

THE COMMANDMENTS OF TORAH: BLUFFING OR BLESSING?

Dr. Daniel Botkin

What is the purpose of the Old Testament Law? Some well-meaning Christians believe that the only reason God gave the Law was to show man that he can't live up to God's standard of righteousness. According to this Christian viewpoint, the Law was purposely designed to frustrate the man who tries to obey it. "I can't keep all those laws!" the man cries out. Through his frustration, the theory goes, the man will see his need for Jesus. When he looks to Jesus, Jesus tells him, "That's okay. My Father didn't really expect you to keep all those commandments. He was just bluffing. He just thought up a list of rules that He knew you wouldn't be able to keep, so that you'd see that under the Law it's impossible to be righteous before God, impossible to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, impossible to be blameless."

In contrast to the words of this imaginary "Jesus," the New Testament says that Zachariah and Elisabeth "were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Lk. 1:6). How can this be? Zachariah and Elisabeth lived before the Messiah died for them. How could anyone still living under the bondage of the Law walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless?

Obviously the purpose of the Law was not just "to show us that it can't be done." Trying to keep the Torah *can* produce frustration, however. A man may grow frustrated if he tries to keep the Torah by the power of the flesh, rather than by the power of the Holy Spirit. Or a man may grow frustrated if he tries to keep the Torah as a means of earning his justification before God. The Torah was not designed to be kept by the power of the flesh, nor was it intended to be a means of earning one's justification before God. "The just shall live by faith." This vital Biblical truth was uttered by the Old

Testament Prophet Habakkuk 2,000 years before the Protestant Reformers latched onto it and made it the rallying cry of the Protestant Reformation.

The Torah can produce frustration for the self-confident man who tries to keep it by mere human will power, or for the self-righteous man who tries to keep it as a means of attaining righteousness. Producing frustration is not the intended purpose of the Torah, though. Moses beautifully sums up the purpose of the Torah in Deut. 4:5f:

"Behold, I taught you all the laws, as Yahweh my God commanded me, that you should obey them in the land whither you go to possess it. Obey them faithfully, and this will show the people of other nations how wise you are. When they hear of all these laws, they will say, 'What wisdom and understanding this great nation has!'"

If our *obedience* to the Torah demonstrates to the nations how *wise* we are, then it follows that our *non-obedience* to the Torah shows the nations that we are *unwise* (which is a nice way of saying "stupid").

When the Torah is obeyed in the right way and for the right reasons, the nations do not say, "What a terrible yoke of bondage these people are under!" The nations say, "What wisdom and understanding these people have!" Let our goal in the Messiah be obedience to the Torah, in the right way and for the right reasons. "For we know that the Law is good, if a man uses it properly" (1 Tim. 1:8). □

"YOU LACKED NOTHING"

Daniel Botkin

The New Testament says "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Tim. 6:8) and "Be content with such things as ye have" (Heb. 13:5). In spite of these Scriptures (and others like them), many of God's people think that they are in great need of more things. Christians in America are especially guilty of this.

After wandering in the wilderness for forty years, the children of Israel were told "these forty years Yahweh thy God hath been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing" (Deut. 2:7). A literal translation of the Hebrew text is "you did not lack a thing" (לֹא חָסַרְתָּ דָבָר). Let's consider just a few of the things that God's people lived without while they were in the desert for those forty years, during which time they "did not lack a thing." They did not have the following items: bank accounts, credit cards, retirement plans, social security, health and life insurance; cars, bikes, recreational vehicles; electric washing machines and clothes dryers; refrigerators, microwave ovens, electric mixers; computers, fax machines, telephones, TVs, video players, radios, CD players; disposable diapers, paper plates, paper towels, Q-tips, kleenex, toilet paper... The list could go on and on.

Of course many of these items wouldn't have been of any use to the people, because they didn't have electricity or indoor plumbing. Their life was simple. Their food staple was manna, and they were given one day's supply at a time. They didn't wear the latest fashions from Egypt, because the Lord made their clothing last: "...these forty years in the wilderness ... thy raiment waxed not old upon thee" (Deut. 8:2, 4). They didn't have permanent dwellings. They lived in tents and *sukkot* (booths). For all practical intents and purposes, they were on a 40-year camping trip. They had food, clothing, and shelter. And the Scripture says that they lacked nothing. The only possessions they



had besides food, clothing, and shelter were whatever items they could haul with them as they crossed the desert.

In America our possessions spill out beyond our sizeable living space. Our possessions fill our closets, clutter our basements and attics, and line the walls of our garages. Some people even have to rent out additional storage space at one of the mini-warehouses that do a thriving business across our nation. I recently heard on the radio that America has about 20% of the world's population, and consumes about 86% of the world's goods. No matter how much of this world's goods we have, it seems it is never enough. "Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied" (Prov. 27:20).

Is it sinful for us to have so much? It depends. It is not a sin to possess things. If our things possess us, however, that is a sin. Yeshua said, "Therefore take no thought, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or, 'What shall we drink?' or, 'Wherewithal shall we be clothed?'" (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek.) For your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteous-

ness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:31-33).

Many American Christians seek first "all these things" and then expect the kingdom of God and His righteousness to be added unto them. If we are more occupied with seeking food and raiment than we are with seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness, then we have reversed the Divine order and are guilty of not trusting our Heavenly Father. And if we are preoccupied and obsessed and distracted from spiritual pursuits by our pursuit of material possessions, then we are guilty of breaking the commandment that says "Thou shalt not covet."

A poor man can be as guilty of covetousness as a wealthy man can, so it is not just an issue of how much stuff we have. It is a matter of having our priorities in order.

"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content," Paul wrote. "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound" (Ph'p. 4:11f). Most American Christians know only how to abound. We would do well to simplify our lives and learn to live on less. The day may come when we are forced to do so. □

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS LONGSUFFERING

Daniel Botkin

The fourth of a nine-part series on the fruit of the Spirit

The KJV says the fruit of the Spirit is longsuffering. Most modern translations use the word "patience" rather than the archaic term "longsuffering." Suffering and patience are related, though. The Hebrew word for "patience," *savlanut*, is related to the word *saval*, which means "suffer."

Patience is one fruit which takes a long time to develop, and it is the one fruit no one wants to wait for. "Give me patience, Lord," we pray. "And hurry up!"

James, writing to the twelve tribes scattered abroad, told his readers "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (Jas. 5:7f).

Years ago a Catholic Arab from Nazareth asked me, "Do you think Jesus will really come back some day?"

"Of course," I answered.

"Why do you believe this?" he asked. "How can you be so sure?"

"Because He came the first time," I replied. "And the same Scriptures that predicted details about His first coming also predict His second coming. If the Scriptures were right about His first coming, why should I doubt the prophecies about His second coming?"

The Messiah came according to the Scriptures the first time ("the former rain"), and we can be certain He will come according to the Scriptures a second time ("the latter rain").

But what does the return of the Messiah have to do with longsuffering? Three things. First, James' exhortation implies that we can expect to suffer affliction between Messiah's first and second Advents. Therefore we need patience to endure: "Take, my brethren, the prophets," James continues, "who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience" (v. 10). Second, the return of



Sitting in Sackcloth.

Messiah will end all suffering: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4). Third, the return of Messiah will mean the vindication of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Rev. 21:12).

No one is going to get away with any crime or injustice they have perpetrated. On Judgment Day the wicked will be punished for every one of their unrighteous actions, and the innocent victims will be adequately compensated for every injustice they suffered. We should pray and work for justice in this life, but if it doesn't happen in this life, James tells us to "Be patient, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord." We can patiently suffer injustice only with the inward assurance that the Lord will someday return and make all things right.

