

THE END OF THE LAW

Dr. Daniel Botkin

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth."

-Romans 10:4

Many Christians are taught from today's pulpits that God had to abolish the Old Testament law code because it was just too difficult for His people to obey all those rules. We are told by Christian Bible teachers that under the Old Covenant, it was impossible for people to walk in all the commandments of the Lord blamelessly. However, it is written of Zachariah and Elisabeth, the parents of John the Baptist, that "they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6). Of course Zachariah and Elisabeth didn't have the benefit of our modern-day Bible teachers to tell them that this was impossible to do. All they had was the Torah to tell them that it is possible:

"For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, 'Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?' Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, 'Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?' But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it" (Deut. 30:11-14).

Walking according to the commandments of the Torah is not impossible. It is not some deep, mysterious secret which only a special class of super-spiritual saints can attain. "It is not hidden from thee," Scripture declares. "It is not in heaven." It does not require being caught up into the third heaven. "Neither is it beyond the sea." It does not require traveling to the other side of the ocean and conferring with some guru or priest or rabbi. The ability to walk according to the commandments of the Torah is within reach of the average child of God: "But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."

In Romans 10, Paul writes that "Christ is the end of the law," and he then quotes this passage from Deuteronomy 30 and comments on it. Therefore, if we want to correctly understand what Paul meant when he wrote that "Christ is the end of the law," then we must keep in mind that believing in Christ and walking according to the commandments of the Torah are not mutually exclusive in Paul's mind; on the contrary, they go together. Otherwise, Paul would not connect this passage from Deuteronomy 30 (which talks about obeying commandments of Torah) with faith in the Messiah.

The Torah describes God's standard of righteousness, and offers it to those who will embrace it by faith. Christians sometimes forget that God's people were justified by faith even before Christ, under the Old Covenant. Three times the New Testament states "the just shall live by faith," and many Christians assume that this is strictly a New Testament concept, something unknown to those living under the Old Covenant. However, this concept was not a new revelation to the New Testament writers; it was a direct quote taken from the Old Testament writings (Hab. 2:4).

Why did Paul connect the passage from Deuteronomy 30, about obeying Torah, with faith in Yeshua as the Messiah? Because Paul knew that the promised Messiah was meant to be *the object* of our faith, the key to living out the blessed life described in Deuteronomy 30 and the rest of the Torah. The identity of the Messiah was no longer hidden in heaven nor buried beneath the sea; the long-awaited

Messiah had been revealed to God's people in the person of Yeshua of Nazareth. The promised Messiah was the goal, the object, the *logos* made flesh, the fulfillment of the Torah. With this thought in mind, let us look at the statement that "Christ is the end of the law."

When some people hear the phrase "end of the law," they think this means "no more rules to obey." This is anarchy, something which the New Testament clearly condemns. God's Kingdom is not to be characterized by lawlessness. On the contrary, Yeshua taught that at the end of this age, God's Kingdom will be purged of its long-lasting and deep-rooted lawlessness [$\alpha\nu\omicron\mu\omicron\varsigma$, *anomos*, "without law," the source of our English word *anomie*]. (See, e.g., *anomos* in Matt. 7:23 and the parables in Matt. 13, esp. vss. 41, 49.)

What, then, does "the end of the law" mean in Romans 10:4? Doesn't "the end" of something mean that it's all over, finished, terminated, ceased to exist? This is the usual meaning in English, but the New Testament is written in Greek, not English. The Greek word translated "end" here is $\tau\epsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ (*telos*). According to the Gingrich lexicon, the noun *telos* can mean "the end" in one of two senses: 1) in the sense *termination, cessation, conclusion* [as in the English definition of "the end" discussed above]; or, 2) in the sense *end, goal, outcome*, i.e., the aim or purpose [as in our English statement "The end doesn't justify the means"].

The important question is this: Which of these two definitions should be applied to *telos* in Romans 10:4? Definition #1 would imply that the commandments of the Torah are no longer valid; they have been abolished by the Messiah who said to not even think that He had come to abolish the Torah (Matt. 5:17ff). Definition #2 would not imply that the commandments of the Torah are abolished, but that faith in the Messiah is *the means* to obtain *the end*, the end (or goal) being the righteousness described in the Torah, and the ability to walk out that righteousness

and live a Torah-observant lifestyle.

Unfortunately, most English Bible translations cause the uninformed reader to assume that “the *telos*/end of the law” means that the Torah is now ended and obsolete. Here are a few examples:

● “For Christ ends the law.” (*New English Bible*) Here the noun *telos* is magically changed into a verb (“ends”) by the translators, so that there can be no possibility of understanding “the end” as “the goal.”

● “But now the Law has come to an end.” (*Jerusalem Bible*) Here the first word γαρ (*gar*) is translated “But,” subtly but erroneously implying that there is some contrast between Torah-obedience and believing in Christ -- even though *gar* is not a word which implies contrast, but “a conjunction used to express cause, inference, or continuation; or to explain” (*Gingrich lexicon*), normally translated “for.” The *Jerusalem Bible* translators also made sure to capitalize “Law” so that the reader would be sure to know that it is God’s Law being talked about here. Paul is referring to God’s Law, of course, but these particular translators want the reader to think that the Torah has, in their words, “come to an end,” even though the verb “has come” does not appear in the Greek text.

● “For Christ has brought the Law to an end.” (*Today’s English Version*) This translation, also called *Good News For Modern Man* (or “Good Noose,” if you prefer) does the same as the *Jerusalem Bible* above, capitalizing “Law” and supplying a non-existent verb, “has brought.”

● “He ends all of that.” (*Living Bible*) As in the *New English Bible*, the noun *telos* mysteriously changes into a verb, “ends.” Thus obedience to God’s holy Torah can be dismissed with the belittling phrase “all of that,” and thereby be viewed as something vain and futile. (The anti-Torah bias of the *Living Bible* is also evident in verses such as John 1:17, where the KJV’s “For the law was given by Moses” expands in the *Living Bible* to “Moses gave us only the Law with its rigid demands and merciless justice.”)

It is obvious that the above translators want their readers to think that “the

telos of the law” means that the Torah is finished and its commandments are no longer valid. David Stern, in his *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (p. 396), points out that *telos* is used 42 times in the New Testament, and according to the Arndt and Gingrich lexicon, *telos* must mean “end” in the sense of “finish” in only 4 or 5 of these 42 places. David Stern correctly concludes that “this verse [Rom. 10:4] does not speak of ending anything. It says that the great sweep of God’s purpose in giving the *Torah* as a means to righteousness achieves its goal and consummation in the coming of the Messiah.”

Faith in the Messiah should not end our obedience to God’s Torah. Faith in the Messiah should be the starting point of our obedience. By being “the goal at which the *Torah* aims” (Stern’s translation), the Messiah becomes the Source which enables and equips and empowers God’s people to live a life of obedience to God’s commandments.

The ability to live a life of obedience to Torah is within the reach of the average child of God. “It is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off ... The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Deut. 30:11; Rom. 10:8f).

Some people think that when Paul wrote about being “saved” here, he meant only “saved from hell.” While faith in Christ does save us from hell, the salvation to which Paul refers here is also salvation from the powers of our carnal, sinful nature. We are saved not only from hell; we are also saved from those hellish things inside us, those things which seem to make obedience to God’s commandments impossible -- our greed, our anger, our unforgiveness, our lust, our selfishness, our apathy, etc., etc. Whatever weaknesses and character flaws we have, through faith in the Messiah, we can be delivered from these things, so that we can be free to trust and obey and thereby experience the victorious, blessed life that our Father in heaven wants us to have. □

GOD'S MISGUIDED PEOPLE

Dr. Daniel Botkin

Why are so many of God's people misguided in their understanding of God's will and God's ways? According to the Bible, it is because religious leaders lead God's people into error. "For the leaders of this people cause them to err," Isaiah wrote, "and they that are led by them are destroyed" (Isa. 9:16). "O my people," Isaiah cried in another place, "they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths" (3:12).

"My people have been lost sheep," Yahweh declares through Jeremiah. "Their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains. They have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting place" (Jer. 50:6).

Unfortunately, this is an accurate picture of many people in today's Judeo-Christian religious world. Jews who blindly follow their rabbis are left without the revelation of the Messiah Yeshua, and they wander about seeking rest for their souls. And Christians who blindly follow their religious leaders are left without the moral guidance and instruction of the Torah, and likewise wander about seeking rest for their souls.

The greatest threat to a believer's faith does not come from atheists and agnostics, but from misguided religious leaders who misguide their followers.

"Let them alone," Yeshua said of the scribes and Pharisees. "They be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt. 15:14).

When Yeshua says, "Let them alone," He points us back to the words of Hosea concerning Ephraim: "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone" (Hos. 4:17). By alluding to Hosea's words, was Yeshua implying that the Pharisees

were, like Ephraim, guilty of idolatry? "Surely not!" some might answer. After all, the Pharisees were the most devout, religious Jews of their day. They may have been guilty of other sins, but idolatry? One thing the Pharisees did *not* do was bow down to statues!

An idol can be something other than a statue, however. The leaders of the Pharisees did have an idol, and that idol was their religious system. Do not misunderstand, though. The Pharisees' religious system was good in very many ways. Many wonderful things could be said about the religion of the Pharisees. Even many of the extra-Biblical, man-made traditions were wonderful, and Yeshua Himself practiced many, perhaps most, of these rabbinic traditions.

So how can we say that the Pharisees' religious system was an idol to them? For the simple reason that it was a religious system where Yeshua of Nazareth was not welcome *except on their terms*. Certainly Yeshua was welcome to join Himself to the Pharisees as another Jew, perhaps

even as a great rabbi and teacher. But the Pharisees' religious system had no place for Him as Lord and Messiah and Son of God. And when Yeshua is invited to come into a religious organization or a local congregation or an individual's life, He will only come if He is welcomed as Lord and Master. He will not be just one of the guys. He must be acknowledged and accepted as absolute Sovereign Lord. The rich young ruler found this out the hard way.

The sad thing is that multitudes of God's people today are being led by blind guides to follow and serve religious systems where Yeshua is not welcomed as Lord and Messiah. He is welcomed into some synagogues as one of the guys, a fellow-Jew, a great rabbi, perhaps even a prophet, but not as Lord and Messiah. He is likewise welcomed into some churches as one of the guys, a fellow-church member whose presence everyone enjoys. Perhaps He is even invited to sit in on the church board meetings, and allowed to offer some suggestions. But He is not welcomed into these churches as absolute Lord and Master. The religious leaders will not allow it. They won't have Jesus trespassing on their turf.

How can God's people tell the difference between the false prophets and teachers and the legitimate prophets and teachers? Yeshua gives us some warning signs to help us spot false prophets:

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matt. 7:15). Outwardly, false prophets look legitimate, like one of the flock. They talk, act, and behave religiously; they go to religious services; they pray, sing, and quote the Bible like everyone else. From

all outward appearance, there is no reason to suspect them. The evil is not apparent on the outside; it is hidden on the inside. They have the inward nature of a wolf, but they do an excellent job of disguising themselves to look like one of the flock.

Because the false prophets cannot be identified by their outward appearance, we must look at the fruit they bear: "Ye shall know them by their fruits," Yeshua said. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so, every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit" (Matt. 7:16f).

"Knowing them by their fruits" means two things. First, it means the fruit of the Holy Spirit in their lives: "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22f). If a spiritual leader is not bearing these fruits in his life, he is suspect. We are not called to judge and condemn, but we are called to be fruit inspectors. Before submitting ourselves to the authority of a spiritual leader, we should inspect his fruit by asking ourselves some questions: Which category of fruits is more evident in his life, "grapes and figs" or "thorns and thistles"? What fruits does he exhibit, not only behind the pulpit, but in his everyday life? Love or hatred? Joy or gloom? Peace of mind or inner turmoil? Longsuffering or impatience? Gentleness or cruelty? Goodness toward others, or lack of concern? Faithfulness (to God, to wife, family, friends, employer, etc.) or unfaithfulness? Meekness or pride? Self-control or lack of self-control?

The second meaning of "knowing them by their fruits" means knowing them by looking at their followers. Some people erroneously think that this verse means that a large following is the mark of a true man of God, and a small following is the mark of a false

prophet. This is not the case, however. False prophets may have multitudes of followers, as did the prophets of Baal in the Old Testament. True prophets may have very few followers. Noah had only seven (unless you want to count the animals). Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and other prophets had almost no followers.

Yeshua was not talking about the *quantity* of fruit a leader bears; He was talking about the *quality*, or kind, of fruit a leader bears. As D.L. Moody once said, converts should be weighed as well as counted.

Just as we looked for the fruits of the Spirit in the leader, we likewise look for the fruits of the Spirit in his followers. What is the quality of the leader's disciples, especially his closest disciples? Are they bearing "grapes and figs" or "thorns and thistles"? We can ask the same questions about the followers that we asked about the leader: Do the followers, especially his closest disciples, generally exhibit love or hatred? Joy or gloom? Peace of mind or inner turmoil? Longsuffering or impatience? Gentleness or cruelty? Goodness toward others, or lack of concern? Faithfulness or unfaithfulness? Meekness or pride? Self-control or lack of self-control? We might also ask ourselves which of these fruits tend to be manifested in our own life after we have been under the influence of this leader's teaching.

Finally, we also need to consider what the spiritual leader teaches about obeying the Father. A person may appear to have love, joy, peace, and the other fruits of the Spirit, but in fact be under delusion, and bearing counterfeit fruit which only resembles the fruit of the Spirit. There are many Hindu gurus and swamis, for example, who seem to have love, joy, peace, etc. And it is even possible for counterfeit fruit to be borne by those who call Jesus "Lord": "Not every one that says to Me, 'Lord, Lord' shall enter into

the kingdom of heaven," Yeshua said, "but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works?' And then I will profess unto them, 'I never knew you. Depart from Me, ye who work iniquity [*anomos*, Gk. without law; lawlessness]" (Matt. 7:21-23).

Because counterfeit fruit can be borne by those claiming Jesus as their Lord, we must also ask this question to determine if someone is a legitimate spiritual leader: Does he teach obedience to the Father's will, or does he teach anomianism, a gospel without law? A true prophet or teacher must pass on both counts, bearing the fruit of the Spirit and teaching obedience to the Father. To pass on only one of these counts is not enough.

To summarize, these are the marks of a false prophet, according to Yeshua's warning in Matthew 7:

- Outwardly he looks like one of the flock.
- He and his followers exhibit "thorns and thistles" (bad fruit) more than "grapes and figs" (the good fruits of the Spirit).
- He and his followers call Jesus "Lord," and may even prophesy and cast out devils, but they do not do the will of the Father in heaven. Instead, they "practice lawlessness" (Matt. 7:23 NASB), and for this reason they will be told to depart from the Jesus whom they claim as their Lord.

Let us be sure that we are not among those who follow false leaders who cause their followers to err and go astray from the ancient paths which God established through His prophets and confirmed through His Son.

"Thus saith Yahweh: Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Jer. 6:16). □

LITURGICAL WORSHIP

Dr. Daniel Botkin

Liturgy, derived from Greek *leitourgia* [λειτουργία, work or act performed by or for the people], is defined as "any system or set of rituals that is prescribed for public or corporate performance."¹ Liturgical worship is characterized by such things as: the reading of written prayers; responsive readings; congregational reciting of creeds; chanting of prescribed blessings; rituals involving bodily motions; use of ritual objects such as special garments, bread and wine, candles, incense, etc. Liturgical worship is formal, pre-planned, and prescribed, in contrast to informal, spontaneous worship which is expressed in the worshipper's own words.

If someone had asked my opinion a few years ago of the value of liturgical worship, I probably would have said that I saw little, if any, value in it. I viewed liturgical forms of worship as dry, boring, monotonous, dead ritual -- an empty substitute for the Pentecostal/charismatic-type worship I preferred. My view was similar to the view described by Gary Burge in a recent article in *Christianity Today*:

"Our evangelical tradition has taught us to champion spontaneity and to make a virtue out of informality. Some of us are sure that God cannot hear written prayers. Corporately spoken creeds, prayers, and liturgies stifle us and the Lord, or so the argument runs."²

In the next paragraph Burge states, "Here I have again changed my mind."

I still have no personal fondness for liturgical worship. I will probably always prefer spontaneous, Pentecostal-type worship. But I must admit that I, too, have changed my mind about the validity and value of liturgical worship.

I have changed my mind for a number of reasons. One reason is because I have come to realize that even non-liturgical churches eventually develop a "non-liturgical liturgy." Certain patterns become set and are then followed each week. An opening

prayer; congregational singing of prescribed, pre-written songs; announcements; offertory prayer and taking of offering; perhaps another song; Scripture reading, pre-sermon prayer, sermon, post-sermon prayer; maybe another song or two; dismissal prayer. When the same routine is followed every week, this worship is, indeed, a "system or set of rituals that is prescribed for public or corporate performance." There is more variety, but it is liturgy nonetheless. So it is not so much an issue of liturgical versus non-liturgical worship, but rather an issue of levels of formality in worship.

Another thing I have come to realize is that Christians who dislike formal liturgy in a church service do not complain about it at weddings and funerals. We expect to hear the minister say the old, familiar words we have heard at weddings: "Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today in the sight of God to unite this man and this woman in holy matrimony." Burge writes, "I have noticed, for instance, that both the marginally churched and the faithful Christian want to hear the Twenty-third Psalm recited at a funeral and 1 Corinthians 13 at a wedding and the hymn 'Amazing Grace' sung at thresholds of crisis."³ If liturgy is acceptable at

weddings and funerals, why not at a church service?

The most important reason I have changed my view of liturgical worship is because I cannot condemn it from a Scriptural or historical basis. I can only condemn it on the basis of my own personal preference -- it's not the style of worship I'm used to, nor the type of worship I enjoy. However, our own personal preferences and enjoyment are not the factors which determine what kind of worship is acceptable to God. We must let God decide for Himself which forms of worship He will accept. The validity or non-validity of liturgical worship must be determined by what the Bible teaches, not by our own like or dislike of liturgical worship. Let's see what the Bible says about it.

The Bible does not condemn liturgical worship. On the contrary, there are many examples of liturgical worship in both the Old and New Testaments. Anyone who reads through Leviticus can see that worship in the Tabernacle and Temple was highly liturgical. The Temple is no longer standing, but Orthodox Jews have retained liturgical forms of worship. Many of these forms are rooted in ancient customs that go back to Biblical times. For example, there is the Jewish practice of having three daily prayer services, the *shacharit*, the *mincha*, and the *maariv* (morning, afternoon, and evening). Is praying three times a day a Bible-based custom? It is written of the Prophet Daniel that "he went into his house; his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime" (Dan. 6:10). King David also prayed three times a day: "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and He shall hear my voice" (Ps. 55:17). According to Jewish tradition, Abraham established the custom of morning prayer, Isaac the afternoon

prayer, and Jacob the evening prayer.⁴

One can find pre-written, prescribed creeds and prayers in the Bible. When the Israelites brought the first fruits of their harvest to the Temple, Yahweh commanded the worshippers to “say unto him [the priest], ‘I profess this day unto Yahweh thy God, that I am come unto the country which Yahweh swore unto our fathers for to give us.’” The priest would then take the basket containing the first fruits. “And thou shalt speak and say before Yahweh thy God, ‘A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt...(etc.).’” (See Deut. 26.) During the times of the Temple, this prayer had to be recited by the priest, then repeated word for word in Hebrew by the worshipper. In this way even worshippers who did not know Hebrew could fulfill the command.⁵

We know from history that many of the Psalms were written and used for liturgical worship. The titles of some Psalms reveal their liturgical use. Psalm 92, for example, is called “A Psalm or Song for the Sabbath Day,” and was sung every Sabbath in the Temple services.⁶ Psalm 95 was also sung every Sabbath in the Temple, and is still part of the Sabbath liturgy in synagogues to this day.⁷ (Psalm 95’s connection to Sabbath worship is probably one reason Psalm 95 is quoted in the discussion of the Sabbath in Hebrews chapter 4.)

