a male name, but an honest study

of grammar and names of that time will refute this argument. Therefore, Junia was clearly a woman apostle which Paul mentions and honors:

“Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.” Romans 16:7 KJV

Paul honors other women in Romans chapter 16, which include: Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Julia and Persis. Elsewhere Paul mentions two women that ministered the Gospel with him:

“I exhort Euodia, and I exhort Syntyche, to think the same way in the Lord. Yes, I beg you also, true yokefellow, help these women, for they labored with me in the Good News, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.” Philippians 4:2-3 WEB

These two women worked with Paul to preach the Gospel and have now fallen into a disagreement like Barnabas and Paul did in Acts 15:36-41. No matter the reason for their disagreement, it shows that their division was important to Paul and the church, which shows they were most likely influential in the churches and perhaps leaders that may have been selected by Paul to minister in the churches.

Paul was even influenced to write the book of 1 Corinthians because of reports from a woman named Chloe:

“And I call upon you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that the same thing ye may all say, and there may not be divisions among you, and ye may be perfected in the same mind, and in the same judgment, for it was signified to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe, that contentions are among you...”

1 Corinthians 1:10-11 YLT

Unlikely a woman was complaining to Paul because men in the church were trying to make her speak in the church, give her more freedom and forcing her to preach. Therefore, the obvious reason she probably reported to Paul was because women were being told to shut up, told they had to wear head coverings, and told they couldn't minister in the churches.

The other point that needs to be addressed is that if Paul told women to shut up in the churches as some claim, then why would he even listen to reports from this woman? This alone should refute the errors that restrict women from speaking.

#6 If Paul is telling the church that women must be silent then he goes against the actions of Yeshua.

“It happened soon afterwards, that he went about through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good news of the Kingdom of God. With him were the twelve, and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out; and Joanna, the wife of Chuzas, Herod's steward; Susanna; and many others; who served them from their possessions.” Luke 8:1-3 WEB

Here we see that along with the 12 core apostles, Yeshua also had women who financially supported his ministry, or provided provisions to support the work of the Messiah. Luke makes this clear that it was women and not just men, that made the ministry of Yeshua possible.

“When they had come in, they went up into the upper room, where they were staying; that is Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. All these with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer and supplication, along with the women, and Mary the mother of

Jesus, and with his brothers. In these days, Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (and the number of names was about one hundred twenty), and said, "Brethren, it was necessary that this Scripture should be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who was guide to those who took Jesus... 'Of the men therefore who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, to the day that he was received up from us, of these one must become a witness with us of his resurrection.' They put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias." Acts 1:13-16, 21-23

In this passage of Acts, we can see that women gathered with the apostles in prayer and for the selection of a replacement for Judas. Peter stood up and addressed the men and women which can be seen by use of certain Greek words used in Acts 1:16. In this verse Peter states: Men, brethren (Greek: adelphoi), which is a word that is context dependent, but means both men and women, as in a church gathering where you would call the congregation "brethren" to include brothers and sisters, or in the same way mankind applies to the human race and includes men and women.

What does all this mean? That many of the women that followed Yeshua gathered with the 12 apostles after Yeshua's resurrection, they also prayed with the apostles, and may have participated in the selection of a replacement for Judas. These same women received the gift of the Holy Spirit during the outpouring that occurred on Shavuot/Pentecost. Peter makes this fact very clear when in Acts 2:16-21 he quotes Joel and lets everyone know that daughters and women will exercise spiritual gifts.

Previously, we also mentioned that in Romans chapter 16 we can see there was a woman apostle named Junia and the interesting part is that Paul said she was a believer before he was, which makes it possible that she may have followed Yeshua during his earthly ministry.

"Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives and my fellow prisoners, who are notable among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me." Romans 16:7 WEB

In John chapter 4, Yeshua broke the norm and customs of the 1st century when he spoke theology with a woman and even revealed to her that he was the Messiah (John 4:25-26). It's been reported that Jewish teachers and rabbis of that day only spoke and taught men and boys the scriptures. However, Yeshua taught this woman the truth about the scriptures, about himself and he even shared a word of knowledge about her past. This event at the well, not only turned her into a follower, but this one woman preached to her village resulting in many more conversions. Clearly, Yeshua knew the ministry potential and gifts this woman had and he had no problem with her preaching to her entire village. If Yeshua had no problem with women in ministry, why should modern men?

#7. If Paul is telling the church that women must be silent then he goes against biblical history.

Biblical history shows that many women took charge of situations, even over men when they had to and many women were instrumental in saving the nation of Israel such as:

Miriam: *"For I brought you up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage. I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam."* Micah 6:4 WEB