The Bible gives some examples of impatient people who refused to wait and took matters into their own hands. We all know about Abraham's attempt to get an heir through Hagar. If Abraham had waited, he would have saved himself (and his descendants) a lot of grief. Sometimes we get impatient waiting for the fulfillment of something God has promised us. When we take matters into our own hands and get ahead of God, we end up producing an

Ishmael. It is better to be patient and do things God's way instead of our own way.

The children of Israel got tired of waiting for Moses to come down from Mount Sinai, and made a golden calf. The Church likewise got tired of waiting for Jesus to come back, and forged an idolatrous, antinomian theology. The following limerick by D.R. Benson could describe the decline of Christianity as well as the incident at Mount Sinai: *Moses' cohorts grew restive and whiny And constructed a gold idol shiny. "We need something more Up-to-date to adore Than some 'shalts' and 'shalt nots' from Mount Sinai."*

King Saul was another one who lacked patience. When Samuel didn't arrive at Gilgal to offer the sacrifice, Saul took it upon himself to offer the sacrifice, something he had no right to do. As soon as he finished, Samuel showed up. Samuel said, "Thou hast done foolishly ... now thy kingdom shall not continue" (1 Sam. 13:13f).

To do things God's way requires the fruit of patience. If we refuse to be patient and suffer long, we can lose a great deal. Of course there are times when we need to move fast and seize the opportunity that God has clearly put before us. Many people, though, because they lack the fruit of patience, rush into debt, marriage, and other commitments that have long-term consequences.

Practically speaking, how do we bear the fruit of longsuffering? By suffering long. There are no shortcuts. The only instruction James gives in his passage about patience is: "establish your hearts"; "complain not one against another"; take the prophets for an example; do not swear with an oath. Finally, James says that if any is afflicted, "let him pray."

Merely following these instructions will not produce the fruit of longsuffering - longsuffering is the fruit of the Spirit - but following these instructions will prepare our hearts to suffer long as we "let patience have her perfect work" (Jas. 1:4) □

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS GENTLENESS

Daniel Botkin

The fifth of a nine-part series on the fruit of the Spirit

Most modern translations of the Bible say the fruit of the Spirit is "kindness," a word that probably more accurately conveys the idea than "gentleness." Kindness is one of the attributes of God. Though He is "angry with the wicked every day" (Ps. 7:11), He is also "slow to anger, and of great mercy" (Ps. 145:8). "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment," He said, "but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee" (Isa. 54:8). The kindness of God toward us is the basis for our kindness to one another: "And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32).

The parable of the Good Samaritan provides an illustration of God's kindness to man. "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead" (Luke 10:30). What an accurate description of mankind's descent into sin and misery. The devil comes to us as a thief to steal, kill, and destroy (Jn. 10:10). Like the man in the parable, we end up robbed of God's blessings, stripped of God's glory, and wounded in many ways - spiritually, emotionally, mentally, physically.

The thieves in the parable "departed" after robbing and their victim. Once the devil gets what he wants from us, he leaves us alone in our misery. After he has us addicted to a sin, the initial thrill and joy of the sin fades away. Have you ever noticed that billboards, magazine ads, TV, and movies always show happy-looking young people enjoying cigarettes, alcohol, illegal drugs, and illicit sex? The media never show us the old people dying of lung cancer, or the winos passed out in the gutter, or the old burned-out drug addict, or the old wrinkled prostitutes, pimps, and pornographers whose bodies are filled with sexually transmitted diseases. Are these people still having fun? No, not much. They just continue to sin because it's easier than the pain of withdrawal. For them, sin is a form of relief more than a source of pleasure.

Who will help a man who has fallen into sin? Who will rescue him before it's too late? A priest? A Levite? It doesn't require a clergyman. All it requires is someone moved with compassion who is willing and able to show kindness. Even a Samaritan will do.

For the Good Samaritan, it was inconvenient, costly, and perhaps even somewhat dangerous to help this man. In spite of the inconvenience, the cost, and the risks, our Master tells us to "Go and do likewise" when we see someone in need. This commandment is, according to Yeshua, the second most important of all the 613 commandments of the Torah. Our scrupulous observance of

Arrival of the Good Samaritan at the Inn

the other 612 commandments means nothing if we refuse to help people in need when we have the means to help them.

The interesting thing about the parable of the Good Samaritan is that Yeshua never called the Samaritan "good." He just referred to him as "a certain Samaritan." The implication is that a person who did what this Samaritan did is not necessarily an exceptionally good person. Helping someone in need should be a normal human reaction. It is to our shame that the Samaritan's actions seem so exceptional to us that we have bestowed upon this man the title of "The Good Samaritan."

The Samaritan gave the innkeeper instructions about taking care of the needy man. "Take care of him," the Samaritan said, "and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee" (Luke 10:35). We have the same promise from our Master. If we take care of needy people, He will repay us when He comes again: "...the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind ... Although they cannot repay thee, thou shalt be repaid at the resurrection of the just" (Luke 14:13f). □

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS GOODNESS

Daniel Botkin

The sixth of a nine-part series on the fruit of the Spirit

When Adam ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God said, "The man has become as one of us, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:22). Ever since Adam ate the forbidden fruit, man has had an intuitive knowledge of good and evil. But is man's knowledge of what constitutes goodness always accurate? Obviously not, because people in different cultures often have different ideas about what is good and what is evil. In Orthodox Jewish culture it is considered evil to bow down to idols; in Hindu culture this is considered good. In 20th-century American culture, cannibalism is considered evil; in some primitive cultures it is considered good. Even within a culture, individuals often disagree about good and evil.

Who ultimately decides what goodness really is? Who gets to give the authoritative definition of goodness? For the Bible-believer, God must have the final word about what constitutes goodness.

When Moses asked to see God's glory, God said, "I will make all My goodness pass before thee" (Ex. 33:19). As Moses stood in the cleft of the rock, God passed by and expressed His goodness with these words: "Yahweh, Yahweh God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in lovingkindness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means leave the guilty unpunished; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation" (Ex. 34:6f).

God's definition of goodness includes punishment for the wicked as well as forgiveness for the repentant. If we ignore either one of these aspects of God's goodness, we will

have a lopsided view of goodness.

Yeshua "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). We are called to follow His example and likewise bear the fruit of goodness, but we must know what goodness is. Many people think that goodness is just being nice to other people. Often this is true. The "Golden Rule" instructs us to do unto others as we would have them do unto us. Even following the Golden Rule requires discernment, though. Let me explain. Some people think that we should give a person whatever he wants, if we are able to do so. Sometimes giving a person what he wants is good. Sometimes it is not good. If a man wants a bottle of whiskey and a prostitute, and we enable him to fulfill his sinful lusts by giving him money, this is not good. The best way to show goodness to people is not to just give them whatever they want, but to give them something that will really help them.

Goodness can be expressed in our words. It can be expressed in kind words, and it can be expressed in words that seem unkind and harsh. I heard about a preacher who went to the hospital to visit a dying atheist that he knew.

"Have you come to preach at me again?" the atheist asked.

"No, I've spent enough time preaching at you," the preacher said.

"Then why did you come here?" the atheist asked.

"Well, I'm just curious," the preacher explained. "I've seen lots of Christians on their deathbeds, and I've watched them die with the peace of God in their hearts. But I've never seen an atheist face death, and I'm just curious. So don't let me bother you; I'll just sit here and watch."