Of course all these examples are “Old Testament” forms of worship. Was liturgical worship practiced in the New Testament? Anyone who knows anything about First Century Judaism knows that the worship in the synagogues, where Yeshua and His disciples regularly worshiped, was highly liturgical. Alfred Edersheim describes in great detail a typical Sabbath service in a First Century synagogue in Palestine. In *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, he devotes thirteen pages to describing the synagogue service; in *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*, he devotes an entire chapter to the subject.⁸ Of the liturgical prayers, blessings, chants, etc., Edersheim says, “There can be

no reasonable doubt that these were said at worship in the synagogues, when our Lord was present ... It is impossible not to feel the solemnity of these prayers. They breathe the deepest hopes of Israel in simple, Scriptural language. But who can fully realise their sacred import as uttered not only in the Presence, but by the very lips of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who Himself was their answer?”⁹

Another writer, after describing the liturgy of the First Century synagogue, says, “Mark it well: to Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, this was worship.”¹⁰

Some Christians believe that Jesus taught against liturgical worship when He said, “But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do, for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking” (Matt. 6:7). Yeshua was not condemning the repetition of any and all prescribed prayers here. He was condemning only “vain repetitions,” not all repetition in general. And it is vain repetitions “as the *heathen* [i.e., gentiles] do,” not the prayers that the Jews repeat. Scripturally-sound prayers composed by sincere, pious Jews are neither vain nor like the prayers of the heathen.

When the disciples asked Yeshua, “Lord, teach us to pray,” He replied, “When ye pray, say, ‘Our Father which art in heaven...(etc.)’” (Luke 11:2). Some Christians insist that Jesus did not mean that we should memorize this “Lord’s Prayer” and repeat it word for word. What He meant, we are told, is that we should use it as a “model prayer,” an outline to remind us of all the general areas of need which this prayer addresses, then pray in our own words.

It is certainly not a bad idea to expand on the Lord’s Prayer by praying more specifically in our own words. There should certainly be some place in our prayer life for praying in our own words. However, we must be careful not to put words into Jesus’ mouth. He did not say, “Here’s an eight-point outline to help you pray.” He said, “When ye pray, say,...” There is no reason to believe that He did not mean for us to say the very words He gave. Some people have noted the similarity of this short

prayer to the longer *Amidah* prayer of the Jewish daily liturgy, and have suggested that Yeshua was giving His disciples an abbreviated version of the *Amidah*.¹¹

What about the worship of the Early Church after Yeshua returned to the Father? Did the disciples continue to use liturgical forms of worship, or did they abandon liturgical forms of worship? According to the *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, “The earliest Christian community of Jerusalem participated in Jewish worship.”¹² This is confirmed in the Book of Acts, where we see the disciples continuing to worship in the Temple and synagogues. Acts 2:42 tells us that the three thousand new souls which were added to the church on the Day of Pentecost “devoted themselves steadfastly to prayer.” Writer Charles Bell has an interesting comment on this verse:

“Actually, to translate the phrase as ‘to prayer’ is slightly misleading. The phrase is literally ‘to the prayers’ and refers to the Jewish practice of set times for prayer in the Temple or synagogue.”¹³

There are other places in Acts where the disciples prayed at set times. Peter and John went into the Temple “at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer” (3:1). Cornelius, a God-fearer, was also praying “at the ninth hour” when an angel appeared to him (10:30). Acts 13 says the disciples in Antioch were “ministering to the Lord” (NASB) or “worshipping the Lord” (NIV). Charles Bell shares some interesting insight on these two translations:

“There is nothing wrong with either of these translations except that they reveal a certain interpretive bias. The Greek word that is being translated is *leitourgounton* and means literally ‘liturgizing’ or ‘performing the liturgy.’ In other words, the Christians in Antioch hadn’t simply gathered for a time of spontaneous prayer. Neither does this verse imply the more elaborate liturgy in use today in the Orthodox churches. However, knowing that Paul’s understanding of worship was

shaped by the worship of Temple and synagogue, and knowing that the first Christians continued to use this form of worship, it is quite safe to conclude that Paul and Barnabas and the others were following a liturgical pattern of worship, most likely that of the synagogue."¹⁴

Those familiar with Jewish liturgy can see Paul using liturgy in his epistles. Stern's *Jewish New Testament Commentary* points out several passages that use the language and liturgical formulas of Jewish blessings.¹⁵

What happened after the church and synagogue separated? Did the disciples abandon liturgical worship at that time? Charles Bell writes, "When Christians were expelled from the synagogue and forced to find their own houses of worship, they nevertheless with very little change maintained this same liturgy." Bell states that these Christian places of worship "were nearly indistinguishable from Jewish synagogues. In fact, in first century Palestine, Christian places of worship were referred to as synagogues."¹⁶

Apparently it was not only in Palestine that these places of worship were called synagogues. James refers to the assemblies in the Diaspora, those "scattered abroad" (1:1), not as *ekklesia*, the word normally used for "church," but as *sunagoge*, the Greek word for *synagogue* (James 2:2).

According to the *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, "the structure of synagogue services was observed: reading and exposition of scripture within the context of prayer and confession. Jewish psalms, hymns, songs, and prayers were adapted. Also the Jewish practice of morning and evening prayer was retained," even after the Church's "definitive break with official Judaism."¹⁷

The New Dictionary of Theology states that the similarity of Christian worship to Jewish liturgy was evident "even when early Christian communities went to great lengths consciously to distance themselves from the public worship of Judaism."¹⁸

With such an accumulation of

Scriptural and historical evidence in favor of liturgical worship, it is obvious that those who consider liturgical worship to be nothing more than "mindless repetition" do not do so on a Scriptural or historical basis, but, as I did, on the basis of personal preference.

I was surprised to learn that there is so much Scriptural and historical support for the validity of liturgical worship. I was also very surprised to learn in a recent *Christianity Today* article that many young people today are being attracted to liturgical churches. These young people claim it is not the liturgy per se which attracts them.

"Say 'liturgy' and my evangelical college students have a reflex akin to an invitation to take a quiz," says the writer of the article. "Say 'mysticism' and they are drawn, fascinated, eager to see what I mean."¹⁹

One girl, when asked what she likes about the Episcopal church she now attends, answered, "I truly worship there. It's the wonder, the beauty I love. It feels closer to God." She claims that at her former conservative evangelical church, "There was no imagination, no mystery, no beauty. It was all preaching and books and application."

Gary Burge, the writer of the article, says, "These migrations and impulses among my friends and students have forced me to ask new questions about what we are doing when we worship... Sunday worship hour has become an equipping/training station for the world. Rather than being an 'otherworldly' encounter reminding us of our heavenly identity, it has become 'worldly' in the sense that its focus is horizontal,

sharpening our discipleship in the world."²⁰

As a teacher, I realize that preaching, books, equipping, training, and application are certainly necessary for discipleship. As a worshipper, though, I realize that these things in and of themselves are not worship. Perhaps the problem is due to Christians' equating these sort of things with worship and thereby losing the element of mystery and awe and wonder which liturgical worship seems to be providing for some people.

What are some advantages of liturgical worship? First, it provides words of praise and prayer for those worshippers who may not be "in the mood" to worship. Doctrinally-sound liturgical worship which incorporates Scripture and/or Scriptural truths is a legitimate form of worship, acceptable to the Father, regardless of our mood, if it is offered in sincerity and in faith. Sometimes I go to prayer and find that I have very little to say because I am "not in the mood" to pray. At such times I might find a Psalm and read it as my own prayer. This is a form of liturgical worship, and it usually puts me in the mood to then offer my own spontaneous praise and prayer.

Liturgical worship also provides acceptable words of praise and prayer for those worshippers who may be incapable of expressing themselves. Some people, especially new believers, may have the will to pray, but not the words. Liturgical forms of worship can encourage and help these people. Jewish liturgy was created "so that men of inarticulate speech might offer prayer as clearly as those who speak an eloquent Hebrew."²¹

Bible-based liturgy can also help provide stability. "There is something reassuring in this recitation of old things," writes Gary Burge, "something that links us with history and tradition. It is like holding a book well worn by your grandparents' fingers. In some mysterious way, we feel strengthened."²²

Burge teaches theology at Wheaton College. When he found out that the students in one of his classes had never heard of the *Shema* which Jews recite, he decided to teach it to

them. "So we began reciting it in Hebrew at the start of each class period," he writes. "At first they thought it was odd. Then they knew they had inherited it. And then they would not let me begin class without it. Was it novelty? Not by the twelfth week. It set the rhythm, it moored us theologically, it centered us in a tradition as old as Moses."²³

Are there any disadvantages of liturgical worship? Visitors who come to a congregation sometimes feel alienated if they are not familiar with the liturgy, especially if a foreign language like Hebrew is used. (This is why it is important to provide a translation, even if the translation is only written and not spoken.) If the visitor continues to attend regularly, though, he will eventually become familiar with the liturgy, and thus the problem should remedy itself. The formerly alienated worshipper will probably come to appreciate the liturgy, as did the students who learned the *Shema* in Burge's theology class at Wheaton.

Other visitors feel alienated by liturgy because it is not the style of worship they are used to. On the other hand, I have met Christians with a background in liturgical worship who felt alienated when they visited non-liturgical churches. According to these pro-liturgy Christians, the overly-informal, happy-go-lucky attitude of the worshippers seemed to show a lack of dignity and a lack of respect for God.

Perhaps the strongest criticism leveled against liturgical worship is the claim that the worshipper can fall into the trap of mindless repetition, just doing the liturgy by rote. ("They honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.") This is certainly a real possibility, but this possibility also exists when singing songs and when offering spontaneous worship. I know this from experience. There have been times when my mouth was busy singing or uttering spontaneous praises to God, when I realized my mind was somewhere else.

Because of the mind's tendency to wander, the Sages of Israel stressed the importance of clearing the mind and praying with *kavanah*, i.e., praying

intently, with concentration. "And when you pray," they taught, "make not your prayer routine, but (a plea for) mercy and supplication before God" (Avot 2:18). "He who makes his prayer routine," they warned, "his prayer is not considered a supplication" (Brakhot 4:4).

If a conscious effort is made to concentrate on the words one is saying, liturgy does not need to be just dead ritual. Charles Bell makes a good point when he writes that "liturgy is neither dead nor alive. People are dead or alive."²⁴

Some people who oppose liturgical worship fear that it will end up replacing spontaneous worship. This seems to have happened to some degree among some Jewish people. When I lived in a Hasidic neighborhood in New York, another believer and I were trying to help four young Hasidic men get their car started. After repeated failures, my friend suggested we pray about their problem. "I don't think I know a blessing for stalled cars," one of the young men said very seriously. Apparently the idea of simply asking God for help was foreign to this Hasid.

A Jewish friend of mine told me that before he became a Messianic believer, he once asked an Orthodox Jew, "Why do we just pray from the prayer book? Why don't we ever pray in our own words?"

"It's goyish," his friend replied.

Not all Jews are opposed to spontaneous prayer, of course. Tevye did quite a bit of spontaneous praying in *Fiddler on the Roof*. Rabbi Hayim Halevy Donin writes that "prayer in its most ideal expression should be spontaneous, expressing in words what the heart feels and the mind believes."²⁵ Years ago I read about a rabbi who suggested inserting a few blank pages into the prayer book so that worshippers would be forced to spend some time praying in their own words.

God's people need to realize that this is not an either/or issue. Both liturgical and spontaneous worship are acceptable to the Father if offered in Spirit and in truth. "Order and spontaneity are linked in the church's worship of God," says *The Broadman*

Minister's Manual.²⁶

Those people who are accustomed to only liturgical worship need to learn to lift up their hands, lift up their voices, and cut loose with the high praises of God. They don't know what they're missing! A good place to get used to doing this is a Pentecostal or charismatic church. The sermon and teaching at such churches is often tainted with unsound doctrine, but it's a good place to get over one's inhibitions about offering spontaneous, audible praise.

Those of us who have been non-liturgical worshippers need to recognize the legitimacy and value of liturgical worship, and prayerfully consider how it might be incorporated into our worship. Charles Bell, who happens to be a former Vineyard pastor, has some important words for many of today's worshippers:

"In many churches the sole criterion for determining whether or not worship is good is how one feels during and after the service ... the Bible contains accounts of meaningful and deeply moving worship. Nevertheless, the Bible also makes clear that the essence of worship is not how one feels about it, but that one offers it to God. True worship is directed to God and not to an inner emotional experience."²⁷

Those who know me need not fear that I might abandon spontaneity in favor of liturgy. I recognize the value of liturgical worship, but my favorite type of worship is still the Pentecostal/charismatic style. There is no place in the world I would rather be than in a room full of praying people when the Holy Spirit falls. There is nothing that compares with that fiery Presence that causes everyone in the room to suddenly let the rivers of Living Water spring up from their innermost being. I love being at a fire-baptized prayer meeting when all the people simultaneously and unashamedly pour out their hearts before God in loud, fervent praise. Perhaps if liturgical worship were offered with this same fervency and intensity, more people would enjoy it. □

Footnotes on next page

FOOTNOTES

- 1 *Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan Publ. Co., 1987), Vol. 8, 580.
- 2 Gary M. Burge, "Missing God at Church," *Christianity Today*, 6 Oct. 1997, 26.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Hayim Halevy Donin, *To Be A Jew* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1972), 161.
- 5 *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, ed. J. H. Hertz (London: Soncino Press, 1988), 859, fn. 5.
- 6 Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 173.
- 7 David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc., 1995), 672.
- 8 Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1971), Bk. III, 437-450; *Sketches of Jewish Social Life* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publ., Inc., 1994), ch. 17.
- 9 Edersheim, *Sketches*, 248, 250.
- 10 Williams and Anstall, *Orthodox Worship*, quoted in Charles Bell, *Discovering the Rich Heritage of Orthodoxy* (Minneapolis: Light and Life Publ. Co., 1994), 29.
- 11 See Stern, p. 32, for some examples of similarities.
- 12 *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. Everett Ferguson (New York/London: Garland Publ. Co., 1990), 540.
- 13 Charles Bell, *Discovering the Rich Heritage of Orthodoxy* (Minneapolis: Light and Life Publ. Co., 1994), 28.
- 14 Ibid., 30.
- 15 Stern, 153, 388, 493f, 577, 672, 744.
- 16 Bell, 29, 28.
- 17 *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 540.
- 18 *The New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Joseph A. Komonehach (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1987), 596.
- 19 Burge, 21.
- 20 Ibid., 22f.
- 21 Donin, 160.
- 22 Burge, 26.
- 23 Ibid, 27.
- 24 Bell, 32.
- 25 Donin, 159.
- 26 Franklin M. Segler, *The Broadman Minister's Manual* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1969), 1.
- 27 Bell, 33f.

The Importance of Studying Hebrew

by Dr. Daniel Botkin

Years ago I read a quote from a Hebrew poet. (I think it was Hayim Nahman Bialik.) The poet stated that reading the Bible in any language other than the original Hebrew is like kissing a beautiful woman with a veil between your face and hers. In other words, reading a translation of the Bible is better than nothing, but it isn't nearly as wonderful as reading it in Hebrew, with the linguistic veil removed.

Even anti-Semites like Martin Luther have recognized the importance of Hebrew: "If I were younger I would want to learn this language," Luther wrote, "because no one can really understand the Scriptures without it." (Pinchas Lapide, *Hebrew in the Church*, p. x)

"Many Bible verses take on new meaning when you know them in the original languages," writes Richard Wurmbrand. "At least pastors and priests should be required to know these. When people of different nationalities love each other, they usually learn one another's language. Why do children of God, especially those who are cultured, not learn the original languages of the Bible?" (*If Prison Walls Could Speak*, p. 95)

Wurmbrand is right. If I were married to a foreign woman, I would soon grow tired of communicating with her through a third party, regardless of how well the third party could translate. I would be very thankful for the translator for as long as he was needed, but I think I would eventually become frustrated and maybe even a little jealous. *I wish she could understand my words as they come from me, I would think. When she expresses delight at the words the translator speaks to her, it almost seems like she loves the translator instead of me.* I would get my wife enrolled in an English class as soon as possible.

Nehemiah knew the importance of preserving the knowledge of Hebrew. When the Jewish exiles returned to Jerusalem after seventy years of captivity in Babylon, Nehemiah made this observation: "In those days also I saw Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab. And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people. And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God" (Neh. 13:23-25). Nehemiah was quite a zealot for the Hebrew language. Maybe we should go into churches and try Nehemiah's method of encouraging God's people to learn Hebrew!

There have also been zealots for the Hebrew language in more recent history. The most notable was Eliezer Ben Yehudah, the man responsible for reviving Hebrew as a spoken language and establishing it as the official language of the modern state of Israel.

A couple hundred years before Ben Yehudah, there were many excellent Christian Hebraists such as Cotton Mather, William Bradford, and other early American settlers. A Hebrew oration was delivered every year at Harvard's commencement until 1817. In the early years of our nation, when anti-British sentiments were high, many colonists wanted to use some language other than English as the national language for the newly-formed United States of America. One of the languages seriously considered was Hebrew. It makes a person wonder how the course of history might have been different if the resolution had been adopted.

What are some things that a Bible reader misses by reading only a translation? For one thing, there are many plays on words throughout the Bible. One of the first examples of a play on words is in the story of the creation of Eve. Adam said, "She shall be called Woman [*ishah*]" because she was taken out of Man [*ish*]" (Gen. 2:23). Adam had seen female *animals*, but this was the first time he had seen a female *ish*. This newly-formed creature resembled Adam, but it was obvious that she was female. So Adam added the feminine suffix *-ah* to *ish*. Another possible explanation: When Adam awoke from his sleep and saw the woman standing before him, perhaps he thought it was another man, and said, "Ish?" and then, as the woman came into focus, "Ahhh!" (This explanation is not to be taken seriously, of course.)

Another play on words can be seen when Adam names the woman "Eve": "And Adam called his wife's name Eve [*Chavah*, "living; life-giver"], because she was the mother of all living [*chai*]" (Gen. 3:20). Similar plays on words can be seen in the namings of Cain, Seth, Noah, Isaac, and the

twelve sons of Jacob, and, of course, at the naming of the Messiah: "...thou shalt call His name *Yeshua* ("salvation"): for He shall save (*yoshia*) His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21, Hebrew translation).