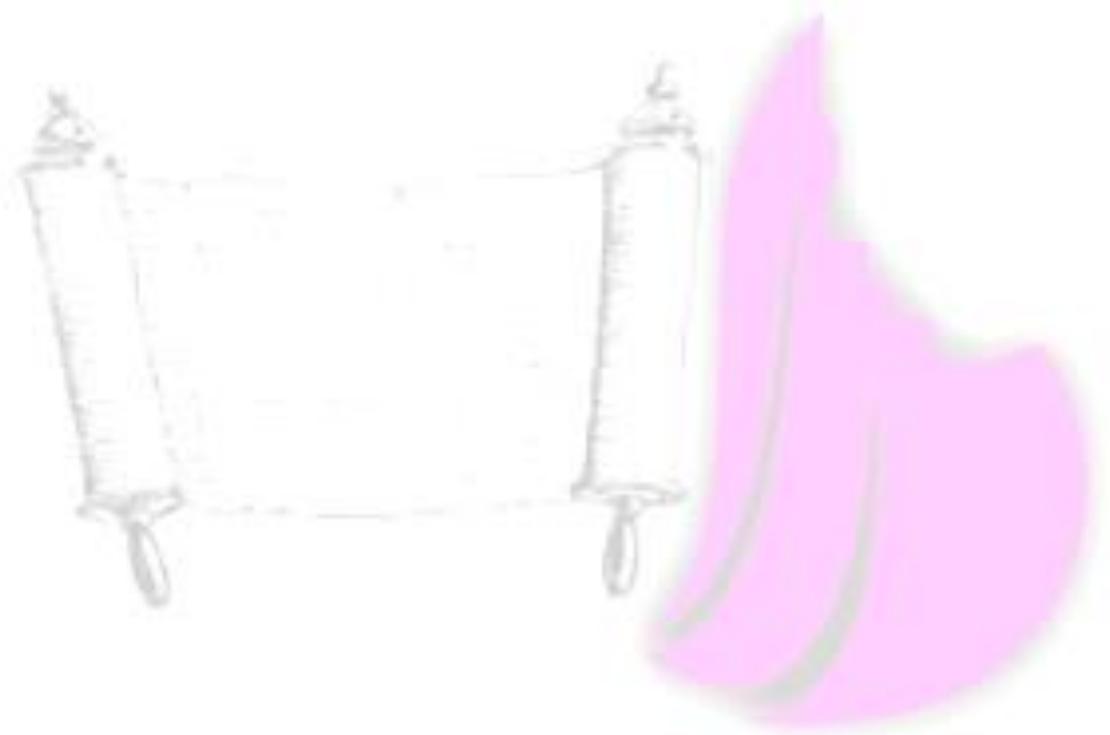
Deborah: *"Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, she judged Israel at that time."* Judges 4:4 WEB

Huldah: *"So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asaiah, went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe (now she lived in Jerusalem in the second quarter); and they talked with her."* 2 Kings 22:14 WEB

To this brief list we can add Mary, Elizabeth and many more women who were crucial to God's will and plan for Israel. Where would we be today without the contribution of these women?

What would have happened if men suppressed the talents, gifts, and callings of these women? The answer is simple. We would have never had the benefit of seeing these daughters of Yahweh contribute to the salvation of Israel and all of mankind.

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Conclusion

Unless there were special issues that were unique to the church at Corinth, such as unruly women, or other issues not revealed to us, I believe the statements of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 are a restatement of questions. The two verses can only make sense when we see them as Paul quoting what someone stated to him in a letter, or repeating what a messenger told him regarding problems occurring in the church. This conclusion is even more logical when we see Paul's answer and rebuke in verses 36 and 37. Combine these facts with what we just studied about Paul's endorsement of women in ministry, how he praised the work of women and the full context of scripture we studied. I think our conclusion stated below is very consistent with evidence presented.

Put all the scriptures together which we looked at in this book and you're left with clear evidence why Paul would never suggest women must keep their mouths shut in the churches. I believe Paul would react harshly to anyone who would suggest women have no rights to speak, pray, prophesy in the church, or minister, which I believe is exactly what he did at the end of 1 Corinthians chapter 14.

"What? Was it from you that the word of God went out? Or did it come to you alone? If any man thinks himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him recognize the things which I write to you, that they are the commandment of the Lord. But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant." 1 Corinthians 14:36-38 WEB

Not only did Paul rebuke those who attempted to restrict women in chapters 11 and 14, but he also gave another word of encouragement in chapter 14:39: *"Wherefore, brethren [adelphoi = brothers and sisters], covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues."*

Paul ends the book of 1st Corinthians with this statement about the husband and wife team of Aquila [husband] and Priscilla [wife]:

"Aquila and Priscilla greet you much in the Lord, together with the assembly that is in their house." These two are very active in ministry as we can see by the fact they have their own church and their activities are recorded in the scriptures:

"But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside, and explained to him the way of God more accurately" Acts 18:26 WEB

Paul honors the wife mentioning her before her husband in named, then honors Priscilla again in Romans: *"Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus" Romans 16:3 WEB.*

Are we to believe that Priscilla who works with Paul, who ministers, who teaches and has an assembly/church in her own home would be commanded by Paul to keep absolutely silent in her home church or assembly meetings? That is difficult to believe or prove. I am more inclined to believe Priscilla was very vocal and had a powerful ministry both in and outside her home church. There is more than enough scriptural evidence that proves Priscilla and other women had an ordained role in ministry where Yahweh blessed them.

The evidence is more than clear that Yahweh selects women for ministry. Therefore, men can attempt to rewrite history, or be a roadblock to the work of God, but I wouldn't want to be in the shoes of those men when they stand before their creator.

Women are gifted with spiritual gifts, they are called to ministry, and women can teach, lead and deliver prophetic words. The question is, what will you do with these scriptural facts? Will you deny them? Ignore them? Will you verify this information for yourself and confirm your previous opinions and bias may have been wrong? Will you accept the

truth? Will you act on this truth? Will you teach it to others who are also living in error by their suppression of women in ministry?

Remember, in these last days it was prophesied that the Spirit of God and spiritual gifts would be poured out on all flesh and that women, just like men, would receive these gifts (Acts 2:16-21). Do men and women want to suppress the prophetic move of Yahweh, and be like the wicked servant who buried the talent given by his master, as Yeshua explained in Matthew 25:14-30?

We encourage you to recognize the gifts and callings in all of Yahweh's people no matter if they are a man, or woman, or even a child. We should encourage one another as our fellow brothers and sisters attempt to fulfill the will and calling of Yahweh.

Don't be a tool for Satan blocking the work of God.

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