The atheist felt insulted and was indignant, but he ended up repenting and made his peace with God before he died. Although the preacher's words sounded cruel, they were actually an expression of goodness,

because it is "the goodness of God that leads to repentance" (Rom. 2:4). Our words and actions are good if they cause someone to repent. "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God," Paul wrote (Rom. 11:22). Some people must see the severity of God before they can see the goodness that leads them to repentance.

The New Testament speaks a great deal about the importance of bearing the fruit of goodness. Goodness is usually referred to as "good works." The reason we are saved by grace is "for good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). Here are just a few other verses about the importance of good works:

● "As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." (Gal. 6:10)

● "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." (Heb. 10:24)

● "...a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Tit. 2:14)

● "And let ours also learn to maintain good works ... that they be not unfruitful." (Tit. 3:14)

There is a key to bearing the fruit of goodness, and that key is revealed from the very beginning, in the first chapter of Genesis. The first thing God declared "good" was His creation; therefore the key to bearing the fruit of goodness is to let God re-create us. In Genesis, goodness was manifested to God as the dumb elements of the planet yielded to the commands of their Creator. Goodness will likewise be manifested in our lives as we yield to the commands of our Creator. As God sees us obeying His commands, He will say, as He said so many times that first week in Genesis, "It is good." And when He is all finished re-creating us into the image of His Son, He will say, as He said that first Sabbath in history, "Behold, it is very good." □

שבת

KEEPING THE SABBATH & KEEPING YOUR JOB Dr. Daniel Botkin

This article is written for those who believe in keeping the 7th-day Sabbath. Permission is granted to photocopy for employers or for Sabbath-keeping friends.

"I'd like to keep the Sabbath, but I can't -- I have to work on Saturdays."

Wrong. You may think so, but you are mistaken. No one who believes in keeping the Sabbath has to work on Saturdays, at least not in America. No one is pointing a gun at the heads of American Christians and Jews and forcing them to work on Saturdays. Americans who work on the Sabbath do so by their own choice, not because they have to.

There were many Sabbath-keeping Christians in Communist Russia who were ordered by their oppressive government to work on Saturdays. Many of these Christians chose to obey God rather than man, and they lost a lot more than some crummy job. They suffered imprisonment, exile, and torture for refusing to break God's holy Sabbath. When we stand with these faithful saints before the Lord on Judgment Day, will any of us have the gall to say, "Well, Lord, I wanted to keep the Sabbath, but I couldn't -- I had to work on Saturdays."?

How does a disciple of the Messiah go about getting every Sabbath off from his job? First of all, you do *not* go in and ask your employer if you can have Saturdays off. You are not there to make a request; you are there to inform. You *inform* your employer (politely and respectfully, of course) that you will not be available to work from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. Your employer may respond in a number of ways:

● "I'll see what we can do to accomodate you, but in the meantime

you'll have to keep working Saturdays."

● "We can give you Saturdays off, but you'll have to work for a few hours on Friday nights."

● "We'll do our best to accomodate you, but we may have to occasionally ask you to come in on a Saturday if we're short of help."

None of these responses is acceptable. Pharoah tried three times to persuade Moses and Aaron to compromise the Lord's demands. (See Exodus 8:25-29; 10:8-11.) Moses and Aaron steadfastly refused to accept

Moses and Aaron steadfastly refused to accept Pharoah's offer of a compromise solution, and we must likewise refuse to accept an employer's offer of a compromise.

Pharoah's offer of a compromise solution, and we must likewise refuse to accept an employer's offer of a compromise.

What if your employer refuses to accomodate you? One solution is to look for a different job. However, that may not be necessary. If this particular job is important to you, you may want to inform your employer of his legal obligation to accomodate employees' religious practices. This should be done in a polite, respectful manner, not in an obnoxious or threatening way.

Many people do not realize that federal law requires employers to accomodate employees who need time off for religious reasons, "unless the employer demonstrates that accomodation would result in undue hardship on the conduct of its business." You, the employee, do not have to prove the validity of your case. It is the employer who must try to prove that letting you keep the Sabbath would cause undue hardship to his business. The burden of proof is on the employer, not on the employee.

Federal law considers the following solutions to be "reasonable

accomodations" which would *not* cause undue hardship to an employer's business:

● Securing a substitute worker (even if the employer has to secure the substitute)

● Flexible scheduling (flexible arrival and departure times; floating or optional holidays; flexible workbreaks; use of lunch time in exchange for early departure; staggered work hours; permitting an employee to make up time lost due to the observance of religious practices)

● Lateral transfer and change of job assignment

The employer "must offer the alternative which least disadvantages the individual [i.e., the employee] with respect to his or her employment opportunities." The employer can also be required to bear the extra costs of accomodating the employee, unless the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission determines that it is "more than a *de minimus* cost."

Sometimes an employer is afraid to give an employee every Saturday off for fear that other employees will see this and likewise demand every Saturday (or Sunday) off for religious reasons. However, according to federal law, this is *not* proof of undue hardship: "A mere assumption that many more people, with the same religious practices as the person being accomodated, may also need accomodation is not evidence of undue hardship."

The above legal information can be found in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended [section 701 (j), 703 and 717] and in Part XII Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Guidelines on Discrimination Because of Religion. These same laws apply to labor organizations as well as to employers. The laws pertain not only to scheduling (though this is the most frequent accomodation needed), but also to other religious practices such as a man's right to wear a beard because of his religious convictions.

The employer's legal obligation to accomodate "pertains to prospective employees as well as current employees." This means that employers

conducting a job interview must be very careful when asking about the need for religious accomodation: "The Commission will infer that the need for an accomodation discriminatorily influenced a decision to reject an applicant when: (i) prior to an offer of employment the employer makes an inquiry into an applicant's availability without having a business necessity justification; and (ii) after the employer has determined the applicant's need for an accomodation, the employer rejects a qualified applicant. The burden is then on the employer to demonstrate that factors other than the need for an accomodation were the reason for rejecting the qualified applicant, or that a reasonable accomodation without undue hardship was not possible."

I do not wish to bore readers with a lot of legal jargon, but Sabbath-keepers need to know that employees have legal rights to reasonable accomodations, and that some employees take their employers to court to enforce these rights. Even as I was writing this article, a story appeared in the 11/27/98 *Jewish Press* about a Seventh Day Adventist whose employer tried to refuse to accomodate her: "Lisette Balint, a resident of Carson City, Nevada, was offered a position in the city's sheriff's department, [and] the department refused to excuse her from working on the Sabbath" ("U.S. Court Defends Religious Rights," p. 62).

Sometimes the employer wins the case, of course, because sometimes it truly would cause undue hardship for the employer to accomodate the employee. When undue hardship is not an issue, though, the law is on our side.

Most employers are reasonable people and are intelligent enough to know that it would be wiser for them to accomodate your need than it would be to refuse you. Many employers will actually respect you for taking a firm but polite stand for what you believe. If they are smart, they will know that a person with strong convictions is likely to be a reliable, honest worker with some integrity. They will want to find a

way to accomodate you.

Some employers are not so kind and understanding, and will simply tell you "No, you have to work on Saturdays." If that is the case, then you must pray and ask the Lord to show you what He would have you to do. Would the Lord have you take your employer to court, or would the Lord have you look for a different job? (You don't need to pray about whether or not the Lord would have you keep working on the Sabbath; He's already told you in the Ten Commandments not to do that!)

Many people do not realize that federal law requires employers to accomodate employees who need time off for religious reasons.