Another feature in the Hebrew of the Bible is the concept of word origins and the relationship of words to one another. Sometimes this is similar to a play on words. Man (*adam*) was created from the dust of the ground (*adamah*). In the transliteration we can see that *adam* is taken out of *adamah*. Contained in the word *adam* is *dam*, the Hebrew word for "blood," reminding us that the life of Adam is in his blood.

Here is an example of word origin: Why was Abraham the first person to be called "a Hebrew" (*ivri*)? The first place the word *ivri/Hebrew* occurs is in Gen. 14:13, where the phrase "Abram the Hebrew" appears, with no explanation of what a "Hebrew" is. Some people suggest Abram was called a Hebrew because he was a descendant of Eber (Gen. 11:14), and this is a possibility. Another possibility, though, is found in the meaning of the ayin-beit-resch (עבר) root of *ivri*. The word means "to cross over" (a river or a street, e.g.). This is exactly what Abram did. He "crossed over" from Ur of the Chaldees to the land of Canaan. He also "crossed over" in a figurative, spiritual sense when he abandoned polytheism and embraced monotheism. The Jews who translated the Septuagint used the Greek phrase Ἀβραμ τῷ περᾶτι (*Abram to perate*, "Abram the passer") in this verse. In other places they used the Greek word *Ebraios* to translate *ivri/Hebrew*. Knowing all this helps us to identify more closely with our Father Abraham. We are all "Hebrews" in a figurative sense if we have "crossed over" from the kingdom of sin and darkness into the kingdom of righteousness and light. Like our Father Abraham, we are all "passers" as we pass through this world, looking for "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10).

The poetry of the Prophets is another area of Scripture that is greatly enhanced by some knowledge of Hebrew. Anyone who has studied both foreign languages and poetry knows that poetry loses some of its impact when it is translated into another language. This is true of prose, too, but even more so with poetry. And many of the Prophets' writings are written in poetic form. Here are a few examples that I ran across while reading through Isaiah in Hebrew:

- "...He [Yahweh] looked for judgment (*mishpat*), but behold oppression (*mispach*); for righteousness (*tsedakah*), but behold a cry (*tse'akah*)" (5:7)
- "For it is a day of trouble (*mehumah*), and of treading down (*mevusah*) and of perplexity (*mevuchah*)" (22:5)
- "Fear (*pachad*), and the pit (*pachar*), and the snare (*pach*) are upon thee" (24:17)
- "...precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept;

line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little" *tsav la-tsav, tsav la-tsav kav la-kav, kav la-kav ze'ir sham, ze'ir sham* (28:10)

Another feature of Hebrew is the use of acrostics. Several Psalms (and Lamentations and the "virtuous woman" passage of Proverbs 31) are written in such a way that the first verse begins with the letter *aleph*, the second with the letter *beit*, the third with the letter *gimel*, and so on. Psalm 119 has groups of eight verses for each of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

A knowledge of Hebrew also allows a reader to see different levels of meaning in the Scriptures. When Isaiah says of the wicked dead that "their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched," the word translated "their fire" is *isham*, a word formed by combining "fire" (*esh*) and the possessive "their" suffix, *-m*. This is how possessives are formed in Biblical Hebrew, so "their fire" is an accurate translation. But the word אשם can just as accurately be read as *asham* ("guilt") if the reader ignores the vowel markings, which are not part of the original text. Thus we can infer that "their fire" (*isham*) is never quenched because their "guilt" (*asham*) is not removed. Their guilt provides the fuel for their fire.

Learning Hebrew idioms can help a reader to better understand the Bible. An idiom is a combination of words that has a meaning which cannot be understood by simply knowing the meaning of each individual word. In English we have hundreds of idioms, such as "That's a horse of a different color" or "That really hit the spot!" These statements have nothing to do with horses and colors or hitting and spots. Students learning a foreign language must learn idioms as complete units, one at a time. It's not enough to just know the definitions of the individual words. My seven years' experience teaching English to foreign students has made me very aware of the importance of learning idioms. If students try to understand an idiom by looking up the definitions of the individual words, they will not get an accurate understanding of what the writer or speaker is trying to communicate. This is as true of Hebrew as it is of English. A Strong's concordance is fine for understanding individual words, but it will not be of much help if you are dealing with an idiom.

One example of a Hebrew idiom is *baruch ha-ba*, translated literally as "blessed is he that comes." In Hebrew this idiom simply means "welcome." When I lived in Israel, the road leading up to Jerusalem had shrubbery trimmed in the shape of Hebrew letters, proclaiming *baruchim ha-baim liyrushalayim*, "Welcome to Jerusalem." When the Messiah lamented over Jerusalem He said, "Ye shall not see Me henceforth, til ye say, Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord" (Matt. 23:39). In other words, He will not return until Jerusalem welcomes Him as their Messiah.

Perhaps the most important benefit of studying Hebrew is

the benefit of having the mind renewed. The student of Hebrew begins to develop Hebraic thought patterns, and a Hebrew-based Biblical world view gradually replaces the Greek-based non-Biblical world view that most Western people have. Marvin Wilson discusses "The Contour of Hebrew Thought" in his book *Our Father Abraham*. Of course the mind can be renewed quite a bit by extensive reading of the Old Testament in a literal word-for-word translation such as the King James Version, where the Hebraic word order and sentence structure are retained to some extent.

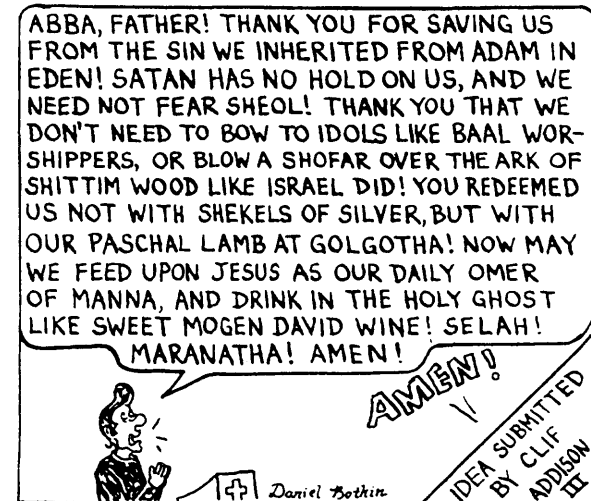
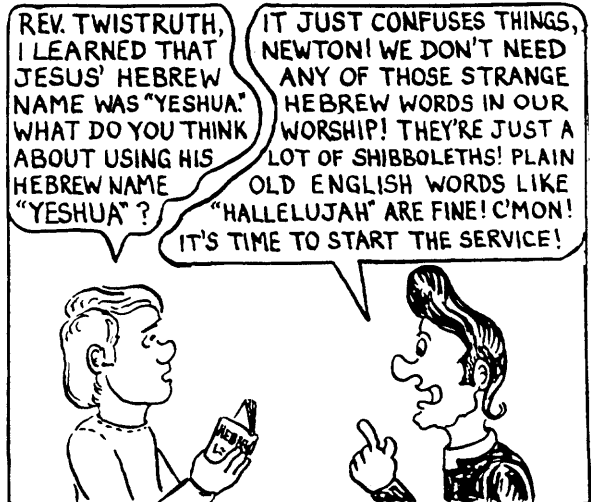
So how does a person learn Hebrew? The best way, of course, is to go to Israel and spend a few months in an *ulpan*, where students attend intensive Hebrew language classes full time. This is how I learned. During my two years in Israel, I spent a total of ten months in *ulpan*, attending classes five hours a day five days a week.

If someone is serious about studying Hebrew, I strongly recommend going to Israel and enrolling in full-time language classes there. After about three months in *ulpan*, I was able to read and understand some of the simpler texts of the Bible, in spite of the differences between modern and Biblical Hebrew. I later studied Biblical Hebrew independently, and taught a class. I have retained my knowledge of the language by further independent study and by teaching Hebrew to others.

Not everyone can go to Israel long enough to study Hebrew, of course. Some large cities (in the New York area, especially) offer courses, as do some colleges and universities. There are many "teach yourself" courses with tapes, videos, and computer programs. These are better than nothing, but cannot compare to learning in a classroom setting. The person who can learn a foreign language without the help of a real live flesh and blood teacher is a very rare individual.

Perhaps in the future our congregation here in Peoria will be blessed with our own facilities and be able to offer short-term, full-time intensive classes here in Illinois. I would love to see us obtain property with enough space for classrooms and live-in dormitories to house students who want to come here and study for a month, two months, three months, whatever. Please pray with us about this possibility. ☞

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A FAMINE AND FOUR LEPERS

Dr. Daniel Botkin

The Bible tells about a great famine in the days of the prophet Elisha, when the Syrian army besieged the city of Samaria. During this famine, people were paying eighty pieces of silver for the head of a donkey and five pieces of silver for a pint or two of dove's dung. There were two women who were so hungry that they agreed to boil their own babies and eat them, one on one day and the other on the next day. The first woman went through with the gruesome task and shared the flesh of her son with the other woman. Then the next day she complained to the king, because the second woman refused to boil her son. The king got angry and vowed to take off Elisha's head. (See 2 Kings 6.)

We see from this story that famine can result in three things. First, it changes the relative value of things. (Donkey heads and dove's dung are pretty worthless in normal circumstances.) Second, famine causes desperate people to take desperate action. (Mothers do not normally eat their babies.) Third, the righteous often get blamed for the terrible conditions that famine brings. (People want to blame somebody for their suffering.)

The Bible also speaks about spiritual famine: "Behold the days come, saith the Lord Yahweh, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of Yahweh. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, and they shall run to and fro to seek the word of Yahweh, and shall not find it" (Amos 8:11).

There is a spiritual famine taking place today in many churches and synagogues where people are not hearing the word of Yahweh. In these places we hear the words of this world's wisdom -- the words of psychologists and psychiatrists and sociologists -- but not the word of Yahweh. We hear testimonies of half-converted celebrities and religious

rock musicians, but not the word of Yahweh. We hear the words of preachers who went to Bible schools where they studied everything except the Bible, but we rarely hear the word of Yahweh that satisfies our deepest longings.

Spiritual famine brings the same three results that physical famine brings. First, it changes the relative value of things. Spiritually-famished people are willing to swallow almost anything they are taught, and they pay a high price for it. Second, spiritual famine makes people desperate. People who lack the spiritual nourishment they need can end up losing their children to the world system by making foolish choices. And third, those in positions of power often blame the righteous for the spiritual famine.

Many of God's people are experiencing this spiritual famine described by Amos. They are wandering from sea to sea and running to and fro, from conference to conference, from seminar to seminar, from church to church, looking for the nourishment their spirit craves. An accurate description of these people is also found in Jeremiah: "My people have been lost sheep. Their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain

to hill, they have forgotten their resting place" (50:6). Hosea says that God's people "are destroyed for lack of knowledge" and that the reason for their predicament is because "they have forgotten the law of thy God" (4:6).

The people who ate donkey heads and dove's dung in Elisha's day are a pathetic yet accurate picture of spiritually-starved people today. Like the Israelites who paid eighty pieces of silver to eat an unkosher donkey head, many of God's people today give their hard-earned money to false teachers and hireling shepherds who feed them unkosher teachings. Doves are kosher, of course, but the Israelites weren't eating the doves -- they were eating the dung that came out of them! Dung is dung, regardless of how kosher its source is. Many false prophets and teachers will draw their teachings from a kosher source -- the Bible -- but by the time the message is digested by them and passes through them, there is nothing substantial left, and they end up feeding their flock nothing but dung. Dung may fill the belly (or the mind), but it cannot satisfy the appetite.

The woman in Samaria who boiled her son cried out, "Help, my lord, O king!" Likewise, some spiritually-famished people cry out to political leaders for salvation. "Help, O Mr. President, Mr. Congressman, Mr. Senator! Fix our nation's problems!" There is not much hope for salvation to come from political sources, especially when the President is a pervert, when there are Congressmen who are crooked, and when there are Senators who are sodomites. And like King Jehoram, many political leaders do nothing to solve the problem, and just blame the righteous. "It's those ultra-religious right-wing radicals! If we could just get rid of them, our nation's problems would be solved!"

While the people were looking to political leaders and donkey heads and dove's dung as the means of their

survival, God's prophet had the word of Yahweh: The famine would not last much longer, Elisha said. The time was soon coming when there would be so much food available that everybody would be able to eat and be satisfied.

This was the word of the prophet, and I believe it can be the word of Yahweh for our generation if people will repent and turn back to God's holy Torah as Yeshua taught it. If our generation will repent and return, then the spiritual famine will end. Right now God's people "are destroyed for lack of knowledge" because they "have forgotten the Torah" (Hos. 4:6). Things do not have to remain this way, though. God can provide so much spiritual food and make the knowledge of His Torah so available, that no one need starve.

How can such a change come about in our generation? The answer to that question is in the rest of the story.

After Elisha prophesied the end of the famine, four lepers outside the gate of Samaria sat talking to one another about their predicament. They knew it would do them no good to go inside the city, because there was no food there. They also knew they would soon starve if they just continued to sit at the gate. One of the lepers suggested going over to the Syrian camp and surrendering. Maybe the Syrians would have pity on them because they were lepers, and give them a crust of bread and let them live. Maybe the Syrians would kill them, but what did they have to lose? If they just stayed where they were, death was certain, so they headed toward the Syrian camp.

When the four lepers arrived at the camp, they found it completely deserted. The Lord had caused the Syrians to hear a great noise of chariots and horses, and the Syrians had fled in fear and left an abundance of food, clothing, silver and gold. The lepers had stumbled upon a great treasure.

Leprosy is a picture of sin. What leprosy does to the body, sin does to the soul. Mankind is like those four lepers. Some of us knew that there

was no hope for us in the dying world around us, so we went in quest of salvation and found Yeshua of Nazareth, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3). The treasures of Torah that we have in Messiah are greater riches than the treasures the four lepers found.

These four lepers started feasting right away, of course. After eating their fill, they began carrying away the rest of the food and treasure and hiding it. They soon realized, though, that there was far more than they could ever use just for themselves. Then they remembered all the starving people back in the city.

"This day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace," one of them said.

They awoke to their duty and returned to the city to share the good news with the starving people. Wagons were sent out to haul the food to the city, and Elisha's prophecy was fulfilled. The famine had ended.

Someone once said that sharing the gospel is simply one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread. Like the four lepers, we have a duty to share the good news with starving people. Many people today are paying a high price to false shepherds who feed them unclean meat from the head of a jackass and fill their minds with dove's dung for dessert. We need to let these people know that the real food, the real deliverance, the real treasures of Torah are found in the Messiah Yeshua, "in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins" and "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 1:14 & 2:3).

"O taste and see that the Lord is good!" (Psalm 34:8)

RELIGIOUS LABELS What Do We Call Ourselves? by Dr. Daniel Botkin

Christians? BELIEVERS?
Worshippers? Messianic Jews?
Sabbath-Keepers? Commandment-Keepers?
Messianic Believers?

The term most commonly used to describe people who believe in the Messiah is "Christian." However, many people who believe in Yeshua as the Christ (i.e., Messiah) have begun to shun the term "Christian" in recent years. There are a number of reasons for this.

Many Jewish people associate the word *Christian* with persecution, pogroms, forced conversions, etc. Therefore many Jewish believers prefer to call themselves Messianic Jews or Believers.

Some non-Jews shun the "Christian" label for a different reason. They have studied enough to know that the word *Christian* does not mean the same thing today that it meant in the time of the Apostles. Because of all the paganism that has crept into the Church and corrupted Christian worship, these people do not wish to be identified with today's Christianity.

If someone asks me if I am a Christian, I usually answer, "Yes, but..." Many times I feel a need to clarify my answer by explaining the difference between what the term originally meant and what it now means. I am not especially fond of the term *Christian*, for the reasons discussed above, and also for another reason: the word *Christian* is found only three times in the New Testament. There is a different term that I prefer to use to describe a follower of the Messiah, and this word is found 370 times in the New Testament. The word is *disciple*.

Why do most followers of Yeshua identify themselves as "Christian," a word used only three times in the New Testament, and shun the term "disciple," a word used 370 times? The answer should be obvious. The word *disciple* implies a disciplined life and a commitment to the terms of discipleship that Yeshua demanded of His followers. If Yeshua's terms of discipleship are read and seriously considered, most Christians will find that they are not truly His disciples.

I say we resurrect the word *disciple* and make it a part of our vocabulary. If the word is used often enough, maybe it will shame some Christians into becoming true disciples. □

LIVING IN THE PLACE OF BLESSING

Dr. Daniel Botkin

READERS: This article is especially for those of you who feel like sheep without a shepherd, sheep without a flock -- those of you who feel isolated and alienated because you are not joined to a good, healthy congregation. You know who you are. Many of you often call me and/or write to me to ask for information, advice, answers to theological questions, etc., etc. Please prayerfully consider what is presented in this article. -DB

When it was almost time for the twelve tribes of Israel to enter the Promised Land, two of the tribes, Reuben and Gad, told Moses that they wanted to stay on the land east of the Jordan River, just outside the borders of the Promised Land. Moses was upset by their refusal to enter the Promised Land. Nevertheless, he agreed to let them do this if the fighting men of these two tribes would at least cross the Jordan and stay in the Land long enough to help the rest of the tribes drive out the enemy. (See Numbers 32.)

By the time Joshua was ready to take the Israelites over the Jordan, the two tribes wanting to settle east of the Jordan had grown to two and a half. Half the tribe of Manasseh had followed the example of Reuben and Gad, and decided that they, too, would settle outside the Land of Promise. To their credit, the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh did keep their word, and sent their fighting men into the Promised Land. (See Josh. 1; 4:12f.) As long as they were in the Promised Land, Joshua was there to lead them and encourage them.

Finally, the war was over. "And Yahweh gave unto Israel all the land which He swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it and dwelt therein. And Yahweh gave them rest round about" (Josh. 21:43f). So it was time for the two and a half tribes to return to where their hearts were: "Then Joshua called the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half tribe of

Manasseh, and said unto them, 'Ye have kept all that Moses the servant of Yahweh commanded you ... therefore now return ye, and get you unto your tents, and unto the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of Yahweh gave you on the other side Jordan'" (Josh. 22:1-4).

After the two and a half tribes went back over the Jordan, they no longer had Joshua to lead them. They were also without the Tabernacle as a center of worship. Their choice of where to live caused them to feel isolated and cut off from the rest of the nation. Because they felt isolated and alienated, they built a large altar on their side of the Jordan. This altar was patterned after the altar of Yahweh in the Tabernacle, but it was not intended to be used for real sacrifices. It was just a mere replica of the real thing, a cheap imitation to help them identify with their brethren who were actually over in the Promised Land.

The other nine and a half tribes came to Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh and told their isolated brethren that they could come and settle in the Promised Land with them if they weren't content with the place they had chosen to live: "Notwith-

standing, if the land of your possession be unclean, then pass ye over unto the land of the possession of Yahweh, wherein Yahweh's tabernacle dwelleth, and take possession among us" (Josh. 22:19).