Fighting for your legal rights in court is one issue, but there is also the issue of maintaining a good testimony as a disciple of the Messiah. Some questions you might want to consider:

- Do I really want to work for an employer who lets me have the Sabbath off only because he was forced to do so by the court?
- Will going to court result in resentment and/or jealousy in my workplace, and do I want to work in such an atmosphere?
- Is this job really worth fighting for?
- Is it possible that letting me have every Sabbath off really would cause undue hardship for my employer's business?
- Even if the court rules in my favor, would there still be some hardship (though not "undue"), and would it be right to let my employer bear this inconvenience?

Keeping your job should really be your third priority in this arena. Keeping the Sabbath and keeping your testimony should be the first priorities. If you can do this and also keep your job, that's great. Personally, I would not feel comfortable forcing my employer to pay extra costs in order to

accomodate me, even though the law can require the employer to bear these minimal costs. For the sake of my testimony as a disciple of the Lord, I would prefer to not exercise this legal right, and would pay for the extra costs myself, unless my employer voluntarily and cheerfully insisted on bearing the cost. I would also be reluctant to demand my legal right to "the alternative which least disadvantages the individual with respect to his or her employment opportunities." If an employer were willing to accomodate me, I would want to find the solution which least disadvantages both of us. If my employer is willing to bear some minor inconvenience in order to accomodate me, then I should be willing to bear some minor inconvenience to keep the Sabbath.

Every situation is unique and has many factors to consider. This is why it is important to pray before deciding whether or not to take your employer to court if he refuses to let you have the Sabbath off. If you do lose your job for the sake of obeying the Lord, the Lord will honor your sacrifice. He may not provide another job immediately, but He has promised to meet your physical needs if you "seek first the kingdom of God" (Matt. 6:33).

In closing, always remember that you are not called to be a slave to your job. Although you are to treat your employer with honor and respect, your employer is not your Owner and Master. If you are a disciple of the Son of God, then He is your real Owner and Master. You are called to be a servant in His Kingdom. You are not called to be a slave to the world system. So don't let your employer or anyone else tell you that you have to work on the Sabbath. □



PRAISE HIM!

Dr. Daniel Botkin

The Bible speaks a great deal about praising the Lord. In the KJV, the English word *praise* occurs 304 times in its various forms (*praised, praises, praiseth, praising*). Obviously praise should be a very important part of a disciple's life. What does it actually mean, though, to "praise the Lord"? When I was a young disciple, I was encouraged by preachers and older brothers to praise the Lord.

"Don't be afraid to open your mouth and audibly praise the Lord," one brother preached. "Get used to hearing your own voice praising the Lord."

"If you want to learn to praise the Lord, look at the Psalms," another preacher suggested. "David was a man after God's heart, and he knew how to praise the Lord."

In my study of the Psalms, I learned that there are six different Hebrew words translated *praise*. Looking at the meanings of these Hebrew words can help us understand how to praise the Lord in a Biblical manner.

The best-known Hebrew word for praise is הלל (HaLaL), the source of *hallelujah* ("praise Yah[weh]"). According to the Gesenius Hebrew Lexicon, the word הלל is onomatopoeic, that is, the word is derived from a vocal imitation of the sound associated with the action (the action in this case being praise). This suggests that making the הלל sound may be a natural, instinctive way for the human tongue to utter praise. The Gesenius Lexicon adds: "In Ethiopia the women on occasions of public rejoicing are accustomed to repeat the sounds *ellelell-ellelell*; whence to make *ellell* is i.q. to rejoice." Gesenius sees a connection between הלל/*ellell* and our English word *yell*. Isaac Mozeson sees a connection between הלל and our English word *ululate* (to howl or wail).

The definition for הלל in Strong's Concordance includes these ideas: to shine; to make a show; to boast; to be clamorously foolish; to rave; to celebrate; to stultify. Some of these

phrases suggest that praising the Lord will make us look foolish in the eyes of worldly people. According to Webster's, *stultify* means "to allege or prove to be of unsound mind; to cause to appear to be stupid, foolish, or absolutely illogical." This is what praise sometimes looks like to people who do not know God. What does it mean to be "clamorously foolish"? *Clamor* is "noisy shouting; a loud continuous noise"; *clamorous* means "marked by confused din or outcry" (Webster's). God is not the author of confusion, of course; it is the unregenerate and the unspiritual who are confused by the din of loud praise.

There are times to be still and quiet before the Lord, of course. Praise takes many forms. If we want to give praise to our Maker in all of its forms, there will be times when we will get loud and emotional in our praise. Other Hebrew words for praise suggest loudness (שבח, SHaBaCH, "to address in a loud tone") and the lifting up of hands (ירד, YaDaH, "to revere or worship with extended hands"; תודד, ToDaH, "an extension of the hand; adoration"). Other Hebrew words speak of praising with songs, chants, and musical instruments (נמר, ZaMaR, "to touch or strike the chords of an instrument, to play, and hence to sing, to chant, as accompanying an instrument"; תהלל, TeHiLaH, "a song of praise, a hymn").

We were created to praise the Lord. The Bible makes it very clear that Yahweh wants to hear the praises of His people. Praise is something that any disciple can give as an offering to the Lord. The only cost to us is the surrender of our time and our pride. Sometimes we have to take authority over our inhibitions, as David did, and say, "Bless Yahweh, O my soul, and all that is within me; bless His holy name" (Ps. 103:1).

Oliver Wendell Holmes once said something about people who "die with all their music in them." People who never learn to praise the Lord do this very thing. They die with their potential praises still inside them, never expressed. May God save us from such a fate. □

PSALM 19: A TWO-FOLD REVELATION OF GOD

Daniel Botkin

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them He hath set a tabernacle for the sun ... and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof."

(Psalm 19:1-6)

The creation bears witness to the existence of a Creator, as the opening words of Psalm 19 so eloquently state. Therefore those who deny the existence of God are without excuse, as Romans 1:20 also states.

Jews and Christians throughout history have found it inspiring and uplifting to meditate on the things of nature that God has created. St. Francis of Assisi regarded everything in nature as his brother or sister. In "The Canticle of Brother Sun," he thanks God for Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brother Wind, etc. Rabbis point out that the Hebrew word for nature, *ha-teva* (הַטֵּבָע), has the same numerical value as *Elohim* (אֱלֹהִים), the word for God, thus affirming the fact that God reveals Himself through nature.

Nature declares God's glory, it shows His handiwork, and it reveals His power. However, a revelation of God that comes only through nature is an imperfect and incomplete revelation, because such a revelation does not tell us how God wants us to live, or how we can be justified and made clean in His sight.

"How then can man be justified with God? Or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?" asked Bildad the Shuhite. "Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea the stars are not pure in His sight; how much less man, that is a worm, and the son of man, which is a worm?" (Job 25:4-6). Thus did Bildad express nature's

inability to tell man what God wants.

Nature can inspire us but it cannot inform us of God's will. For that information, we must look to another source of revelation, and that source is God's Torah. This same Psalm which begins by telling us about God's revelation in nature continues by telling us about God's revelation in the Torah:

"The Law of Yahweh is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of Yahweh is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of Yahweh are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of Yahweh is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of Yahweh is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of Yahweh are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is Thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward" (Ps. 19:7-11).

Writing by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, David begins this Psalm by proclaiming the revelation of God

which exists in nature, then he suddenly starts writing about the revelation of God in the Torah. Why this sudden switch of topics in mid-psalm from nature to Torah? To teach us that there are two aspects to God's revelation of Himself. God reveals His awesome power, glory, splendor, etc. through His creation. We need to see this because it can inspire us, humble us, motivate us, and uplift us. God's will for His people, however, is not revealed in nature. It is revealed in His Torah. We need to see this so that we will know how to live in harmony with nature and with nature's God.

When Yeshua of Nazareth came to earth, both aspects of God's revelation were manifested. Certainly God's power, glory, and splendor were manifested on earth as never before, in the short life of this humble Rabbi from Galilee. The radiance of that glory still continues to shine today, nearly 2,000 years later, in the hearts of those who love Him. The revelation of God's Torah was likewise manifested in Yeshua. He not only taught His disciples to obey the Torah, He gave a living demonstration of how to live within the boundaries of God's commandments -- boundaries set for us for our own good by a wise and loving Heavenly Father.

Yeshua was the Word made flesh, the Living Torah. After His Ascension He sent the Holy Spirit to write the Torah on the tablets of our hearts (the same Torah that was written first on tablets of stone), so that we might obey the Torah from an inward desire to obey ("the newness of the spirit"), rather than from fear or peer pressure ("the oldness of the letter"). By looking to the glory of God that was in Yeshua, we can be inspired, humbled, motivated, and uplifted. By looking to Yeshua as our Torah teacher, we can learn how the Father wants us to live a life of blessing within the framework and boundaries of the Torah. □

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS FAITH

Daniel Botkin

The seventh of a nine-part series on the fruit of the Spirit

When the missionary Paton took the gospel to cannibals in the New Hebrides, he learned that the natives' language had no word for *faith*. This presented a problem. How could he speak about faith to a people who had no such word in their language?

Paton solved the problem by describing a person with faith as "someone who sits quietly on the grass, without worrying." Paton's string of words is not exactly a word-for-word translation of the Hebrew and Greek terms used in the Bible, but the phrase nicely describes a person with true faith.

Faith must be present at the starting point of our relationship with God: "But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). This verse does not say that God will reward everyone. It does not even say that He will reward everyone who seeks Him. It says that God will reward those who *diligently* seek Him. And diligently seeking God must begin with some measure of faith.

Hebrews chapter 11 is called "the faith chapter" because it recounts many of the Old Testament people who had faith. Their faith was not merely some idle, passive mental state. Faith motivated them to act, to obey, to persevere. These saints in the faith chapter are all introduced with the words "By faith," and then we are told what they *did* by faith. Real faith produces action. As James put it, "faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone," and "I will show you my faith by my works" (James 2:17f).

What a difference we could make if we had the faith to diligently seek God. It has been said that when Augustus Caesar came to Rome, it was a city of wood, and when he left it, he had transformed it into a city of marble.

We can do greater feats than this if we change from being a prayerless people without faith, and become a prayerful people full of faith, a people who diligently seek God and believe that He rewards those who diligently seek Him. To diligently seek God does not require a Ph.D or material wealth or worldly power. It requires faith, something that is available to all of God's children.

How do we bear the fruit of faith? How does faith come? "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). D.L. Moody commented on this verse: "I prayed for faith, and thought that someday faith would come down and strike me like lightning. But faith did not seem to come. One day I read in the 10th chapter of Romans 'Now faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' I had closed my Bible and prayed for faith. I now opened my Bible and began to study, and faith has been growing ever since."

Bible study by itself will not necessarily produce faith, however. There are some Bible scholars and theologians who make a career out of studying the Scriptures, yet they have no faith because they have no hearing. They know the word of God printed on the page, but that is all. Their study produces no hearing, so the word of God remains on the pages of the Bible and never gets into their hearts.

The Psalmist wrote "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee" (Ps. 119:11). How do we get the word of God from the pages of the Bible into our heart? I'm not sure how other folks do it, but I do it by meditating on the Scriptures. Seven times Psalm 119 mentions meditating (vss. 15, 23, 48, 78, 97, 99, 148).

To meditate means to ponder, to think deeply, to concentrate, to focus intently upon a subject. The Hebrew words for meditation include these ideas. The Hebrew terms also mean to converse aloud with oneself (וָשַׁח) and to mutter or speak with oneself in a low, murmuring voice (וְהִנִּיחַ). I encourage people to do this, to actually vocalize the meditations of the heart in a low voice, and to audibly pray as the Scriptures are being pondered. (I don't recommend doing this out in public, though, since people who mutter to themselves are often regarded as mentally imbalanced.)

As you meditate on the Scriptures, ponder each word and phrase over and over, like a cow chews its cud. Think about the implications of the words you are pondering. Think about how this particular truth applies to you. Think about other verses of Scripture that speak about this same topic, and let those verses throw more light on the subject. Audibly voice the meditations of your heart. Let the word be expanded and extended in this way until it is digested and assimilated and has become a part of you. Let the Holy Spirit knit the word into the very fiber of your being.

This sort of meditation will cause the word of God to get from the pages of the Bible into your heart, where the word can produce the hearing which results in faith. Then when you have faith, you can go out and *do something* by faith, as the heroes of Hebrews chapter 11 did. And then in the books of heaven it will be written that you did something worthwhile by faith.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS MEEKNESS

Daniel Botkin

The eighth of a nine-part series on the fruit of the Spirit

Some people think that meekness means being a weak, timid, soft-spoken sissy. This is not the Biblical idea of meekness, though. The Bible says that Moses was "very meek," meeker than anyone on the face of the earth (Num. 12:3). Yet when meek Moses came down from Sinai with the Torah and saw the golden calf, he did not react like a weak, timid sissy. He threw down the tablets, ground the golden calf into powder, cast the powder into the water, and made the people drink it. Then he instructed the Levites to take their swords and slay the idolators in the camp. The Messiah was also "meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29), yet He was no soft-spoken sissy either. When He went into the Temple, He overturned the tables and drove out the buyers and sellers with a whip. Clearly meekness is not what some people think it is.

Meekness before God is humility. Humility is perhaps the most elusive of the fruits of the Spirit, because a person can become proud of his humility. When this happens, the humility disappears, because pride and humility are mutually exclusive.

Yeshua's parable of the Pharisee and the publican provides an excellent illustration of the glaring contrast between pride and humility. "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are," the proud Pharisee prayed, "extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess" (Lk. 18:11f). This Pharisee may have been humble at one time, but he began to focus on his good works and became proud. "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner'" (Lk. 18:13).

The key to bearing the fruit of meekness seems to be having a realistic view of ourselves and a realistic view of God. We must realize that we are unworthy sinners, yet have the faith to ask God for the mercy which we do not deserve. After we humble ourselves and receive God's initial mercy, humility must be maintained. We must always remind ourselves that if there is anything good or holy about us, we cannot take the credit for it. Any goodness or holiness or greatness that resides in us was put there by God, so we dare not congratulate ourselves. This does not mean that we cannot feel a sense of satisfaction when we gain spiritual victories. We just need to remember who gave us the victory. The Pharisee's prayer would have been accepted if he had said, "God, I thank Thee that I am not like other men are - extortioners, unjust, adulterers, publicans - *but I certainly could have been!* It's only because of Your mercy that I'm not. You are the One who gives me strength to fast twice a week; You are the One who gives me the faith to tithe. Apart from Your mercy, I could never do these things, and there would be nothing good about me."

A person with true humility can even accept compliments and praise from people, because the humble person knows who it was that gave him the ability and talents to accomplish the things for which people praise him. "In nothing am I behind the very chiefest Apostles," Paul wrote. Then he was quick to add, "though I be nothing" (2 Cor. 12:11). Paul knew he was a great man of God, but he also knew he could not take the credit for it. "By the grace of God I am what I am," he wrote (1 Cor. 15:10). He knew he ranked right up there with the chief Apostles, yet he also knew he was "the chief of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15).