The two and a half tribes did not take up this offer to move to a place where there was real congregational worship, a place where they would be better off spiritually. What was it that held them to this land east of the Jordan? They were cattlemen. It was the green pastures outside the Promised Land that had first motivated them to choose this place (Num. 32), and it was these same green pastures that held them there. Their career, their business, and their financial prosperity were more important to them than their spiritual well-being.

Many years later when Yeshua of Nazareth crossed the Sea of Galilee and entered into the territory of the two and a half tribes, the first thing He encountered was a wild man possessed with a legion of devils (Mark 5). This demon-possessed man was a manifestation of the long-term fruit of the choice made by Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh.

Now let me address some of you directly. Many of you write to me and call me with your questions, concerns, problems, fears, etc. That is fine; I don't mind. I do not want you to think that you cannot continue to do this. I am honored that you think highly enough of me to trust me to give you advice, guidance, comfort, answers to questions, etc. I am willing to continue doing what I can to help you. What I cannot do, though, is be a shepherd to readers who are not a part of our local congregation here in Peoria.

Joshua could not lead and advise and encourage the two and a half tribes who chose to live in isolation from the rest of the nation. He could only lead those who were with him. I cannot be a substitute for the real flesh-and-blood local pastor that you

need. If I could shepherd you from a distance, I would gladly do it. Unfortunately, remote control doesn't work for shepherding like it does for steering a toy car. (Not that I want to "control" anyone; I just use remote control as a comparison.)

Those of you who are not in a congregation need to get into a congregation, even if it means quitting your job and moving to another state. You must not let your career and financial success be more important to you than your spiritual well-being. That was the error of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh.

When Yeshua called disciples to follow Him, many of them had to leave jobs, homes, and relatives. If your priorities are not in order, you cannot even rightly claim to be a disciple of Yeshua. It is impossible to be a disciple if you let your job, your home, or your relatives prevent you from going where the Messiah wants to lead you. This is not just my personal opinion; it is what Yeshua said. Read Luke 14:25-35. These challenging words of Yeshua were not spoken just to the Twelve or just to a special category of "super disciples." These words were spoken to "the great multitudes" that were following Him. These words were spoken to all of us who claim to be following Him.

Many of you are without fellowship only because of your choice of where to live. Rather than move to a place that could provide good fellowship, you stay where you are and wither away in loneliness, uncertainty, and confusion. Like the two and a half tribes who built an imitation altar, you try to build something that ends up only resembling real fellowship – a mere replica of the real thing, an imitation to help you identify with the rest of your brethren who do have real fellowship. And like the altar east of the Jordan, there is no real sacrifice, because you are not willing to make the sacrifice necessary to join a congregation.

Like those invited to the great supper in Yeshua's parable, you "all with one consent begin to make excuse" (Luke 14:18). One man's excuse was a piece of ground he had

just bought; the next man had just bought five yoke of oxen; another man had just married a wife. Like these three men, some of you let your real estate, your career, or your relatives hinder you from following the Messiah.

I say to you what the nine and a half tribes said to Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh: If the place you are now living has no congregation, then leave that place and come and take possession among those of us who do have fellowship. If you are a sheep without a shepherd, then find a flock that has a faithful shepherd. There are Messianic congregations all over the United States. I counted 262 listed in the congregational directory of the latest *Messianic Times*. And this listing does not include every Messianic congregation in existence.

Some of you refuse to join a congregation because you cannot find one that agrees with you 100% on every jot and tittle. You strain at doctrinal gnats and swallow the camel of having no fellowship and of being accountable to no one but yourself. You see the splinter in your brother's eye, but you do not see the beam in your own eye. If you cannot find a suitable congregation somewhere, you are just too picky.

I am not just trying to recruit people for our congregation, but if any of you want to consider moving to Peoria, let us know. I'm not a cult leader and we have no compound. I'm not Joshua and I'm not saying that Peoria is the Promised Land. However, we do have a congregation that appears to be stable and healthy, and we have good fellowship with one another. We have three elders (myself and two other brothers who have been elders for over two years) and another brother who is an anointed preacher. We have love for one another and we have faith and vision for the future.

If you are not in a congregation, find one somewhere, even if you have to move. Relocating can be expensive and difficult, but it can be done. I know from experience. God makes a way for those who are determined to follow His Son at any cost. Get into a congregation for your own good and for the good of the Body. □

SOME THOUGHTS FOR FATHER'S DAY

Dr. Daniel Botkin

The greatest compliment I have ever received came from my daughter Shoshanna when she was four years old. She was sitting on my lap one day with her arms around my neck, and out of the blue she said, "Daddy, when I grow up, I hope I get someone as nice as you for a husband."

Naturally, I felt very honored. "Oh, you'll probably get someone better than me," I told her.

She looked at me with an expression of surprise on her face. "I didn't think *anyone* could be better than *you!*" she informed me. "Except for God!"

This has been my greatest compliment, and my greatest challenge as well -- to live up to my children's expectations of me. When a little daughter ranks her father just one notch below God, it gives dad a lot to live up to.

Our role as earthly fathers is to be a reflection of the Heavenly Father. A child's concept of God as the Heavenly Father is greatly influenced by the earthly father's character and behavior. This is why it is such a grievous sin for fathers to abandon, abuse, or mistreat their children. Such behavior gives children a warped concept of what God is like, and this concept is often carried into adulthood. I have known adult Christians who admitted to me that they have a difficult time thinking of God as their Heavenly Father, and even addressing God as "Father," because their earthly fathers had failed so miserably at being a good dad to them during their childhood.

Some people think of God as Father only in an impersonal, corporate sense. They think of Him as the Father of Mankind, much like we think of George Washington as the Father of our Nation. But when Yeshua spoke of God as the Heavenly Father, He made it very clear

that God is not an impersonal, uncaring Father. He is not only "*the* Father"; He is also "*your* Father." In the Sermon on the Mount, Yeshua referred to God sixteen times as "your Father." Yeshua let us know that God is a Father who loves and cares for each individual person.

This truth is probably best illustrated in the well-known parable of the Prodigal Son. In this story, the son demanded his inheritance, then left home and father and squandered all the money his father had given him. His money gone, the only job the son could find was feeding pigs. Not a very kosher job for a Jewish boy! After coming to his senses, he decided to return home and ask his father to forgive him. His father saw him coming from afar off and ran to meet him. His father forgave him and had a feast that night to celebrate the return of his son.

Some of the first missionaries to China were surprised to learn that the Chinese had a legend that was very similar to the Prodigal Son story. The Chinese version had a different ending, though. As the son was eating the feast that his father had fixed to welcome him home, the

son suddenly felt a sharp pain in his stomach. He dropped his plate of food and clutched his abdomen. The son saw an evil grin spread across his father's face, and he realized that his father had poisoned him as punishment for running away and squandering his inheritance. And the moral of the story is: "So shall it be done to every son who dishonors his father!"

Needless to say, I like the Biblical story of the Prodigal Son much better than the Chinese story. God is not like the father in the Chinese legend; He is like the father in Yeshua's parable -- watching and waiting for His wandering children to come to their senses and leave the pig pens of this fallen world and return home to their father's loving embrace.

The earthly father in Yeshua's parable is a reflection of our Heavenly Father. If we wish to be a reflection of the Heavenly Father in our children's eyes, then we must show love, compassion, and forgiveness to our children, as did the father in the parable. This father never stopped loving his son, in spite of what the son had done. As soon as the father saw his son heading toward home, he ran to meet him halfway. He did not just stand there impatiently tapping his foot and frowning, with his arms folded across his chest. It was obvious that the son had repented and wished to be reconciled to his father. This father immediately accepted the apology and never mentioned the son's sin again. He simply rejoiced in the fact that he and his son were together again.

This is the kind of Father that God is to His children, and it is the kind of father that God wants us to be to our children. May God help us to live up to our calling as fathers, not just on the day that the world has designated Father's Day, but every day. □

accurate reflection of what has happened to the real Jesus, Yeshua of Nazareth, throughout the centuries. Men have altered the face of the original Yeshua by misrepresenting Him. He has been portrayed as an anti-Semite, an anti-nomian, a Gentile, a weak, mild-mannered sissy, and a number of other things that are not true of Him. Some of the misrepresentation has been deliberate; some has been done with good intentions, by those seeking to restore the true Jesus to the Church.

Dr. Barcilon has been faithfully working and waiting nearly twenty years to see the original face of Jesus re-emerge in Da Vinci's painting. Those who love Yeshua have been faithfully working and waiting nearly twenty centuries to see His face re-emerge. In our generation, we are witnessing the removal of the final layers of grime and filth and paint from the face of Yeshua. The false teachings of anti-nomianism and anti-Semitism are being removed, for those who have eyes to see. The Face that is re-emerging is the Face of a Torah-obedient Messiah who taught His disciples to obey God's Torah.

The title of the *Parade* article is "Nobody Expected Anything Like This." It's a very appropriate title, I think. □ *-Daniel Botkin*

This past Easter Sunday (sic), the cover of *Parade* magazine featured "Leonardo's Face of Jesus" from the famous "Last Supper" that Da Vinci painted in 1498. The article inside the magazine tells about the twenty-year effort to restore this work of art to its original beauty.

Over the centuries, the face of Jesus that Leonardo painted has undergone a great deal of change. The elements and the passing of time have taken their toll on the painting, of course. The face of Jesus has also been deliberately altered by arrows and stones hurled by malicious men. Well-intentioned men have likewise contributed to the alteration of Jesus' face: monks accidentally removed some of the original paint from the surface when they tried to absorb condensation and clean off the mold that had grown on the face of Jesus. Afterward, well-meaning artists, all of them inferior to Da Vinci, tried to restore it, but only made things worse. One art restorer was so incompetent that he gave James six fingers.

Dr. Pinin Brambilla Barcilon has been using high-powered microscopes, surgical scalpels, and special solvents to remove the grime, glue, and paint of past restorers. Through Dr. Barcilon's twenty years of painstaking work, the face of Jesus is finally re-emerging as Leonardo originally painted it.

This story interests me not just from an artistic standpoint, but also from a spiritual standpoint. The things that have happened to the face of Jesus in Leonardo's painting are an

WWJD?

What Would Jesus Do? The initials of this slogan can be found on jewelry, key rings, hats, and other items of Christian merchandise. The purpose of this slogan is to remind Christians to behave like Jesus would behave in any given situation.

In my files I have an old article that expresses the same basic idea of today's WWJD fad. The title of the article is "How Revival Would Be Promoted - If all Christians begin to live like Jesus!" The article encourages us to "simply follow the example of Jesus in all areas of life." Then it lists several questions for the reader to consider: Would Jesus loaf on the job? Would Jesus spend His money this way? Would Jesus speak this way?

Such questions are good to consider, and I would like to add a few more: Would Jesus break the Sabbath? Would Jesus eat pork? Would Jesus knowingly do anything else that violates His Father's Torah? What Would Jesus Do? *-DB*

WHY

Dr. Daniel Botkin

The best that a serious religion can do with "Why?" is to respond, "Because."

-Leonard Fein, Jewish journalist
(June 12, 1998 *Forward*)

-Why, oh why, oh why, oh why?

-Just because, because, because, because.

-Woody Guthrie, Jewish folksinger
(1912-1967) (*TRO Folkways Music*)

Why. That is The Big Question. Already my four-year-old twin daughters are asking me, "Daddy, why did God make wasps?"

"I don't know," I tell them. "Maybe to punish bad people."

But of course that does not explain why good people seem to get stung as easily and as often as bad people do, and my daughters know this. God could have created wasps that instinctively avoid good people, but He didn't. He created wasps that do not distinguish between good people and bad people.

Of course there are tragedies far worse than a wasp sting. There are innocent people who die young. And there is the Holocaust, a tragedy so terrible and so colossal that it defies any rational explanation. Though no other tragedy can match the Holocaust, there are many other examples of personal and national tragedies throughout history. On Tisha B'Av (August 1 & 2 this year), Jewish people remember the two Temples of Jerusalem which were both destroyed on this date. They also remember other tragic events in Jewish history which occurred on this same date.

Tisha B'Av is a day for mourning, and for some, perhaps, a day for asking "Why?" Why does a good God, with unlimited power and wisdom, create a world in which His beloved creatures suffer pain, heartbreak, disease, and dozens of other forms of misery? Why?

Philosophers and theologians have grappled with the question of suffering since the time of Job. The existence of suffering and evil is difficult for us to understand because we believe three fundamental truths:

1. God is good. There is no evil in Him.
2. God is all-powerful. There is nothing He cannot do if He wants to do it. "With God all things are possible" (Mt. 19:26; Lk. 1:37).
3. God allows suffering and evil.

It seems illogical that all three of these truths should co-exist. After all, if God is all good, He should not want His creatures to suffer; and if He is all-powerful, He is strong enough and smart enough to figure out a way to run a pain-free universe. If we could eliminate any one of these three statements, things would be easier to understand. For example, if God were not all-powerful, that would explain

the reason for suffering: God is not quite powerful enough to prevent it. Or if God were not all good, that would explain the reason for suffering: God has a mean streak in Him that makes Him want to occasionally inflict pain on His creatures. Or if suffering and evil did not exist, we could more easily believe that God is all-powerful and all good.

Of course there are the armchair philosophers and pseudo-theologians who offer shallow answers to the "Why" question. "Suffering builds character," they say. "It purges and purifies. It draws us closer to God. Good eventually comes out of it."

These statements are true, but they fail to explain *why* it has to be. Such statements do not tell us why character, purging, and purifying cannot come *without* pain. They do not tell us why we cannot draw closer to God *without* suffering. "With God all things are possible"; therefore, if God wanted to build character in us without suffering, He could think of a way to do it. If He wanted to devise a pain-free way to purge us and purify us, He could do it. If He wanted to draw us closer to Himself in a painless way, He could do it. A loving mother is careful not to hurt her newborn infant when she draws him close to herself. Does God have less compassion for His children?

If God is all-powerful, as the Bible teaches, He could have created a world where pain would never exist. And if He is all good, as the Bible teaches, you would think that that's the kind of world He would *want* to create. As a matter of fact, the Bible says that the new earth will be forever free of any pain. So if that is God's ultimate goal for the world, what's He waiting for? Why doesn't He fix it right now? Or better yet, why didn't He see to it that the original earth remained "very good" from the beginning, so that it wouldn't need several thousand years of fixing?

It's not sinful to wonder about these things. It's okay to ask God why He allowed certain tragedies to happen to us, as long as we ask humbly and as long as we are willing to accept God's silence if He chooses not to tell us. Where some people go astray is in questioning God in a defiant, demanding, accusing manner. They shake their fist at the heavens and shout, "You owe me an explanation, God!" This is questioning God's Sovereignty, His right to rule the universe as He sees fit. It is one thing to wonder and ask why bad things happen; it is another thing to challenge God's Authority as the Creator and to call into question His ability to rule the universe. God has the right to do whatever He knows is best - and to do it without giving us an explanation. Nowhere in the Scriptures is it written that God is obligated to explain His actions to us. Children hate to hear their parents say "Because I said so, that's why," yet we sometimes say these words to our children when we know they are incapable of understanding the reasons for our actions. Sometimes our Heavenly Father says this to



Tisha B'Av: The Destruction of Jerusalem
Oil & mixed media on burlap by Daniel Botkin (After Picasso's *Guernica*)

us when we are incapable of understanding the reasons for His actions.

Years ago I was speaking to a college student. He was full of "Why" questions about God's decision-making policies. I spoke to him about God's Authority, Power, and Sovereignty, and the fact that God is not obligated to explain His decisions to us. The young man listened to me and then said, "So you're saying we should do things God's way because He's bigger and stronger than the rest of us?"

"If you want to put it that way, yes," I replied. "But you also must understand that God is also a lot smarter than the rest of us, and that He loves us. He knows what He's doing, and He's doing it for our own good."

It is obvious that God sees and knows something about the purpose and value of suffering that we cannot see or know on this side of eternity. Experiencing pain apparently has some hidden value, something so precious that God is willing to let His beloved children suffer horribly.

The person with true faith will trust the Lord even when he does not understand why bad things happen. The person with true faith may suffer miserably. He may experience tragedies and not have the faintest idea why. He may be tormented by the fact that God does not provide any explanation, yet he will continue to trust God even in the dark, lonely silence. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him," said Job (13:15).

The person with true faith may be deeply puzzled and angered by life's unfairness, yet he will continue to believe that God is pure, in spite of the fact that God seems to be in no hurry to fix things. To have this kind of faith requires a pure heart. "Blessed are the pure in heart," Yeshua said, "for they shall see God" (Mt. 5:8). The pure in heart will receive a revelation of God's purity. The Psalmist put it this way: "With the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure..." (Ps.

18:26). In other words, the pure heart will continue to see God as pure regardless of the circumstances. The Psalmist continues: "...and with the perverse Thou wilt show Thyself perverse." In other words, those who view God as a less-than-perfect, perverse Being have a perverse perception of Him simply because the perversity of their own heart distorts their spiritual vision.

I do not wish to go into great detail about my own personal sufferings. I will only say that I have lost people whom I loved dearly. Some were lost through untimely deaths and some through betrayal and abandonment. I have experienced emotional grief so intense that I pleaded with God to let me die in my sleep, and I was sincerely and deeply disappointed each time I awoke to find myself still here. The only thing that kept me from suicide during these times was my belief that it is wrong. I have also experienced physical pain so intense that I feared I was dying. I have suffered more than some and less than others. I have never questioned God's goodness and purity, and I hope by His grace that I never do.

I do not have the slightest clue why I have had to suffer, or why people in general have to suffer. The Bible does not answer the "Why" question. On the contrary, it is the Bible that raises the question, by proclaiming a good, loving, all-powerful God who does not use His power to immediately end all suffering.

All we can really do is believe what the Scripture says about suffering: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). Notice, the glory will be revealed "*in us*," not "*to us*." Elsewhere Paul alludes to this future "manifestation of the sons of God" when he writes that God's purpose in saving us is so that "in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches

of His grace in His kindness toward us through Messiah Yeshua" (Eph. 2:7). Paul also writes "that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" (Eph. 3:10). God intends to use His people to make a statement to the heavenly beings. God's glory, grace, kindness, and wisdom will be manifested in us and by us to all the celestial beings in the universe throughout the ages to come. Somehow suffering fits into this great plan.

God could destroy His enemy without man's help, but for some reason God has chosen to use man as His instrument: "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength because of Thine enemies, that Thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" (Ps. 8:2-4).

The Day will eventually come when the Judge of all the earth will settle all accounts. We will all be more than adequately compensated for all our sufferings when God's glory is revealed in us. Knowing this fact does not explain why we have to suffer, nor does it lessen the pain that we now feel. This knowledge can, however, give us the courage and strength and patience that we need to endure our sufferings.

Yeshua endured His suffering "for the joy that was set before Him." That joy was His future Bride, the Church. We can endure our suffering for the joy that is set before us. That joy is our future Bridegroom, the Messiah.