The proof of humility is obedience to the commandments of God. When

King Hezekiah called Israel to celebrate Passover, the obedient "humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem" (2 Chron. 30:11). When King Manasseh was in affliction, he "humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers" (2 Chron. 33:12). When he was delivered and restored to his throne, he immediately purged the land of idolatry and "commanded Judah to serve Yahweh, God of Israel" (33:16). This was the proof that his humility was genuine. Any humility which does not lead to obedience is a false humility. Even the Messiah's humility was tied to obedience: "He humbled Himself, and became obedient" (Ph'p 2:8).

Sometimes our humility is tested by our willingness to obey something which we consider to be small or trivial or even foolish. At first, Naaman the Syrian was too proud to dip seven times in the Jordan River. But when he overcame his pride and obeyed the prophet's word, he was healed of his leprosy (2 Kings 5). If Naaman had refused to humble himself and obey instructions which seemed foolish to him, he would have missed out on his healing. How many blessings are we deprived of because of our refusal to humble ourselves and obey instructions which seem foolish to us? Only eternity will reveal the answer to that question.

The Scriptures declare many blessings that are promised to the meek. The meek shall inherit the earth; they shall eat and be satisfied; they shall increase their joy. (Ps. 37:11 & 22:26; Isa. 29:19) Yahweh will lift up the meek; He will beautify them with salvation; He will guide them in judgment and teach them His way. (Ps. 147:6; 149:4; 25:9) May these promises encourage us to humble ourselves and obey the commandments of God. □

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS SELF-CONTROL

Daniel Botkin

The ninth of a nine-part series on the fruit of the Spirit

Americans are becoming more and more self-centered. Our courts are cluttered with frivolous lawsuits because whiners believe that their individual rights have been violated. People get their feelings hurt and sue someone for emotional trauma. We are turning into The Nation of Thin-Skinned Crybabies.

Of course the media feed the self-centered lifestyle. "You owe it to yourself," advertisers tell us. "You deserve a break. You deserve the best." TV talk shows portray self-righteous people, motivated by self-gain and self-love, talking about themselves. Self-absorbed people seek self-realization, self-discovery, self-awareness, self-actualization, self-satisfaction, and self-fulfillment. We are becoming a self-centered, self-absorbed, self-obsessed people.

In contrast to all the hyphenated self-sins, the Bible says that the fruit of the Spirit is self-control. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we can control our self -- our desires, our emotions, our appetites, and our tongues. We can abstain from that which is forbidden. This is called self-denial. We can exercise moderation in that which is permitted. This is called self-discipline. We can do that which we are commanded to do, even when we would rather do something else. This is called dying to self.

If you are not controlling yourself, who or what is controlling you? Are you letting yourself be manipulated by advertisers, TV, co-workers, peers, or relatives? What are you driven by? Passion? Lust? Anger? Greed? Love of money?

The key to bearing the fruit of self-control is surrendering control of one's life to the Lord. It is contrary to human nature to relinquish control, but we must deny ourselves and die to our own pleasures and desires. "If any

man will come after Me," Yeshua said, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it" (Matt. 16:24f).

When Yeshua spoke of taking up one's cross and losing one's life, He was not just talking about dying as a martyr for the faith. Martyrdom is the destiny for some disciples, but most of those who take up their cross and lose their own life do not die as martyrs. They simply die to their own will and embrace the will of God. A man loses his own life/soul/self by relinquishing control, then the Holy Spirit produces the fruit of self-control.

When a disciple has self-control, it affects the way he spends his time. Paul likened the Christian life to the life of an athlete in training. (See 1 Cor. 9:24ff.) An athlete in training can enjoy some of the legitimate pleasures of life -- entertainment, relaxation, socializing, etc. -- but he must be careful that these things do not interfere with his training. The athlete must keep his mind focused on his goal, and his life must revolve around preparing for the attainment of that goal. The athlete must watch his diet, stay in shape, maintain a confident attitude, and avoid anything that might cause him to lose the prize. If we were as serious about our faith as some athletes are about their training,

we would see a tremendous amount of spiritual fruit in our lives.

David exercised a great amount of restraint and self-control when he had the opportunity to kill King Saul. Saul had been pursuing David, trying to hunt him down and kill him. One night when a deep sleep from Yahweh fell upon Saul and his men, David and Abishai, one of David's men, went into the camp of Saul. Abishai pleaded with David to let him run a spear through Saul and pin him to the ground.

"Destroy him not," David said. David would not let himself be controlled by personal feelings or by a desire for revenge or even by the fact that King Saul deserved to die. Because Saul was Yahweh's anointed, David was willing to let Yahweh deal with Saul. "Yahweh shall smite him," David said, "or his day shall come to die, or he shall descend into battle and perish." (1 Sam. 26) David had self-control because he was "a man after God's own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14). David wanted to please God more than he wanted to please other people or himself.

"But I can't help myself," some people say. "I can't control myself in this one particular area. That's just the way I am." If this is true of you, perhaps you cannot control yourself because you have not yet learned to really love God, and to be a man or woman after God's own heart, as David was. If this is the case, don't beat yourself and wallow in self-pity and think you are a hopeless case. This kind of reaction will only add self-pity and unbelief to the sins that you already carry. Instead, just be totally honest with the Lord. Confess your lack of self-control and tell Him that you want to lose your own life so that you can find the new life He has for you. As you surrender your own life, you will see His life begin to bear the fruit of self-control. □

JUDGE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT

Daniel Botkin

"JUDGE NOT," Jesus said, and self-righteous sinners repeat these words like a mantra, thinking this gives them automatic immunity from any criticism from followers of Jesus. Of course if people would read more than just the first two words of Jesus' statement, they would see from the following verses what He meant: Don't judge *unfairly*. Don't judge others more strictly than you judge yourself. Don't condemn a brother for a small fault if you have a major sin in your own life. Get the major sin out of your own life first, then you *can* help your brother get the small sins out of his life. (See Matt. 7:1-5.)

If people would read even further in the New Testament, they would learn that "he that is spiritual judgeth all things" (1 Cor. 2:15). In contrast to the natural man, however, the spiritual man does not judge by his natural senses: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14).

"Judge not according to appearance," Yeshua said, "but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24). Does this mean that the outward appearance of God's people does not matter, that it is okay to dress immodestly or to wear clothes that pertain to the opposite sex? Again, the context of the statement explains the meaning of His words. In the previous verses of this chapter, Yeshua's listeners were judging Him on the basis of rumor, gossip, and hearsay. They were trying to discern spiritual things with their natural senses. To "judge not according to appearance" means that we should not depend on nothing more than our natural senses to discern spiritual things.

We cannot judge the spiritual condition of a person solely by what we see and hear with our natural senses. Let me give a couple of examples. Gertie the Gossip sees Pastor Pureheart go into a bar, and within a few hours half the congregation has heard the news. Of course none of the

gossips know that the pastor only went into the bar to get change for the parking meter. Another example: Pastor Pureheart sees Brother Biceps, a young member of his church, talking to a prostitute on two different occasions, and the pastor assumes that Brother Biceps has a secret sin. The next Sabbath, Pastor Pureheart looks out over his congregation and sees the prostitute sitting with Brother Biceps and his wife. The prostitute repents that day and begins a new life, thanks to the work of Brother Biceps and his wife.

Let me give one more example. You see a young man with strange clothes and long hair down to his shoulders. He drinks, smokes pot, and likes to party. One day he goes into a tavern. When the bartender refuses to serve him, the young man shouts a long string of filthy cuss words at the bartender. Everyone in the tavern looks up in shock, expecting to see the bartender and the young man to get into a fist fight.

Witnessing this incident would correctly tell you that this young man is not right with God. But witnessing just this one incident would not tell you everything about this young man's spiritual condition. It's very possible that this young man has recently begun reading the Bible and has been thinking very seriously about it. It's possible he's been praying to God and counting the cost of discipleship. It's possible he has even secretly fasted in a sincere effort to find God. It's possible he has been slowly but surely falling in love with Jesus. He still has a long way to go -- that's obvious from what you have just witnessed in the tavern -- but it's even possible that he might grow up to someday lead a Messianic congregation in Peoria, Illinois. In this case, it's not only possible, it's true. I was that young man.

People's outward appearance -- their speech, their behavior, their dress -- can often tell us that a person is living a sinful life, but these things do not tell us how close that person is to the Kingdom of God. We cannot see the inward spiritual struggles that might be going on in people's minds as the Holy Spirit deals with them. We must not limit God by judging according to appearance.

Yeshua knew the hearts of men. Many believed in Him when they saw

the miracles, "but Yeshua did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men ... for He knew what was in man" (John 2:24f). He did not commit Himself to "them," but He *did* commit Himself to those whose hearts were open and teachable, as we see Him doing in the very next verse: "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews..." (John 3:1). Yeshua committed Himself to spending time with Nicodemus that night because He found in Nicodemus a heart which was open to His teachings. Later Nicodemus spoke up in Yeshua's defense in the Sanhedrin. After the Crucifixion Nicodemus helped bury Yeshua.

We probably would have judged Nicodemus according to outward appearance: "He's a Pharisee, so he must be a hypocrite. Not only a Pharisee, but a *ruler*, that makes him even more of a hypocrite. He came to Yeshua by night -- he must be a coward, afraid somebody might see him with the Master. And his questions! What an ignoramus he is about spiritual things!"

Yeshua knew all men; He knew what was in man. He saw the potential in Nicodemus and committed Himself to talk with him and instruct him. Yeshua looked at sinners and saw potential saints. He looked at a tax collector named Matthew and saw a potential Apostle. He looked at Mary Magdalene, a woman with seven devils, and saw a potential disciple. He looked at a woman who was five times divorced (and now shacking up with a man), and He saw a woman who was a potential evangelist to her people, the Samaritans.

We need to ask for the eyes of Yeshua when we look at sinners. The majority of sinners will refuse to repent and will perish, but there are some sinners who will repent. God wants to reach those sinners whose hearts are open and hungry and teachable. If we learn to judge righteous judgment instead of judging sinners by outward appearance, we will find those sinners who are closest to the Kingdom of God. Then we will have the privilege and the pleasure of ushering them into the Kingdom and introducing them to the King. □

THE LOVE OF MONEY

Daniel Botkin

"For the love of money is the root of all evil." -1 Tim.6:10

For some sins God gives us "space to repent" (Rev. 2:21), i.e., He gives us a warning and an opportunity to repent so we can avert the judgment of God. The love of money, however, is a sin which seems to bring down the judgment of God swiftly and without warning. A few examples from the Scriptures demonstrate this.

ACHAN

When the walls of Jericho fell and the children of Israel took the city, Joshua warned the people to not take any of the spoil for themselves. Achan disobeyed. He took "a goodly Babylonish garment, and 200 shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold." Gold obtained through covetousness truly is a "wedge" in the Enemy's hands. Just as a wedge inserted into a small crack can split a log apart, so the love of money can wedge its way into a man's heart and destroy him. That is exactly what happened to Achan. After he admitted his guilt, he and his entire family were stoned to death and burned by the express commandment of God. (Josh. 7)

GEHAZI

After Naaman was healed of his leprosy, he tried to give the Prophet Elisha a gift, but Elisha refused to accept it. Gehazi, Elisha's servant, decided he would take advantage of Naaman's generosity. "I will run after him and take somewhat of him," Gehazi said to himself.

When Gehazi caught up to Naaman, he told him a lie. "My master hath sent me," Gehazi lied, "saying,

'Behold, even now there be come to me from mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver and two changes of garments.'

Naaman gladly gave Gehazi more than he had requested, and Gehazi hid his treasures and returned to the house. The Prophet Elisha, knowing what had happened, pronounced Gehazi's doom: "The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee and unto thy seed forever." Then Gehazi "went out from his presence a leper as white as snow." (2 Kings 5)

ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA

Lest anyone think that the love of money brought swift judgment only in Old Testament times, before the age of grace had caused the "harsh Old Testament God" to "mellow out," we have the story of Ananias and Sapphira. Like other followers of Yeshua, this couple sold a piece of land with the intent of donating the money to the new Messianic Community that had formed in Jerusalem. Before they gave away the proceeds of the sale, they kept back a portion of the money for themselves. Ananias brought the money to the Apostles, pretending that he was giving the full amount of the sale.

Peter knew what Ananias and Sapphira had done. Peter did not say, "Brother Ananias, the Lord has revealed to me that you're not being honest about this. Let's pray together and ask God to forgive you." Instead, Peter simply told Ananias that the money had always been his to do with it as he wanted, and then informed him that he was not lying to men but to

God. "And Ananias hearing these words fell down and gave up the ghost."

Three hours later Sapphira came in, not knowing that her husband was dead and buried. Peter did not offer Sapphira any condolences or ask her to repent for her part in the sham. Instead, he set her up. He asked her how much they had sold the land for. When Sapphira lied, Peter told her that the men who had just buried her husband would carry her out next. "Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and carrying her forth, buried her by her husband." (Acts 5)

"And great fear came upon all the church," we are told in the next verse, "and upon as many as heard these things." There would be more of a healthy fear of God in the Church today if we would see lovers of money get "slain in the Spirit" like Ananias and Sapphira. The day may not be far off when God will purge His Church and once again start bringing swift judgment on those who love money. Let us prepare our hearts for such a day. □

*Remove from me vanity and lies:
give me neither poverty nor riches;
feed me with food convenient for
me: Lest I be full, and deny Thee,
and say, 'Who is Yahweh?' or lest I
be poor, and steal, and take the
name of my God in vain."*

-Proverbs 30:8f

ONE BODY, ONE FAITH

Dr. Daniel Botkin

My one criticism of the Messianic Jewish movement is that many (perhaps most) Messianic Jews seem to be content with a dichotomous arrangement which now exists in the Body of Messiah. There is the "Jewish branch" which keeps the seventh-day Sabbath, celebrates the Biblical Feasts of the Lord, follows Biblical dietary laws, and practices other miscellaneous Torah commands (*tzitzit*, *mezuzah*, etc.). Meanwhile the "Gentile branch" worships on Sunday, celebrates holidays which have their roots in pagan idolatry, has church-sponsored hog roasts, and ignores what it considers to be "the least of the commandments."

I cannot believe that this present dichotomous arrangement reflects God's will for the "one body" of Messiah and the "one faith" mentioned in the New Testament writings. Such a body of Gentiles did not even exist in New Testament times, except among the pagan idolators who had nothing to do with Israel's God. Today's dichotomous arrangement results in two separate faiths, not one faith. If Jewish and non-Jewish believers are to be one body in practice, and not just in theory, the present arrangement will not do.