"Looking unto Yeshua, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2). □

The lyrics of the following song were inspired by my meditations on the Book of Job in conjunction with my own sufferings. -DB

LAMENTATION OF JOB

Daniel Botkin

Earthbound yet longing for heaven, I mourn,
Cursing the day that my body was born,
I wish from the womb that my soul had been torn
From my flesh; how I wish I had never been born
In this world where the madhouse morticians adorn
Your cold corpse with cosmetics to comfort the mourners
Who gaze on the clay you had formerly worn.

My friends here beside me, they try to console,
But their lips pour out bile that poisons my soul.
They just drive me further away from the goal
Of the One who has buried me deep in this hole.
My days of depression have taken their toll
And the evil inside me is blacker than coal,
So I wait for the cleansing to come to my soul.

A whirlwind from heaven now swirls all around,
I close my blind eyes and I float to the ground.
In the mist of a vision my spirit is found
And I see my Redeemer with purity crowned.
He speaks and His words in my brain they do pound,
I hear and with ecstasy scream at the sound
Of the Voice that goes forth to free those who are bound.

The Voice asks, "Where were you when matter was made,
Before earth's and heaven's foundations were laid?
Suspended on nothing, commanded, they stayed.
Upheld by My power, they never have strayed
From the course that I set for the stars that have played
In the sky, til the beauty of heaven does fade,
And then mankind for glory his suffering will trade."

The Voice now is silent, I try to reply
To the vision as tears from my eyes I do dry.
I see now such knowledge for me is too high.
The One I had heard of I see with my eye.
Repenting in sackcloth and ashes I lie,
And I feel something deep down inside of me die,
Then one more newborn manchild ascends to the sky.

*-Daniel Botkin
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THE MANTLE OF ELIJAH

Dr. Daniel Botkin

And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces. He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back and stood by the bank of Jordan. And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, "Where is Yahweh, the God of Elijah?" And when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over. (2 Kings 2:11-14)

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In 1981 and 1982, I spent a lot of time praying with another disciple, a good friend of mine. For nine months the two of us met at 5:30 every weekday morning and prayed together until shortly before 7 o'clock, when he had to leave for work. Every morning we knelt on sackcloth and wrapped ourselves in sackcloth as we fervently cried out for a closer walk with God and a greater anointing of the Holy Spirit.

One morning when our prayer was especially intense, I suddenly and unexpectedly heard these words in my spirit: "Seek the mantle of Elijah." I pictured Elijah's mantle floating down to Elisha, and Elisha using the mantle to open the Jordan, and I wondered if I had heard the Lord speaking to me. The voice had not been audible, and I am not a person who is quick to believe and act on uncertain impressions. I shared my experience with my friend when we finished praying, and we both agreed that if it was the Lord who had spoken to me, that He would confirm it.

I returned home and happened to pick up a *Guideposts* magazine that my wife had left on the kitchen

counter. I opened the magazine and my eyes immediately fell on a very short article about Elisha's receiving of Elijah's mantle. The article itself did not impress me, and I do not have a very high regard for *Guideposts* magazine; nevertheless, it seemed that this article in *Guideposts* was being used as a "guidepost" to confirm the word I had heard in my spirit less than an hour earlier. I decided I had better take a closer look at the story of Elijah's mantle, and see what the Lord was wanting to teach me.

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The first place Elijah's mantle is mentioned is in 1 Kings 19. Elijah was in a cave on Mount Sinai when the word of the Lord told him to "stand upon the mount before Yahweh." Elijah then witnessed four manifestations of God's power: "And, behold, Yahweh passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before Yahweh; but Yahweh was not in the wind. And after the wind, an earthquake; but Yahweh was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake, a fire; but Yahweh was not in the fire. And after the fire, a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave" (1 Ki. 19:11-13).

According to Jewish tradition, this cave in which Elijah stood was the

very same "cleft of the rock" where Moses was told to "stand" as the glory of God passed by him (Ex. 33:21ff). Regardless of whether or not this tradition is true, we know that it was on this same holy mountain that God spoke to Moses from the burning bush. Moses' encounter with God on this mountain transformed "the rod of Moses" into "the rod of God." (See Ex. 4:2 & 4:20.) The rod of Moses became the symbol or token of Moses' God-given authority. Likewise, on this same mountain, the mantle of Elijah became the symbol or token of Elijah's God-given authority, for we next see Elijah casting his mantle on Elisha. Elisha clearly understood Elijah's action to be a call to follow, for Elisha "arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered to him" (1 Ki. 19:21).

The Bible does not mention Elijah's mantle or Elisha again until 2 Kings 2, where we read about Elijah's departure from earth. Elijah and Elisha's final day together began in Gilgal. Elijah told Elisha, "Tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me to Beth-el." Elisha insisted on accompanying his master, "so they went down to Beth-el." At Beth-el Elijah said, "Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me to Jericho." Again Elisha insisted on going with Elijah, and they went down together to Jericho. At Jericho Elijah said, "Tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me to Jordan." Elisha insisted on going there, too.

Fifty "sons of the prophets" (a Hebrew idiom for disciples of prophets) followed Elijah and Elisha, but "stood to view afar off." Elijah took his mantle, wrapped it together, and smote the waters of the Jordan. The waters divided, and Elijah and Elisha crossed over. Both men knew that God was going to take Elijah away, and Elijah asked Elisha what he could do for him before he was taken away.

"Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me," Elisha requested.

"Thou hast asked a hard thing," Elijah replied. "Nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so."

Elisha kept his eyes steadfastly fixed on Elijah until Elijah was taken up, and the mantle was passed on to Elisha, giving him a double portion of Elijah's spirit. (Some Bible teachers have counted the miracles that both these men performed, and they find that Elijah did sixteen and Elisha did thirty-two, exactly twice that number. See *Dake's Reference Bible*, p. 394.)

Those of us who follow the Messiah can learn a lot from this story. The story is about a disciple's devotion to his master, and the disciple's determination to stay close to his master no matter where the master happens to be going.

At Gilgal, Beth-el, and Jericho, Elijah seemed to discourage his disciple from following him. Our Master Yeshua likewise said some things that would seem to discourage people from following Him: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me"; "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me"; "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple"; "Count the cost."

These and other similar statements are peppered throughout the gospels to weed out those who are only half-heartedly following the Master. (The only problem is that most Christians do not take such verses seriously.)

Elisha's whole-hearted devotion to his master is an example of the whole-hearted devotion we should have to our Master. Elisha's determination to follow his master every step of the way, regardless of the consequences, is an example of the determination we should have to follow our Master every step of the way, regardless of the consequences.

The places where Elijah and Elisha went in this story also have something to teach us. They went from Gilgal to Beth-el to Jericho to the Jordan. If a person looks at the elevation of these

places on a topographical map, he will see that Elijah and Elisha's final journey together was one of gradual descent. Gilgal is higher than Beth-el, Beth-el is higher than Jericho, Jericho is higher than the Jordan. This teaches us that if we are determined to whole-heartedly follow our Master, we must be willing to "go down," i.e., to continually humble ourselves. Each successive humbling brings us down further than the previous humbling, until we have humbled ourselves to the lowest position. Is this not what our Master taught? "When thou art bidden," He said, "go and sit down in the lowest place" (Lk. 14:10).

The names of the places in Elijah and Elisha's journey are significant. They reveal stages of a disciple's growth. Elijah and Elisha started out at Gilgal. Gilgal was given its name in Joshua chapter 5, when those men who had been born in the wilderness were finally circumcised: "And Yahweh said unto Joshua, 'This day have I rolled away (גָּלַתִּי, *galoti*) the reproach of Egypt from off you.' Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal (גִּלְגָּל, 'a rolling away') unto this day (Josh. 5:9)."

We experience our "Gilgal" when the Lord circumcises our heart and "rolls away" the reproach of our former bondage to the world. This occurs when we come to Golgotha and allow our old life to be "cut off" and discarded like a lifeless foreskin. Even the name *Golgotha*, "the place of the skull" (*gulgolet* in Hebrew, גִּלְגֹּלֶת), is related to the Hebrew word *gilgal*. Like Elisha, we begin our final journey with the Master by coming to Gilgal/Golgotha.

Many Christians are content to go no further than this in their walk with the Master. They have eternal life (or at least they hope they do), and they want to go no further. The Master says, "You can stay here if you want to. I'm going further down, to Beth-el." Those disciples who value His Presence too much to lose it will follow Him down to Beth-el.

Beth-el ("the house of God") was named by Jacob after he had his dream of the ladder in that place:

"And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, 'Surely Yahweh is in this place, and I knew it not!' And he was afraid, and said, 'How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God (*beth-el*) and this is the gate of heaven!' ... And he called the name of that place Beth-el" (Gen. 28:16f, 19).

We experience our "Beth-el" when we "awake out of our sleep" and experience the fear of God. Some modern Bible translations use "reverence for God" instead of "the fear of God." People who think that the fear of God means nothing more than "reverence" do not know the Scriptures. When people experienced the fear of God in the Bible, they experienced real fear, not mere "reverence." They trembled with fright; they fell on their faces; they fainted; they thought they were going to die. People who think that such fear was something "just for the Old Testament" need to know that when the New Testament tells us to "Fear God" (Mt. 10:28; 1 Pet. 2:17; et. al.), it uses the Greek word *phobeo* (φοβέω), the source of our English word *phobia*. Hebrews 12:21 tells us that "Moses said, 'I exceedingly fear and quake.'" This phrase "exceedingly fear" is *ekphobos* (εκφοβος). The *ek-* prefix means "out of" (compare our English prefix *ex-* in words like *exit*, *extraordinary*, etc.). According to Strong's Concordance, the literal meaning of *ekphobos* is to be "frightened out of one's wits." This is more than mere reverence for God; this is the fear of God. If we wish to follow the Master any further than Gilgal/Golgotha, we must "awake out of our sleep" and experience the fear of God at Beth-el.

Once at Beth-el, we can remain there and fall back asleep, or we can continue to follow the Master down to Jericho. Who doesn't want to experience Jericho? A place of great victory, where the walls came tumbling down! Yes, Jericho represents great victories in our spiritual experience. What many disciples forget, however, is the cost of that victory at Jericho. The Israelites had to obey instructions that seemed foolish and irrational and

risky to the natural mind: Silently march around the city in full armor, then return to camp. Do this six days in a row. Then on the seventh day, go around seven times. Really wear yourselves out, marching in full armor in the hot sun right before the fight. Then just shout, and the walls will fall.

If we want to experience Jericho-like victories, we must be willing to follow Jericho-like instructions that will make us look foolish to the world. We must be willing to say with the Apostle Paul, "We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Messiah's sake" (1 Cor. 4:9f). This is another necessary step if we want to obtain the mantle of authority from the Master.

After Jericho, the Master goes down to the Jordan, and if we wish to continue with Him, we must go down another step. More than any other place, the Jordan speaks of going down, both by its name and by its location. The Jordan, *ha-yarden* (הַיַּרְדֵּן), takes its name from *yarad* (יָרַד), a verb which means "to go down; to descend." The Jordan begins at a higher elevation in the north, then winds its way further and further below sea level until it runs into the Dead Sea near Jericho. This is literally the lowest spot on the face of the earth. There is no place on the earth's surface that is further below sea level. If hell is really under the crust of the earth, then a living person could get no closer to hell (geographically speaking) than at this area where Elisha followed his master. Those who have visited this area know that it is a hell-like area. It is unbearably hot and dry and desolate, and a heavy stench of sulphur hangs over the region. The Dead Sea is called the Dead Sea because there is no life there.

Elisha had to follow his master all the way down to this hellish wilderness in order to receive the mantle of authority. If we expect to receive authority from our Master, we must be willing to endure hellish humblings of our fleshly pride. There will be times when following the Master will bring us so low that we feel like we are going

through hell. Unfortunately, this is often the only way that our pride can be put to death.

The Septuagint says that Elijah and Elisha went over the Jordan *en eremo* (ἐν ἐρημῷ), "into the wilderness." This same Greek word is used in the New Testament where it is written that John the Baptist, who had the spirit of Elijah, was *en eremos*, "in the deserts" until the day of his showing unto Israel (Lk. 1:80). According to the Gingrich lexicon, this Greek phrase literally means "abandoned, empty, desolate, deserted, lonely places." This is an accurate description of some of the things we may suffer when we follow the Master all the way down to the Jordan. We may be *abandoned* by friends; we may feel *empty* and *desolate*; we may be *deserted* by people we love; we may find ourselves in *lonely places*.

There is a positive side to all this, of course. Elisha's master was walking close beside him in this place, and our Master will likewise walk close to us. It was in this hellish wilderness that Elijah said, "Ask what I shall do for you," and it is in our hellish wilderness that Messiah will say to us, "Ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (Jn. 15:7). It was in this lonely place where Elisha saw his master ascended and glorified, and it is in our lonely places where we will receive revelations of our Master ascended and glorified. It was in this place where the mantle of Elijah's authority fell, and it is in this place where the mantle of our Master's authority will fall upon us.

Like the fifty sons of the prophets who went as far as Jericho and "stood to view afar off," so there are some disciples who are willing to go so far as to be "fools for Messiah's sake," yet they keep a safe distance from that place which would finally deal with their pride and make them fit for the Master's use. They refuse to humble themselves any more, and they settle for being mere spectators, sitting on the sidelines with the sons of the prophets, watching to see what happens to those who continue to go on with the Master.

The Bible teaches that God will once again send the spirit of Elijah to restore all things and to prepare God's people for the return of the Messiah. Peter said that the heavens must receive the Messiah "until the times of restoration of all things" (Acts 3:21). Yeshua said that Elijah will come and "restore all things" (Mt. 17:11). If Elijah must "restore all things" before Messiah's return, that means the Church must have lost some things along the way, things that must be restored before the Messiah will come for His Bride. Some of those things presently being restored are Sabbath, Feast Days, Biblical diet, head covering, and modest dress. The spirit of Elijah will rest upon those disciples who are determined to wholeheartedly follow the Master in the pursuit of those things which must be restored to the Bride.

When it was time to prepare God's people for the first coming of the Messiah, the spirit of Elijah did not come upon the political and religious leaders of the world, but upon a man in the wilderness: "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zachariah in the wilderness" (Lk. 3:1f).

This Scripture shows us that God bypasses all the tetrarchs, governors, Caesars, and high priests of this world, and sends His word to men in the wilderness. The job of these men is to call God's people to repentance in preparation for the second coming of the Messiah. The spirit of Elijah will not rest upon many of the big shots of the political or religious world. The spirit of Elijah will rest upon unknown, obscure people who are willing to follow the Master all the way into those lonely places in the wilderness.

"I remember thee, the devotion of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness..." (Jer. 2:2) □

Major events in Church history since the beginning of the Reformation seem to parallel the four manifestations that occurred in conjunction with the Bible's first mention of Elijah's mantle, and with the four places that Elijah and Elisha went on that day that the mantle fell to Elisha:

WIND	EARTHQUAKE	FIRE	STILL SMALL VOICE
GILGAL Golgotha	BETH-EL Awakening and fear of God	JERICHO Fools for Messiah	JORDAN & DESERT Keep eyes on Master, even in lonely places
Early Reformers	"Great Awakening" Quakers, Methodists, etc.	Pentecostal movement	Spirit of Elijah to call God's people to repen- tance and restoration
SAVED	SANCTIFIED	FILLED WITH SPIRIT	WEARING THE MANTLE
1500s	1600s	1700s	1800s
			1900s

The wind that Elijah saw "rent the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks." The Reformation brought great winds of change that shattered mountains of superstition and false doctrines. God's people started looking to Golgotha instead of to Rome for their salvation. The earthquake parallels Jacob's awakening and fear of God. This is also what happened during the Great Awakening and the Methodist revivals. People ("*earthen* vessels") trembled and quaked with the fear of God. (That is how the Quakers got their name.) Fire is an appropriate symbol for the Pentecostal movement, since there were "cloven tongues like as of fire" on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:3). Several years ago, manifestations of supernatural fire were actually reported (and even captured on movie film and still shots - I have seen both) at some Pentecostal meetings. And of course the early Pentecostals were "made a spectacle unto the world" and were "fools for Christ's sake" as they endured mockery, ridicule, slander, and abuse. If this generation of disciples is willing to pay the price that is required to make us fit for the Master's use, we can inherit the mantle of Elijah and hear the still small voice.

BAPTISM

Dr. Daniel Botkin

The words *baptism*, *baptize*, and *baptist* do not appear in the Old Testament. The first time these words appear in English Bibles is in the New Testament: "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea" (Mt. 3:1). We are not told in this verse what a "Baptist" is, but a few verses later we read that the people "were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins," and that even Yeshua came "to be baptized of him." At the end of the gospel story, Yeshua tells His eleven disciples, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Mt. 28:19f). Then on the Day of Pentecost, Peter tells his listeners, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is unto you, and unto your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:38f). As the Book of Acts continues, we see that new believers normally underwent baptism as their first act of obedience.

These New Testament verses raise six questions I wish to discuss:

1. Where did John the Baptist come up with the idea of baptism?
2. Why did Yeshua tell His disciples to baptize new disciples from among the nations?
3. Why does the "baptismal formula" of Mt. 28:19 ("in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost") never appear in the Book of Acts?
4. How was the act of baptism performed?
5. Why is baptism important?
6. What is the significance of baptism?

JOHN THE BAPTIST

John the Baptist lived and wor-

shipped as a Jew. The only Bible John had was the Old Testament, and the English word *baptize* does not appear in the Old Testament. So where did John come up with the idea? Did he stay out in the hot desert sun too long and say to himself, "I think I'll dream up some new religious ritual to get attention, and start my own cult!"?

Bible-believers who bother to read Leviticus are familiar with the concept of ritual purity. The process of ritual purification included ritual immersion in water. In John's day, ritual immersion was also used in converting proselytes to Judaism. Therefore the concept of baptism was not a new or foreign idea to John's Jewish audience. The only thing about John's baptism that might be called new or novel was the fact that John was calling Jews to a baptism of repentance, in preparation for the Messianic Kingdom that was "at hand." Just as a non-Jewish proselyte was expected to undergo a baptism unto repentance, so likewise those who had been born and raised Jewish were expected by John to undergo a baptism unto repentance. (See Mt. 3:9.)

In a Jewish context, baptism is often called going into the *mikvah* (מִקְוָה). The first place this word appears in the Bible is in Gen. 1:10, where we see *mikveh ha-mayim* (מִקְוֵה הַמַּיִם), "the gathering together of the waters." There is also a Hebrew verb, *taval* (טָבַל), which means "to dip." *Taval* is the source of John's title "the Baptist" in Hebrew: *Yohanan ha-matbil* (יְהוֹנָן הַמַּטְבִּיל). The verb *taval* is used to describe Naaman dipping seven times in the Jordan to be healed of his leprosy (2 Ki. 5). The Septuagint translates *taval* into Greek with the word *baptizo* (βαπτίζω), the source of our English word *baptize*.

MESSIAH AND THE NATIONS

Why did the Jewish Messiah tell His Jewish followers to baptize

disciples from among the nations? To understand the implications of the "Great Commission," we must put ourselves in the sandals of the Apostles. The Apostles were Jews and were very aware of the distinction between Israel and the nations. To any serious Jew, the Jews were "us" and the nations were "them." If a non-Jew wanted to convert to the Jewish faith, he was baptized and learned to obey the commandments of the Torah. Yeshua's "Great Commission" consisted of these same two things, baptism and obedience to the commandments. Therefore the Apostles would have understood the Great Commission to mean:

"Go to the nations, i.e., the Gentiles, the *goyim*, and make proselytes - not to Pharisaical Judaism with its errors, but to the pure faith as taught by the Master. Initiate these Gentiles into the faith by the *mikvah*, then teach them to obey Torah as the Master taught it."

The rabbis used the *mikvah* to initiate Gentile proselytes into Judaism, and the Apostles were to likewise use the *mikvah* to initiate Gentile proselytes into the Messianic faith.

THE APOSTLES IN ACTS

In Matthew 28, Yeshua said to baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." This phrase never appears in the Book of Acts. Instead, we read about the Apostles baptizing "in the name of Jesus Christ" (2:38), "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (8:16), "in the name of the Lord" (10:48), and "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (19:5).

What does this mean? Weren't the Apostles reciting the right formula when they baptized? And which of the three above variations did they actually utter? "Jesus Christ" or "the Lord Jesus" or "the Lord"? Which baptismal formula should be used today? Can we just pick any one of the four formulas that appear in the

Bible? Or must the person administering the baptism say the Hebrew form of the Messiah's name, as some teach?

This is a subject that is often very divisive. Churches have split and entire denominations have been formed around which baptismal formula to use.

A big part of the problem is due to an assumption that nearly everyone makes. We *assume* that the Apostles recited some formula when they baptized new disciples. We make this assumption because of our own experience. At every baptism we have ever seen, we heard the person administering the baptism say "in the name of Jesus" or "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" or "in the name of Yeshua." Because we have never seen a baptism performed without the reciting of some accompanying baptismal formula, we assume that the Apostles likewise recited some formula, just like we do. It is certainly possible that they may have recited something; however, the Bible does not actually say that any formula was recited. We are not told that they *said* anything. The Bible only says that they *baptized* "in the name of Jesus Christ/the Lord Jesus/the Lord."

What does it really mean to do something "in the name of" someone else? Does it mean that you must utter the name of the person while you perform the action? To do something "in the name of" someone else has nothing to do with reciting a magic formula. The seven sons of Sceva found this out the hard way. (See Acts 19:13-16).

To do something in the name of someone else simply means to do it *by that person's authority*. When we do something in someone else's name, we are in effect saying: "Because he is not here in the flesh to do it himself, I am acting on his behalf, as his authorized agent, to carry out his will." This is what it means for a foreign ambassador to do something in the name of his country's government. If an American ambassador in a foreign land is authorized by the

President to do something, the ambassador does not have to recite "in the name of Bill Clinton" every time he carries out his duties. What matters is that the authorization to act is genuine, and that the will of the authorizing agent is carried out.

Baptizing someone "in the name of" is not a matter of saying the right formula. It is a matter of authorization and action. Reciting the precise words of a magic formula is important in occult rituals, but the Bible does not teach such linguistic superstition.

THE METHOD OF BAPTISM

What is the Biblical method of baptism? Sprinkling, pouring, or immersion? Most Bible-believers agree that immersion is the Biblical method for New Testament baptism. There are a number of strong arguments in favor of immersion. First, the Greek word *baptizo* means to dip or immerse. Second, baptism is a picture of burial. We are "buried with Him by baptism" (Rom. 6:4). Some have pointed out that a corpse is not "buried" if you merely sprinkle a handful of dirt on it. Merely sprinkling water on someone does not give a very good picture of a burial. Finally, we know from history that proselytes to Judaism underwent complete immersion when they were converted. The immersion was actually self-administered, with three witnesses who made sure that every part of the body was entirely submerged.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BAPTISM

For some believers, getting baptized is low on their list of priorities, in spite of the fact that in the Bible, baptism was normally the first act of obedience after repentance and faith. Some people actually question whether baptism is even important enough to bother with at all. "After all," the reasoning goes, "it's just water. Does performing a ritual that gets you wet really please God? Why would He care?"

The important question is not *why* God would care; the important question is *does* God care? The fact that baptism was commanded by the

Messiah is sufficient proof that baptism is, indeed, important to God. And Yeshua not only commanded that new disciples be baptized; He also set an example for us by undergoing baptism Himself.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM

So what is baptism all about? What is it supposed to accomplish? As Peter said, it is not merely the removal of dirt from the body (1 Pet. 3:21). Let's look at how the rabbis viewed the immersion of a proselyte, and see how these rabbinic insights might apply to the baptism of a disciple of the Messiah.

The rabbis teach that everything in the visible, physical world has a spiritual counterpart in the invisible spiritual realm. In other words, things that we see in the earthly creation are reflections or shadows of heavenly realities which we cannot see with our physical eyes. This idea is not as far-fetched as some Christians might think it is. Hebrews chapters 8-10 teaches that the earthly Tabernacle with its priesthood and worship was a "shadow," patterned after a Tabernacle that exists in the heavens, with its priesthood and worship. Ephesians 5 teaches that the husband-wife relationship is meant to be a reflection of the relationship between Messiah and His Bride, the Church. Romans 1:20 says that God's invisible attributes, eternal power, and divine nature "are clearly seen, being understood by the things that have been made."

According to the rabbis, when a man's body is immersed in the physical waters of the mikvah, his soul becomes immersed into the spiritual reality which the baptismal waters represent.

What does water represent? The thing that most distinguishes water from the rest of the physical creation is the fact that water is fluid, while solids are static. Therefore we could say that solids represent permanence and water represents change. And change is what baptism is all about, according to the New Testament - change from the old, sinful life to a new, resurrected

life of righteousness. (See Romans 6.)

The New Testament uses Noah's family on the ark as a picture of baptism (1 Pet. 3:20f). Noah's family certainly experienced a change. They were taken out of the old, pre-Flood world into the new, post-Flood world. Moses and the Israelites passing through the Red Sea is also referred to as a type of baptism (1 Cor. 10:2). Here again we see change. The Israelites were taken out of Egyptian bondage and into the wilderness to meet God at Sinai.

When a person enters the baptismal waters to follow the Messiah, he should understand that he will be undergoing a spiritual change which is just as real as the change that Noah and his family experienced when they emerged from the ark and set foot on a new world. The ungodly world that the disciple formerly knew stays buried in the waters, just as Noah's pre-Flood world was buried under the waters. The disciple should understand that his old life is left behind, just as Moses and the Israelites left their former lives of bondage, when they passed through the Red Sea and journeyed to the holy mountain to receive the revelation of God's Torah.

The rabbis referred to a proselyte coming out of the mikvah as "a little child just born" or as one "born anew." The proselyte was regarded as a brand new person with a brand new beginning in every respect. The rabbis understood the reality of what baptism accomplished. Some might

say they understood it too well: the rabbis said that the change was so complete that a man could, technically speaking, marry his own [former] sister or mother, except for the fact that such a practice would give proselytizing a bad name! This was not done or encouraged, of course; it was only stated to emphasize how complete the change was when a person emerged from the mikvah. The old person was buried in the baptismal waters, and a new person emerged.

REPENTANCE AND FAITH

Of course without repentance and faith, baptism is meaningless and of no value. Without repentance and faith, the only change that takes place is that a dry sinner becomes a wet sinner. The Talmud likens an unrepentant man to "a man who has in his hand a defiling reptile." "Even if he immerses in all the waters of the world," the text continues, "his baptism avails him nothing" (Taani 16a).

The Greek word for baptism, as pointed out earlier, means to dip or immerse. The use of the word implies that the thing being dipped takes on the qualities of the liquid into which it is being dipped, just as cloth takes on the color of the dye into which it is dipped. When we are immersed in the baptismal waters, we likewise undergo a change. Our soul takes on the character of change, for change is the spiritual reality behind the baptismal waters. If we are unrepentant and/or without true faith, however, we will not "absorb" the change that baptism is

meant to accomplish.

This truth was illustrated to me recently when my daughter showed me a T-shirt she had tie-dyed at camp. The entire shirt was covered by the dye, except for the thread that had been used to sew the label onto the back of the neck. This particular thread remained white, in spite of the fact that the entire shirt had been dipped and exposed to the dye. Why did this one particular thread not absorb any of the dye? Why did it not change color like the rest of the shirt did? I told my daughter that it was because of the material the thread was made of. Cotton absorbs dye, but some synthetic materials do not.

That synthetic thread on my daughter's shirt illustrates a powerful truth about the necessity of repentance. If there are areas of our life that we refuse to surrender to the will of the Father, then our lack of repentance will prevent any real change from taking place in that particular area of our life. The baptismal waters will accomplish no change until we are repentant and surrendered, and willing to "absorb" the change. Our old nature will continue to manifest itself in that unsundered area. And it will be obvious to all who witness it, just as that synthetic thread on my daughter's shirt was obvious to her.

As important as baptism is, it is useless if it is not accompanied by genuine repentance and faith. Let's make sure that our repentance and faith are genuine, and not synthetic. □

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GLOSSOLALIA: SPEAKING IN TONGUES

Dr. Daniel Botkin

People who have never spoken in tongues sometimes refer to tongues as “babble,” “gibberish,” or “mumbo-jumbo.” The New Testament makes it quite plain that speaking in tongues was one very common manifestation of the Holy Spirit. People who use belittling terms like “gibberish” and “babble” to describe the tongues phenomenon are coming dangerously close to the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, the sin which Yeshua said “shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come” (Mt. 12:32). If such people are speaking against the Holy Spirit in ignorance, I pray the Father will forgive them, for they know not what they do.

I freely admit that when I hear someone speak in tongues, it sounds like gibberish to me. And when I hear someone speak in Chinese or Korean, that sounds like gibberish to me too. The English language sounds like gibberish to people who do not know English. So the tongues issue really has nothing to do with how the utterance might sound to us. The Bible even mentions the possibility of men speaking in the “tongues of angels” (1 Cor. 13:1). Tongues which are truly inspired by the Holy Spirit are not always human languages, and therefore are not subject to the same scientific and linguistic scrutiny to which human languages may be subject.

I also freely admit that there are counterfeit tongues, inspired by demonic spirits. However, this is further proof of the legitimacy of the genuine, Biblical tongues. Nobody makes counterfeit \$30 bills, because there is no such thing as a real \$30 bill. Why would Satan manufacture a counterfeit tongues experience for people in the occult if the real experience were not still available to God’s people? A man once said, “I’ll bet 90% of the tongues in churches are

counterfeit.” Another man replied, “That may be true. But if someone gave me a big box of \$20 bills and told me 90% of them were counterfeit, I wouldn’t throw away the whole box.”

When a person speaks in tongues, is he speaking to men or is he praying to God? It depends. Paul writes about praying and singing in tongues (1 Cor. 14:14f). He also writes “he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him” (1 Cor. 14:2). Yet we know that men understood the Apostles when they spoke in tongues on the Day of Pentecost: “every man heard them speak in his own language” (Acts 2:6).

After Paul writes that “no man understands” a person speaking in tongues, Paul then tells us that tongues are “for a sign” to “them that believe not” (14:22), which would imply an understanding of the utterance on the part of the unbeliever who hears it, just as happened on the Day of Pentecost. But then in the very next verse Paul says that if unbelievers come into the assembly and hear everyone speaking in tongues, they will say you are mad. Now Paul seems to be telling us that we shouldn’t let the unbelievers hear the very tongues which are supposed to be a sign for them!

Finally, Paul says that if there is no one present to interpret the tongue, then a person should “keep silent” and “speak to himself and to God” (14:28), which sounds like another pair of contradictory instructions.

The only way to make any sense of Paul’s instructions in 1 Cor. 14 is to recognize that there are two types of supernatural tongues. First, there is the tongue which could be described as a “prayer language,” which is available to all Spirit-filled disciples. This tongue is for the edification of the individual rather than for the

edification of the congregation. (“He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself,” 14:4) This is the tongue which “no man understands.” Paul wanted all disciples to experience this tongue. (“I wish that you all spoke in tongues,” 14:5.) Paul encouraged the Corinthians to edify themselves by praying and singing in this tongue (14:14f). No one else needs to hear this tongue. This is the tongue which a man “speaks to himself and to God.”

The second type of supernatural tongue is an utterance which is intended to be heard by others and supernaturally understood and interpreted by someone for the benefit of the congregation. This is the tongue which functions as a sign to the unbeliever, as on the Day of Pentecost. This tongue, along with its interpretation, is equivalent to a prophecy. (If prophecy were a dime, the tongue and its interpretation would each be a nickel.) This type of tongue is one of the nine gifts of the Spirit listed in 1 Cor. 12:8-10, and is not given to every single believer. These gifts are distributed to specific members of the congregation according to God’s will, for the edification of the congregation. This is the tongue to which Paul refers when he writes “All do not speak with tongues, do they?” (1 Cor. 12:30). No, all do not speak in tongues to the congregation, but all may pray and sing in tongues “to himself and to God.” Paul also says “All are not prophets, are they?” yet he also says “ye all may prophesy” (14:31). One does not have to be a prophet to prophesy, and by the same token, one does not have to have the “gift of tongues” (i.e., the tongue which is for the edification of the assembly, and needs an interpretation) in order to pray and sing in tongues privately for one’s own edification. □

THE SALEM WITCH TRIALS

Dr. Daniel Botkin

Most Americans today do not take the subject of witches seriously. There are some neo-pagans who practice witchcraft, and there are born-again Christians who know that witchcraft is nothing to fool around with, but to most Americans, witches are in the same category as fairies and elves. Witches are to Halloween what Santa Claus is to Christmas.

The Puritans of Salem, Massachusetts believed the Bible and took the subject of witchcraft seriously. The story of the Salem witch trials is bizarre and puzzling. Salem was not the first place where people were executed for witchcraft, of course. Prior to the Salem hangings, sixteen people were executed for witchcraft in other parts of New England. Prior to that, there were thousands ("tens of thousands" according to one source) who were burned at the stake for allegedly practicing witchcraft during the Protestant Reformation in Europe. None of the previous witch trials has intrigued historians like the Salem witch trials, though. Salem was unique.

It all started with Tituba, a female slave from Barbados, who lived in the home of Rev. Samuel Parris, the minister of the church in Salem. Tituba showed some of the young girls of Salem how to tell fortunes by floating an egg white in a glass. The girls, intrigued by the fortune telling, continued to meet with Tituba in the Parris kitchen, until the girls became "afflicted."

The first to be afflicted was nine-year-old Betty, the daughter of Rev. Parris. Betty went into a trance and, with her hands frozen in place, uttered "the most hideous gargles and growls." Prayer only made her condition worse, and caused her to scream. Betty's cousin Abigail, who also lived in the Parris home, soon started manifesting strange behavior. She barked like a dog, crawled under furniture, stomped her feet, howled,

and shouted "Whish! Whish!" as she flapped her arms. This sort of bizarre behavior quickly spread to all eight girls, and later to three more.

Dr. Griggs was called, but he could not explain the girls' strange behavior. Perhaps the girls were bewitched, the doctor suggested. Rev. Parris did not want to believe this, until Mary Sibley, a neighbor, instructed Tituba to make a "witch cake" to determine if witchcraft was present. The witch cake was made of rye flour mixed with urine from the afflicted girls. The cake was fed to a dog, and the dog was observed. The effect of the cake on the dog is not known, but apparently the dog exhibited some behavior which led the people to conclude that the witch cake had bewitched the dog, thereby confirming the suspicion of witchcraft. Ministers then surrounded the girls and demanded the names of those who had bewitched them. The girls offered no names, so names were suggested: Was it Sarah Good? Yes! Was it Sarah Osborn? Yes! Was it Tituba? Yes!

These were the first three to be arrested. Tituba denied practicing witchcraft until they beat a confession out of her. Tituba's confession included stories of witches' sabbaths, blood-red cats and rats, demonic creatures, and a personal visit from Satan himself. Because Tituba confessed, she was not executed. Sarah Good and Sarah Osborn, however, maintained their innocence all the way to the gallows, even though a confession would have saved their lives. With the noose around her neck, Sarah Good shouted at the minister, "I am no more a witch than you are a wizard! If you take my life away, God will give you blood to drink!" Years later this minister had a hemorrhage, and died drinking his own blood.

Over sixty people were accused of witchcraft that year in Salem. Those who confessed were able to walk

away from the hangman's noose. The nineteen who refused to confess were hanged. Eighty-year-old Giles Corey simply refused to testify. Boulders were laid on his chest to try to squeeze either a confession or a denial out of him. After being pinned under the weight of the stones for two days, he died. Three others died in jail awaiting trial. Four-year-old Dorcas Good was kept in chains for nine months because the afflicted girls claimed that Dorcas' spirit had bitten them.

Most of the accused were people of good reputation, many of them well-respected church members. All of those found guilty were convicted on the testimony of the afflicted girls. The "evidence" was either "spectral evidence" (the girls' claims that the spirit of the accused appeared to them and harmed them by biting, scratching, piercing, and choking) or the "test of touch" (the cessation of the girls' erratic behavior when touched by the accused).

During the courtroom proceedings, the girls often broke out into fits of screaming, writhing, and flailing, especially when the accused were ordered by the judges to look upon the girls. Sometimes the girls would all simultaneously mimic the gestures and body movements of the accused. When the girls claimed to see the "specters" (spirits) of the accused going after two women in the courtroom, it produced surprising effects: one of the two women fainted, and the other woman broke out into fits.

Of all those accused, Rebecca Nurse seemed the least likely candidate for a witch. She was a meek, gentle, God-fearing, church-going elderly woman. When brought before the court, she said, "I never afflicted no child, no, never in my life." She then prayed, "O Lord, help me!" and the girls swooned. The jury brought back a "not guilty" verdict, causing the girls to writhe and flail and howl. The

judges told the jury to go back and reconsider their verdict. The verdict was changed to "guilty" and Rebecca Nurse was hanged.

These events began in December 1691 and ended abruptly in the fall of 1692. There were no other reports of afflictions after that. Four years later, a judge and twelve jurors confessed their own bewilderment and shame for their actions: "We confess that we ourselves were not capable to understand nor able to withstand the mysterious delusion of the Powers of Darkness and Prince of the Air ... [we] do hereby declare that we justly fear that we were sadly deluded and mistaken."

Twelve-year-old Ann Putnam, one of the most vociferous accusers, years later wrote a confession of her own bewilderment: "I greatly fear I have been instrumental with others, though ignorantly and unwittingly, to bring upon myself and this land the guilt of innocent blood: though what was said or done by me against any person I can truly and uprightly say before God and man, I did it not for any anger, malice or ill will to any person, for I had no such things against one of them, but what I did was ignorantly, being deluded of Satan."

What really happened at Salem? One 19th-century historian concluded that the girls were just "great actors" who deceived their elders. If this is true, then the judges and jury were extremely naive and gullible -- downright stupid, in fact -- and these girls, all of them members of a God-fearing Puritan community, were extremely wicked -- wicked enough to knowingly send twenty innocent people to their death. Freudian psychologists have tried to explain it as "mass hysteria." This does not really explain what caused it, though; it merely gives a clinical-sounding name to the phenomenon. Some Bible-believing Christians have suggested that actual witchcraft was at fault -- that the girls were possessed by demons, and that these lying spirits caused the deluded girls to lie and send innocent Christians to the gallows.

For a Bible-believer, this last idea

seems like the most likely explanation. However, strange sightings reported by some adults suggest that there may have been something else at work in conjunction with the demonic activity. John Londer claimed he saw "a black thing" with the body of a monkey, the feet of a rooster, and the face of a man. This thing spoke to him, he said. Joseph Bayley reported seeing an apparition of Mr. and Mrs. John Proctor as he passed by their house. (The Proctors were in jail awaiting trial at the time.) Bayley's wife was with him, but did not see what he saw. Another man reported seeing "strange things" in his chimney, things which quivered like jelly, undulated, then disappeared and reappeared as lights. His wife saw nothing.

Hallucinations, undulating objects, lights, paranoia, erratic and irrational behavior, tingling, crawling sensations on the skin... Based on my observation of drug-taking hippies in the late 1960s, I would say that the afflicted people of Salem were having a bad LSD trip. A far-fetched idea? Not really. There is a parasitic fungus known as ergot. This fungus grows on grains, and contains isoergine, an alkaloid which has an effect similar to that of LSD or of *ololiuqui*, the ritual hallucinogenic used by the Aztec Indians. The ergot fungus grows especially well on rye. What grain do you suppose the people of Salem ate? Rye.

Rye grown in low, wet ground would be especially likely to have a heavy infestation of ergot. Three of the afflicted girls, including the most notorious of the accusers, lived on the Putnam farm, which was located in a swampy meadow. Mrs. Putnam was one of the few adults afflicted. Salem's rye harvest that fall was stored in barns for months before it was finally threshed, shortly before Thanksgiving, making conditions especially favorable for ergot infestation. The first symptoms of the girls' affliction appeared in December, soon after the rye was threshed.

Ergot poisoning produces a number of symptoms: crawling, tingling sensation on the skin, vertigo, ringing

in the ears, headaches, disturbances in sensation, hallucinations, muscular contractions, epileptic convulsions, vomiting, diarrhea, mania, melancholia, psychosis, and delirium. Every single one of these symptoms are alluded to in the records of the Salem witch trials.

Ergot is most likely to appear during warm, rainy springs. According to the diary of Samuel Sewall, the spring of 1691 was warmer and wetter than usual. The following year there was a drought (a condition not favorable for ergot growth), and the witch hunts abruptly ended, leaving the people of Salem confused and bewildered by their own irrational actions -- much like some drug users who can only explain their irrational behavior by saying that their actions were drug-induced.

If the rye crop was infected with ergot, wouldn't the entire town have been afflicted? Not necessarily. One field can be infected with ergot, and the field next to it can be free of ergot. The severity of ergot poisoning also depends on how badly the rye is infected and on how much infected rye is eaten. Epidemics of ergot poisoning in Europe suggest that females are more susceptible to poisoning than males, and children are more susceptible than adults. All those who were severely afflicted in Salem were female children. It is interesting that accusations of witchcraft in Europe often increased during epidemics of ergot poisoning.

One way or another, the Devil was definitely at work in Salem. If ergot poisoning was present, the Devil latched onto it and made use of the fear, paranoia, and hallucinations that it produced, in the same way he has used the popularity of mind-altering drugs to draw people into the occult in our generation.

What lessons can we learn from this dark episode in the Church's history? The most obvious lesson is Don't tamper with witchcraft or hallucinogenics. Some other obvious lessons: Don't jump to conclusions. Don't be quick to believe an accusation against a brother or sister. Don't

believe accusations without real evidence from reliable witnesses. And don't go trying to concoct "evidence" by questionable means like the "witch cake." "We ought not to practice witchcraft to discover witches," Increase Mather said.

Another important lesson that is especially relevant in our time: Don't let yourself be carried away by any doctrinal wind that happens to be sweeping through the Church. The record of the behavior of Salem's afflicted girls sounds very much like reports of some modern-day revival meetings -- howling, barking, screaming, growling, crawling, writhing, flailing, swooning, etc. If the girls were possessed by lying spirits and/or suffering ergot-induced hallucinations, then these manifestations were not of God. If, on the other hand, the girls were telling the truth and were truly bewitched by the accused (an unlikely possibility), then their actions were the manifestations of those who are bewitched. Regardless of which view we take, the conclusion is the same: these manifestations were not of God.

The Bible does not forbid being emotional. On the contrary, the Bible encourages us to express our emotions in worship and praise. The Psalms are filled with such encouragement. Furthermore, the Bible gives examples of emotional worship that was pleasing to God. True worship will bring honor to God. The Salem witch trials brought shame, not honor. And some of the circus antics taking place today "in Jesus' name" also bring shame upon the Lord's reputation. May the story of Salem be a warning to us all. □

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REBELLION IS AS THE SIN OF WITCHCRAFT

Daniel Botkin

"For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (1 Sam. 15:23). There are times when we must engage in righteous rebellion and sanctified stubbornness in order to do the right thing. However, we need to be absolutely sure that we are not rebelling against something which God has ordained and established.

Some people rebel by cutting themselves off from all fellowship with other believers. These deluded disciples view themselves as "lone prophets," and refuse to be accountable to any congregation, because no congregation measures up to their expectations. They think they are sacrificing the joys of fellowship for the sake of God's truth, when in fact they are in rebellion against God, because God commands us in the Scriptures to "forsake not the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is" (Heb. 10:25).

Samuel's words of rebuke were spoken to a man who stubbornly insisted that his disobedience was "for the Lord." God had commanded King Saul to totally destroy the Amalekites, including the animals. Saul and his army spared the best of the sheep, oxen, fatlings, and lambs. When Samuel confronted Saul about this, Saul kept trying to justify himself by saying that he had spared the animals "to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God." Couldn't Samuel understand that Saul had a spiritual reason for his actions? Saul wasn't doing this for himself; he was doing it "to sacrifice unto the Lord."

"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams," Samuel said. "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry."

Saul lost his throne, his crown, and his kingdom for refusing to obey, even though his refusal was supposedly "for the Lord." Disciples who refuse to be

a part of a congregation will be deprived of the blessings of God in this life and lose rewards which could be theirs in the age to come, even though their refusal to fellowship is supposedly "for the Lord" and for the sake of truth as they perceive it.

In contrast to the story of King Saul, there is the little-known story of the Rechabites. There is some uncertainty about who Rechab was and exactly who these people were and where their descendants are today, but that is not the point. Rechab had a son named Jonadab. Jonadab decided that he and his descendants would live differently than other people: "Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye nor your sons forever," he commanded his sons. "Neither shall ye build a house, nor sow seed, nor plant a vineyard nor own one. But all your days ye shall dwell in tents, that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers" (Jer. 35:6f).

Jonadab the son of Rechab wanted his descendants to avoid city life and continue living as nomads. It is important that we understand that it was not God who commanded the Rechabites to abstain from wine. It was not God who told them they could not sow seed or plant vineyards. It was not God who commanded them to live in tents throughout their generations. It was Jonadab who commanded his sons to maintain these traditions.

What if a father in our modern American culture were to decide that he wanted to establish some similar traditions for his family? And what if he ordered his adult sons to maintain these traditions throughout their generations? I think most American Christians would tell the sons, "Your old man's crazy. You don't have to do all those things. It's bondage to think that way." And most American sons would heartily agree with this assessment of their father's peculiar wishes.

The Rechabites didn't view their father Jonadab that way, though. The Rechabites told Jeremiah, "Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he

hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters; nor to build houses for us to dwell in; neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed; but we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us" (Jer. 35:8-10).

Most Americans would feel sorry for those poor, deluded Rechabites -- still in bondage to their crazy ancestor's wild ideas about the best kind of lifestyle. Maybe the Rechabites need deliverance from a "generational curse." Maybe we should utter a prophecy over them to set them free from their terrible oppression. Better yet, let's let Jeremiah utter a prophecy over them, so we can all see what the Lord God thinks of all this nonsense:

"And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, This saith Yahweh of Hosts, the God of Israel: Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according to all that he hath commanded you: Therefore thus saith Yahweh of Hosts, the God of Israel: Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not lack a man to stand before Me forever" (Jer. 35:18f).

Read those words again and let them sink in. God commended the Rechabites for their obedience, and promised that they would always have "a man to stand before Yahweh forever." These words normally refer to priests and faithful prophets. (See 2 Chron. 29:11; Ezk. 44:15; 1 Kings 17:1; et. al.)

I don't think we realize how un-Biblical our American ways are, nor do we see how deeply rooted the rebellion in our American culture is. Our nation was born out of rebellion against the British because we wanted Independence. Regardless of whether or not America's founding fathers were right to revolt, our culture and the American Church are now permeated with rebellion and an intense desire to be accountable to no one -- not to fathers or mothers, not to husbands, not to a congregation. May God slay the rebellion in our hearts and give us the heart of the Rechabites. □

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS LOVE

Daniel Botkin

The first of a nine-part series on the nine fruits of the Spirit

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control." -Gal. 5:22f

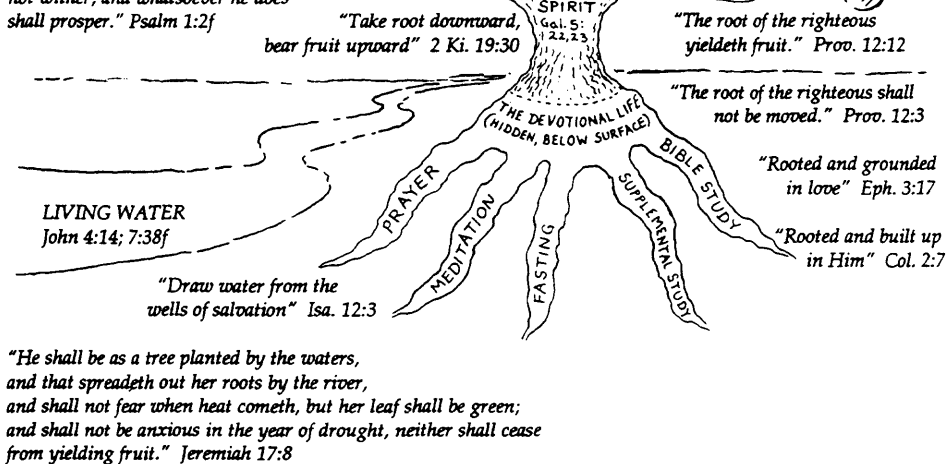
Love is the first quality mentioned in Paul's description of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Love for God and for man is of supreme importance, as the Messiah taught: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Mt. 22:37-40).

When we speak of love, it is important that we distinguish between the Bible's definition of love and the world's definition of love. When worldly-minded people think of love, they usually think of a mushy, syrupy, sentimental emotion. Biblical love is certainly not cold and unemotional, but it is much more than a gooey, feel-good emotion. The world thinks that a spiritual, love-filled person is someone so tolerant that he never says anything bad about other people. The Bible, on the other hand, tells us that King David, a man after God's heart, said, "Do not I hate them, O Yahweh, that hate Thee? ... I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies" (Ps. 139:21f). The prophet Jehu rebuked King Jehoshaphat with these words: "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate Yahweh? [a question we need to ask ourselves] Therefore is wrath upon thee from before Yahweh" (2 Chr. 19:2).

Of course those examples are from the Old Testament. Does the New Testament contain that sort of negative, intolerant rhetoric? Yeshua, the love-filled Messiah of the New Testa-

"TREES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS" Isaiah 61:3

"...his delight is in the Torah of Yahweh, and in His Torah he meditates day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth fruit in his season. His leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he does shall prosper." Psalm 1:2f



ment, told the religious hypocrites, "you are of your father the devil" (Jn. 8:44). True love tells people what they need to hear, not necessarily what they want to hear. Love for the Father's house motivated the gentle Carpenter from Nazareth to take a whip and drive the money-changers out of the Temple and overturn their tables. Paul, the love-filled Apostle, struck a man blind and called him "thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness." All because the man tried to turn someone away from the message Paul was preaching. (See Acts 13:6-11.) The world sometimes speaks about "tough love," but I don't think the world knows what tough love really is.

So what is God's definition of love? God's love is revealed in this, that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Jn. 3:16). God's love is revealed in the giving of His Son to save mankind from perishing. Those who refuse to believe in God's Son, however, are not the recipients of

God's love, and do perish: "he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (Jn. 3:18). This is how God's love operates. He does not force His love on those who refuse it. He lets them go their own way and perish.

If we want to know how God wants us to love, we need to look at God's love as it was expressed and poured out through His Son. In other words, we ask ourselves "How did Yeshua show His love for His Father and for His fellow man?" The answer to this question will tell us how God wants us to love.

Yeshua showed His love for the Father by doing what pleased the Father. "I do always those things that please Him," Yeshua said (Jn. 8:29). How did He know what pleased the Father? The Torah told Him what things are pleasing and displeasing to the Father. When He was in the wilderness, He resisted temptation by choosing to honor the Father's Torah. For each of the three temptations, He quoted from Deuteronomy. His love

for the Father was shown by obedience to God's commandments, and the same is true for us. "For this is the love of God," John wrote, "that we keep His commandments" (1 Jn. 5:3). If someone in John's generation had read John's statement and asked, "John, what are the commandments of God?", John would have said, "You'll find them here in this Torah scroll."

Yeshua's love for His fellow man was shown by His compassion for the multitudes. "When He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd" (Mt. 9:36). He loved the multitudes not in an impersonal way, but as individuals, helping and healing them one at a time. He even loved individuals who walked away from Him because they couldn't pay the price of discipleship. It says of the rich young ruler, that "Jesus beholding him loved him" (Mk. 10:21). Yeshua's love for the rich young ruler did not cause Him to lower the cost of discipleship, though. He did not run after this young man to try to work out some special arrangement for him. Yeshua's love did not stop Him from letting this young man go his own way.

Yeshua even loved the people of the city that rejected Him. He wept and lamented over Jerusalem. (Lk. 13:34f; 9:41-44) The Greek word translated "wept" in Luke 19:41 means to sob and wail aloud. He was not grieved for Himself. He was not pouting and feeling sorry for Himself because the people didn't appreciate Him and give Him the recognition He deserved. He was grieved for the people because He knew what they were missing out on by failing to recognize their Messiah.

After weeping over the city, He went into the Temple and drove out the buyers and sellers. We, too, should have the boldness and zeal to "overturn the tables" by exposing error in God's house. Before we imitate the Whipping Messiah, however, we should first learn to imitate the Weeping Messiah. Some people who try to expose error are motivated by nothing

more than their fleshly anger and pride. They know they are right (and they are!), they're proud of it, and they want to prove it. They don't really care about the people they are trying to instruct and correct. It is possible to be theologically correct according to the letter of the law, but exhibit attitudes and actions which are contrary to the spirit of the law. The letter of the law kills, but the spirit of the law gives life. (2 Cor. 3:6) Before we attempt to expose and correct error in God's house, we need to be sure we are motivated by our grief for God's misguided people, and not by fleshly anger or pride. Until we have learned to imitate the Weeping Messiah, we have no right to imitate the Whipping Messiah.

All of the above information tells us only what our love for God and for man should look like. There is still the question of "How?" How do we love people who are not very loveable? It's easy to love people who seem naturally loveable to us. It's more difficult to love people we can't stand to be around. A poem I heard years ago expresses it quite well:

To dwell above
With saints we love,
Oh, that would be glory!
To dwell below
With saints we know,
Well, that's another story!

Our old carnal nature cannot produce the fruit of love. Love is the fruit of the *Spirit*, not the fruit of our flesh. We can only love others as we learn to let God pour His divine love for others into us. Romans 5:5 says "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." When this happens, it is actually God's love that we have for the person, and not (originally) our own love. This cannot be used as a cop-out, however. We can't just say, "I love you with the love of the Lord, brother," when we know that in reality we hate his guts. If we have truly received God's love for that person, it will be real. We will have it, we will feel it, and most importantly, we will express it in some way. If our brother

needs encouragement to lift him up, our love will be expressed by a word of encouragement. If he needs rebuke and correction, our love will be expressed by a word of rebuke and correction.

Love is the fruit of the Spirit. We can love only because "God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6). Fruit starts out as a seed, and the Seed which bears the fruit of love is the Messiah in us, the Seed of the Woman promised in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:15), the "Seed that remains" in the person who is born of God, enabling him to "not commit sin" (1 Jn. 3:9). We can only love by becoming a "fruit tree yielding fruit after its kind, whose seed is in itself" (Gen. 1:11). The Seed sprouts and begins to grow, and assimilates all the elements around it, transforming the water and minerals of the soil into itself, until the tree has yielded the fruit of love. This is how the Spirit produces the fruit of love in us. The tree yields fruit only as we yield to the will of God and let the Seed grow. As John the Baptist put it, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). The best way to learn how to decrease and yield to the will of God is to spend time alone with God in the prayer closet. "And thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Mt. 6:6). □

The following poem was written this year at the Feast of Tabernacles by poetess Betsy Botkin (age 13) and poetess Andrea Cox (age 12).

TABERNACLES

Tabernacles is so fun;
We get to play, we get to run.
On our booths made out of boards
We hang our pumpkins, corn and gourds.
We get to see our friends so dear;
They come from far, they come from near.
We're always in a real good mood
Because there is a bunch of food.
Thanks a bunch for coming here.
We hope that you come back next year.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS JOY

Daniel Botkin

The second of a nine-part series on the nine fruits of the Spirit

When I was a little boy, I wanted to live a life that pleased God. For some reason, I thought that this would only be possible by being a sad monk in some dreary, distant monastery. I wasn't raised Catholic, so I'm not sure where this idea came from, but it frustrated and disappointed me. I wanted to please God, and I knew that I didn't have what it takes to live a life without joy. I did not realize until I was much older that it is a great joy to follow and serve the Lord.

Isaiah writes about those who join themselves to Yahweh. God promises to "make them joyful in My house of prayer" (Isa. 56:7). The Hebrew word for joy, *simchah* (שִׂמְחָה), suggests a smiling, cheerful, merry countenance. Sometimes the word refers to loud expressions of joy, in songs and shouts of rejoicing. Several of the Psalms tell us to "shout for joy" and to "make a joyful noise." When the foundation of the second Temple was laid, the people "shouted aloud for joy" and "the noise was heard afar off" (Ezra 3:12f).

God's house is supposed to be a place that makes people joyful. I have been in some churches that are anything but joyful. It has been said that joy is contagious. Depression, pessimism, and apathy are contagious, too. God has called His people to "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Pet. 1:8). Psalm 16:11 tells us where this indescribable joy is found: "In Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand are pleasures evermore."

The devil offers a substitute, worldly pleasure to keep people away from the joy that is found only in God's presence. The Bible speaks about "the pleasures of sin" (Heb. 11:25). Let's be honest -- sin is fun. If it were not, people wouldn't do it so much. The Bible says that people do enjoy

the pleasures of sin, but these pleasures are only "for a season," and then the sinners reap the bitter fruit of their sin. "The joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment," said one of Job's friends, "yet he shall perish forever like his own dung" (Job 20:5-7).

A man once took his son to the public baths for a lesson about the pleasures of sin. First he took the boy into a nice, warm pool for a short time. Then he took the boy to the coldest pool and threw him in the water. The boy howled and quickly got himself out of the water. Then the father wrapped a warm towel around the shivering boy and took him into the warm steam room. "Son," the father explained, "I did that to demonstrate to you what sin is like. At first it makes you feel nice and comfortable, like you felt in that first pool. But afterwards, when it's time to pay for your sin, it makes you feel cold and miserable, like you felt when I threw you into the cold pool."

The devil offers only the worldly pleasures of sin for a season. The pleasure God offers is fullness of joy in His presence. This inward joy is

something that abides within us even when our outward circumstances are not conducive to joy. Habakkuk wrote, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will joy in the God of my salvation" (3:17f). The abiding joy of the Lord is not dependent on outward circumstances.

Obedience is required for this joy to remain in us, though: "If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:10f). This Scripture reveals an important key to bearing the fruit of joy. It is only by *His* joy remaining in us that *our* joy is full. What was the Messiah's joy? Hebrews 12:2 says that He endured the cross "for the joy that was set before Him." The joy set before Him was His Bride: "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee" (Isa. 62:5). We are the joy set before Him, and He should be the joy set before us.

We cannot experience the abiding joy of the Lord until we forsake the worldly pleasures of sin. The Holy Spirit will only bear the fruit of joy when the tree is abiding in the presence of the Lord and looking forward to being united to the Bridegroom. "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom," said John the Baptist, "but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy is therefore fulfilled" (John 3:29). The greatest joy we can experience is to know that the Messiah is pleased with His people, and to hear Him rejoicing over His Bride. □

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS PEACE

Daniel Botkin

The third of a nine-part series on the nine fruits of the Spirit

Years ago people talked about "making your peace with God." This expression is not heard much nowadays, probably because the world has lost sight of the fact that sinners (even nice ones) are rebels at war with God. In Hebrew blessings and prayers, God is often called *melech ha-olam*, "King of the Universe." Every time a sinner breaks the Law of God, he is declaring war on the King of the Universe. When a sinner makes his peace with God, he is expected to quit breaking God's Law.

Isaiah wrote this about peace: "Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith Yahweh; and I will heal him. But the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isa. 57:19ff). To the repentant, whether they are far from God or near to God, God proclaims peace and healing when they repent. The fate of the wicked, on the other hand, is a restless life of inner turmoil, continually plagued by the mire and dirt of their sinful life. The verses preceding Isaiah's statement show us that genuine repentance is what makes the difference: "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (v. 15).

Repentance must be accompanied by faith. After justification by faith is explained in Romans chapter 4, Romans chapter 5 begins with these words: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." We have inward peace because we know our sins are forgiven. False prophets offer a counterfeit "peace," of course.

People are told to just repeat the words of a prayer, with no explanation of the necessity of genuine repentance and faith. People are given the impression that they can continue to live in sin and still be at peace with God. Preachers who promote this message are like the false prophets in Jeremiah's day: "They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace" (Jer. 6:14). When an unrepentant sinner is told by a preacher that he has made his peace with God, this gives the sinner a false sense of security. He erroneously assumes that he is at peace with God, but his actions prove that he is still a rebel at war with God.

The only way to make peace with God is unconditional surrender to God's terms. "Here are My terms," says God. "Repent and put your trust in My Son. He paid the penalty for your sins, so you owe your life to Him. If you sincerely believe this, you will show your faith by following Him and obeying His teachings." Normally the first act of obedience is water baptism, which serves as a formal ceremony to officially proclaim the person's transfer from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light.

Once a person has made his peace with God, the Holy Spirit can begin to produce the fruit of peace in the person's heart and mind. "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Ph'p. 4:7). There are many other verses that speak about the wonderful peace of God. Where can people with troubled hearts and minds find this peace that will bring rest to their souls? Yeshua said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Mt. 11:28ff).

Notice that He first *gives* rest, then we must *find* that rest. It is a free gift, but we have to do something to find it. It is found by taking His yoke upon ourselves. In rabbinic thought, the yoke refers to Torah. The Torah as taught by the Pharisees had become an unbearable yoke (Mt. 23:4; Acts 15:10). The Torah as taught by Yeshua, on the other hand, was easy. The yoke of the Torah was not non-existent in the teachings of Yeshua, as some people seem to think. He did teach obedience to the written Torah, and this is the yoke by which we find rest to our souls.

Psalms 119:165 says, "Great peace have they that love Thy Torah." If we truly love God's Torah, we will read it, study it, meditate on it, and do it. Then we will have great peace, "the peace of God which passeth all understanding."

"O that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments!" said Yahweh. "Then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea" (Isa. 48:18). □

PASSION AND ZEAL

Daniel Botkin

One day I was driving down a two-lane country highway, and a car was approaching from the opposite direction. At first it looked like the driver was alone, but as the car got closer, I realized there were two people in the car. The driver was a young man, and his passenger was a young lady with her arms wrapped around him and almost sitting on his lap. My first reaction was to roll my eyes, shake my head disapprovingly, and wonder why some people feel no embarrassment about making a public display of their affections. As we passed each other on the highway, though, I saw big letters written on the side of the car proclaiming this couple "Just Married!"

"Oh!" I thought to myself. "In *that* case..." Suddenly their public display of affection was perfectly understandable and acceptable to me. Instead of seeing this couple as two lust-crazed people without discretion or self-control, I saw them as starry-eyed newlyweds on their way to their honeymoon.

We expect to see young newlyweds hang all over each other, totally oblivious to the fact that others may be observing them. It seems a bit unusual, though, when we see an older couple showing this kind of affection for one another in public. After all, married couples gradually stop showing affection for one another in public. Sometimes they stop showing affection in private as well.

There is a spiritual parallel to all of this. In the Bible, God's relationship to His people is likened to the relationship between a bridegroom and his bride: "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee" (Isa. 62:5).

When a person enters into a real relationship with God, that person, whether male or female, is often very much like a starry-eyed bride. New disciples are often oblivious to the opinions of others as they publicly and openly display their affection for their

newly-found Lord. The new disciple is like a bride on her honeymoon, with her head in the clouds.

We expect newly-saved people to behave this way. After the "honeymoon" period, though, we expect them to be as spiritually cold, sterile, and unemotional as all the other Christians around them. We regard zeal as a mark of immaturity, and think that more "dignified" religious expressions are a mark of maturity.

While it is true that both the physical and spiritual maturing processes bring about some positive changes, the quenching of our passion and zeal is not a change for the better. Our passion and zeal, whether romantic or religious, often start out like a blast of fire which seems uncontrollable. This fire should not be quenched, but it should gradually develop into a steadily burning flame that is contained in our hearts and controlled by the Holy Spirit.

Maturity will bring about some changes in the way our love is manifested. As a man who is fast approaching middle age, I am more discreet about showing affection for my wife in public than I was twenty years ago. However, I am just as passionate and zealous about my commitment and faithfulness to her as I ever was. The same is true in my relationship with God. I do not publicly proclaim my love for God quite as loudly and boisterously (and sometimes obnoxiously) as I once did. I am more careful with my words than I used to be, but my passion and zeal for God have not diminished. On the contrary, I believe I have had more passion and zeal for God in these past

few years than I ever had as a young disciple.

The outward expressions of our love for our spouse and our love for God usually change as we mature. This is to be expected. If our passion and zeal have waned, however, we have a problem. Yeshua the Bridegroom addressed this problem when He spoke to His Bride at Ephesus: "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works" (Rev. 2:4f).

In our relationship with God and with our spouse, we need to keep the fire of our love continually burning. If we have lost the zeal and passion we once had, we need to heed the words of the Bridegroom. His instructions can be summarized with three R's: Remember, Repent, Redo. These three R's can help us keep the flames of our passion and zeal ignited. □

ANTINOMIANISM

Daniel Botkin

The New Testament Greek word for "law" is *nomos* (νομος). *Nomos* is the Greek word that was used by the translators of the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word *Torah*. Several times in the New Testament, the word *nomos* appears with an *a*-prefix attached to it, making a new word, *anomos* (ανομος). The *a*-prefix in Greek means "no," "not," or "without." When the *a*-prefix is attached to a Greek word, it gives the word a negative meaning, just like the *a*-prefix does in English words such as *amoral*, *asexual*, *atheist*, etc.

The Greek word *anomos*, therefore, means "without law" or "lawless." Sometimes this word appears in the New Testament in its noun form *ανωμα[ν]* (*anomia[n]*, "lawlessness"). You may recognize this as the source of our English word *anomial* or, in its more common form, *antinomian*. An antinomian is, according to Webster's, "one who holds that under the gospel dispensation of grace the moral law is of no use or obligation because faith alone is necessary to salvation."

Webster's description of an antinomian reminds me of some preachers I've heard. I don't think I'd want to be an antinomian, considering what the New Testament says about anomians and anomianism. Let's look at a few places where the Bible talks about this.

Yeshua said, "Not everyone that saith unto Me, 'Lord, Lord' shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works?' And then will I profess unto them, 'I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity [*anomial*]' (Mt. 7:21-23).

Here the Son of God describes a multitude of people ("many," He said, not just a small handful of cult mem-

bers) who find themselves excluded from the Kingdom. Who are these people? It is certainly not atheists, Hindus, or Buddhists who are being talked about here. The people being talked about here are people who call Jesus "Lord" and even do good works in His name. These are church people involved in church activities. They expect to inherit eternal life, but are stunned to find themselves excluded from the Kingdom. The Jesus they thought they knew was obviously a counterfeit Christ. And what is the proof that they never really knew Him? They were anomians -- "workers of lawlessness" as Stern's *Jewish New Testament* words it; people who "practice lawlessness" according to the *New American Standard Bible*.

Yeshua spoke about anomians again in the parable of the wheat and tares. The tares ("the children of the wicked one") grow together with the wheat ("the children of the kingdom") until harvest time, when the angels are sent forth to "gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity [*anomial*, 'lawlessness']" (Mt. 13:41). Throughout the history of Christianity, the wheat and tares have been side by side, and it has often been difficult to tell which is which. But as harvest time draws near, it will become more apparent which people are wheat and which people are tares. The anomians are the tares, Yeshua said. They have been in His Kingdom for a long time, and now He is sending forth His "angels" (the word simply means "messengers," either human or heavenly or both) to rid His Kingdom of antinomianism.

Paul wrote about a "falling away" (*apostasia*, "departure from truth") that was to come. This falling away was not just referring to some event in the distant future. Paul described the falling away as "the mystery of iniquity (*anomias*, 'lawlessness')," and said that this "secret power of lawlessness" (NIV) was "already at work," and that the "Wicked" (*anomos*) would be revealed (2 Thes. 2:7f). Since *anomos* is an adjective, many

translators provide a noun and render this as "the Wicked One" or "the Lawless One," having in mind an end-time Anti-Christ figure. While it is possible that there may be some reference here to the Anti-Christ, the word *anomos* may simply be referring to the lawless *theology* (i.e., antinomianism) which caused the Church to depart from the Torah and go into apostasy. The error of antinomianism, the "secret power of lawlessness," is being exposed in our generation. Many Christians are waking up and returning to Torah. The secret power of lawlessness is no longer a secret to these people. When the secret is out, lawlessness loses its power and its grip over these people.

The root of the Church's apostasy has been her rejection of the Torah. Perhaps it would be fairer and more accurate to say that the Church rejected those elements of the Torah that seemed "too Jewish" for her. The transgression of any of the Law is wrong, though, because "sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). When we violate God's Torah, we sin.

Is there any hope for people who are a part of a Church that has been apostate for most of her history? Deliverance from the spirit of lawlessness comes by the grace of God, but it is a grace that teaches us to honor God's Torah, not a grace that teaches us to be antinomians:

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world: Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity (*anomias*, 'lawlessness'), and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:11-14).

A grace which does not teach us to honor God's Torah is not the grace of God, and a savior who does not redeem us from antinomianism is not the true Savior, but a counterfeit Christ who cannot save. □

THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

Daniel Botkin

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it." Mt. 13:45f



Some people view the merchant man in this parable as a seeker looking for something meaningful and noble in life. The pearl that he finds is the opportunity to be a disciple of the Messiah. The seeker becomes a disciple by forsaking all his earthly possessions. I will not deny the validity of this interpretation. Certainly the parable can be understood this way. However, for the purpose of this article, I want to look at an alternative understanding of the parable. I want us to think of the man seeking pearls as the Heavenly Father seeking a Bride made up of true worshippers. ("For the Father seeketh such to worship Him," Yeshua said - John 4:23.) The "one pearl" is the one true Body of Messiah (commonly called "the Church"), and the "great price" was the suffering the Messiah had to endure to obtain His Bride.

Years ago when I was new in the faith, I was intrigued by this parable. I knew almost nothing about pearls, so I went to the library and looked in the Encyclopedia. What I learned provides some remarkable illustrations and lessons about true worship and about the Body of Messiah as the pearl of great price.

One thing unique about the pearl is its source. Mineral gems are formed in the ground, but the pearl is formed in an oyster, a living being. In like manner, there are religions and forms of worship that have their origin in the earth, and there is true worship which is born of the Living God. In Genesis, none of the animals taken "out of the ground" could be a bride for the first Adam. His bride had to be taken out of a living being. None of the man-made "mineral gem" religions of earthly origin, taken out of the ground,

can be a Bride for Messiah. Only that Body of disciples that are born of the Living God can be the Bride for Messiah, the Last Adam. Furthermore, there is only one species of oyster which produces a pearl of any real, lasting value. There is only one God and one faith that is of any real, lasting value.

There are imitation pearls, and they are virtually worthless. Imitation pearls are made by coating glass beads with a substance that is extracted from fish scales. This is interesting, since the fish has long been a symbol for Christ. (The Greek word "fish," ΙΧΘΥΣ [*ichthus*], was used by early Christians as an acronym for *Iesous Xristos Theou Uios Soter* -- "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior.") Just as liquid is extracted from fish scales to coat imitation pearls, so false prophets extract ideas from the teachings of Jesus, the *Ichthus*, to whitewash their imitation worship and make it look Christ-like. To the untrained eye, imitation pearls (and imitation worship) look like the real thing. Those with a trained eye will eventually see the flaws, though, and know that they are looking at a cheap imitation of the real thing.

Cultured pearls are not the same as imitation pearls. To form cultured pearls, men open oysters and "plant" a grain of sand inside the oyster. This grain of sand becomes the "seed" around which the oyster forms the pearl. Cultured pearls are real pearls,

but they are formed with man's help. Pearls that are formed naturally, without man's help, still retain their color and luster after hundreds of years. Cultured pearls, on the other hand, lose their color and luster after a few decades. It is interesting to note that most denominations, revivals, and movements in Church history begin to fade after a few decades. These are often genuine moves of God, but they soon lose their color and luster because they are, like cultured pearls, too dependent on man. Denominations and movements become "cultured" because they absorb the culture around them. True worship, on the other hand, never loses its original color and luster.

A natural pearl begins when a single grain of sand is drawn into the oyster. In the economy of God, Abraham was the original grain of sand around which the Body of Messiah has formed. (God promised to multiply Abraham's seed "as the sand which is upon the sea shore" - Gen. 22:17.) The oyster secretes a substance called nacre (or mother-of-pearl), a part of itself. It gradually covers the grain of sand in layers over a long period of time. So it has been with the Body of Messiah. God has given of Himself to generation after generation. One generation disappears as it is layered over by a new generation, and the Body grows and develops into the pearl of great price. A normal pearl is formed after seven years -- the number of completion and perfection. Many people believe that there will be 7,000 years of history before God's purpose is completed -- 6,000 years of work and 1,000 years that is "all Sabbath" (i.e., the Millennium).

Although a pearl is not a mineral gem, it is made up of mineral crystals, which break light up into tiny rainbows. In the Revelation, John saw before the throne of God "a sea of glass like crystal" (4:6) and a river "as clear as

crystal" (22:1). He also saw around the throne "a rainbow" (1:28). Ezekiel likewise described the appearance of God's glory "as the appearance of the rainbow" (1:28). The true Body of Messiah should manifest something of God's glory. This is accomplished as the Body absorbs the glory of God. Pearls absorb as well as reflect light. Mineral gems taken from the ground only reflect light. Religions of earthly origin can reflect certain elements of truth. They bounce some of Jesus' teachings off themselves, and appear to have light. It is only external light, however, and not internal, because they cannot absorb the light. "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" (John 1:5).

When complete, a pearl has the same color and luster as the lining of the shell that made it. The Body of Messiah is destined to bear the image of the Son of God: "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). "And as we have borne the image of the earthy [i.e., the earthy Adam], we shall also bear the image of the heavenly [i.e., the heavenly Adam]" (1 Cor. 15:49).

What can mar the beauty of a pearl? Human sweat. Sweat contains an acid that can cause spots and blemishes on the pearl. Sweat is a consequence of sin (Gen. 3:19). Just as sweat makes spots and blemishes on the pearl, so sin makes spots and blemishes on the Body of Messiah. "Spots they are and blemishes," Peter

said of false teachers in the Body (2 Pet. 2:13). Spots and blemishes are removed from pearls by men with the ominous-sounding job title of "the peelers." The peelers scrape away the entire blemished layer, which results in a smaller pearl. This smaller pearl is more valuable, though, because it is now without spot or blemish. This should teach us something about the relative importance or unimportance of congregational size, and how God determines the value of a congregation.

Blemishes can be prevented by washing the pearls in water after each use. Blemishes can be prevented in the Body of Messiah by regularly washing in "the water of the word": "Messiah also loved the Church, and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of the water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25-27).

In Revelation 21:21 John described the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem as being made of twelve pearls. (This is where we get the expression "the pearly gates.") It is believed that the oyster suffers pain when it produces a pearl. Throughout history the Lord has suffered along with His people. "In all their affliction He was afflicted," Isaiah wrote (63:9). Gates speak of entry. It is because of the suffering of the Messiah that we can enter through these gates into the New Jerusalem.

On these gates are written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (Rev. 21:12). Perhaps these gates of pearl will serve as a memorial for all of the suffering that God, the Messiah, and the people of God have had to suffer to obtain the pearl of great price.

The pearl can also teach us some things about the individual members of Messiah's Body. Each pearl is unique. Pearls come in a variety of colors, sizes, and shapes. A pearl can be white, pink, blue, green, black, gray, yellow, cream, or bronze color. It can be round, pear-shaped, T-shaped, cylindrical, or irregular. The Body of Messiah is likewise made up of people of different colors, races, sizes, and shapes. Sometimes when an irregular, ugly pearl is broken open, a perfect pearl is found inside. Sometimes this happens with people, too.

When pearls are completely formed, they need no additional enhancement to improve their natural beauty, unlike mineral gems, which must be cut and polished. Pearls just wait for the oyster to finish its work, then the pearls are brought out into the light, where they are sorted and weighed to determine their value. So shall it be for God's people on Judgment Day. "Yahweh weigheth the spirits" (Prov. 16:2). We will each be sorted and weighed to determine what value we are to God in His Kingdom, and we will be rewarded accordingly. "For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works" (Mt. 16:27). ○

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