Many Messianic Jewish leaders teach that the above-mentioned commands of Torah (Sabbath, Feast Days, dietary laws, etc.) are mandatory (or at least a good idea) for Jewish believers but optional for non-Jewish believers. I realize that these particular practices are generally regarded as being distinctively Jewish, and not for Gentile Christians. However, the only reason these practices are considered distinctively Jewish and not for Gentile Christians is because the Jewish people have done these things and the Christians have not. I fear that some Messianic Jews are letting the events of history, rather than the Scriptures, determine their theology. I know of no place in the Bible where these particular commandments are singled out and put into a special category called "mandatory for Jewish believers; optional for non-Jewish believers." If this were the

case, what would someone with only one Jewish parent do? Go to a Messianic congregation half the time and to a Gentile church half the time? What about a person who has one Jewish grandparent, and considers himself one-fourth Jewish? Should he wear just one *tzitzit* instead of four?

In the early years of the modern Messianic Jewish movement, some Gentile Christians were afraid that Messianic Jews were re-erecting "the middle wall of partition" by their observance of Sabbath, Feast Days, dietary laws, etc. Messianic Jews assured their non-Jewish brothers in the Messiah that such was not the case. In some Messianic Jewish circles, though, non-Jews were only politely tolerated, and in some places they were actually discouraged from attending Messianic Jewish meetings for no other reason than the fact that they were not Jewish. I speak from my own experience and the experience of other non-Jews.

Nowadays non-Jewish believers are usually welcomed into Messianic congregations, though some prejudice still exists. Things have improved, but there is still a wall of separation as long as Messianic Jews are content with the present dichotomous arrangement of a paganized "Gentile Church" for the non-Jews and a Bible-based "Messianic Church" for the Jewish believers. Both cannot be right. You cannot have it both ways. If the Torah is still good and valid for Jewish believers, then it is equally good and valid for non-Jewish believers, too. We who were "in time past Gentiles" (Eph. 2:11) have been grafted into "the commonwealth of Israel" by our faith in Israel's Messiah (Eph. 2; Rom. 11). If Messiah has made us full-fledged members of Israel, why is all of Israel's Torah not for us?

Leaders in the Messianic Jewish movement have stated that it is important for Jewish and Gentile believers to keep their distinct identities separate. I do not necessarily disagree with this assertion, but it raises questions for me as a Gentile. How are we non-Jewish Messianic believers supposed to

maintain our identity as Gentiles? Eat pork? Put up a Christmas tree? Work on Saturdays? Or should we just disregard the non-binding Oral Torah and the extra-Biblical ethnic things like the kippah, bagels, and Yiddish expressions? Or is it enough to just admit that we are not Jewish, and recognize the fact that we do not need to go through a formal conversion to Judaism in order to be accepted as full-fledged members of Messiah's Body?

Messianic Jewish congregations are attracting more and more Gentiles all the time. The Messianic Jewish movement is being "overrun with Gentiles" as one prominent Messianic Jewish leader recently said to a non-Jewish member of my congregation. I sometimes get the impression that some Messianic Jews feel that all these Gentiles pose a threat to "their" movement. It is not "their" movement, of course; it is the Lord's movement.

Messianic Jews who seem annoyed by the great number of non-Jews in the movement concern me, because this attitude will result in further separation between Jewish and non-Jewish believers. Gentiles will be subtly (or not so subtly) encouraged to go to a Gentile church instead of to a Messianic congregation. A Messianic Jewish friend who shares my concern refers to this as the "ethnic purging" of the Messianic Jewish movement.

Gentiles coming into the Messianic movement will not be satisfied if they are told that they would be just as well off in a Gentile church. They know that living a Torah-based life in the Messiah brings greater blessings than a life which ignores those important aspects of the Torah that Messianic Jews practice. Messianic Jewish leaders need to strongly encourage (i.e., proselytize) Gentile Christians to join the movement, and then teach them those parts of the Torah that the churches have failed to teach them. This is not "Judaizing." It is simply telling Gentiles the truth about the Torah and the truth about Gentile Christianity. □

AN APPEAL TO CHURCHES TO ABANDON THE WORD EASTER WHEN CELEBRATING THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD

Dr. Daniel Botkin

This article originally appeared in *The Lookout*, April 2, 1995, where it was entitled "Don't Use the E Word." Permission is granted to make copies to send to church leaders.

Any good dictionary or encyclopedia will tell you that our English word *Easter* was originally the name of the Anglo-Saxon fertility goddess worshipped by ancient pagans. The word is simply the Anglicized form of *Ashtoreth* (plural, *Ashteroth*), the goddess to whom the Israelites fell prey so often in the Bible. A little historical research will reveal that the worship of this goddess involved acts of sexual immorality too perverse to describe.

This pagan festival of the vernal equinox was "Christianized" by Church leaders centuries ago, and adapted and modified to commemorate the Resurrection of Jesus. The lewd fertility rites were abandoned but the name of the goddess remained. According to the Venerable Bede, an 8th Century historian and theologian, Christians "stole the name, and thus the power" of the Anglo-Saxon goddess. (See *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, "Easter.")

No disrespect meant to Christians of past centuries, but our Risen Lord needs neither the name nor the power of this pagan fertility goddess. When

the Israelites went into the Land, God commanded them to "wipe out the names" of the heathen gods of Canaan. Then God warned them to not worship Him in the ways that the pagans worshipped their gods. (Deut. 12:3, 30ff) We would do well to heed these instructions and wipe out the name of the fertility goddess from our worship.

What would be an alternative term to refer to the annual celebration of the Resurrection? "Resurrection Day" would be an obvious, suitable choice, of course. Most of the major Romance languages use words that are derived from the Hebrew *pesach* (פסח, "Passover"): *Pascha* (Latin, Greek, Russian), *Paques* (French), *Pasqua* (Italian), *Pascua* (Spanish), *Pask* (Dutch).

If one wants to be Biblically accurate, the day of the Lord's Resurrection could be called "Firstfruits." This day was one of the Feasts of the Lord, when the firstfruits of the spring barley harvest were brought to the Temple in anticipation of the remaining harvest yet to come. The Lord commanded that this annual holy day take place on the first Sunday ("the morrow after the sabbath") after Passover. (See Lev. 23:1-11.) Our Lord rose from the dead on the feast of Firstfruits, which explains why Paul, in anticipation of the final resurrection yet to come,

wrote these words:

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, the firstfruits of them that slept ... For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming" (1 Cor. 15:20-23).

If one wants to be really Biblically accurate, one could even abandon the traditional way of calculating the day for celebrating the Resurrection, and simply celebrate it on the first Sunday following Passover, which would be the Biblical date for the feast of Firstfruits. (The traditional Christian method of calculation is based on the vernal equinox, a method modeled after the pagans' calculations for the worship of the fertility goddess. Some years it actually occurs on the Biblical Firstfruits; most years it does not.)

Seeing all of Christendom change the day they celebrate the Resurrection may be too much to hope for at this point in history, but abandoning the use of the fertility goddess' name does not seem to be too much to expect. If we truly believe that God has given His Son "a name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9) and "all power in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18), then we should agree that He needs neither the name nor the power of the pagan fertility goddess. □

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TEENAGE KILLERS AND HELLFIRE

Daniel Botkin

Another massacre has taken place at a public school, this time in Colorado, leaving several innocent people dead, scores of family members grieving, and a nation stunned and bewildered by yet another senseless slaughter. Opponents of guns think the solution is stricter gun control; opponents of gun control argue that one teacher or administrator with a gun could have stopped the killers much sooner and saved some lives. From a logical and political standpoint, I tend to agree more with those who oppose stricter gun control. However, I know that this is a spiritual problem, and will not be solved by political solutions.

The young people who commit these violent acts of random murder are deceived by their own wickedness. They do not believe that they will suffer the fierce wrath of God and be cast alive into the lake of everlasting fire and brimstone, where they will weep and wail and gnash their teeth in outer darkness for all eternity, as they are tormented day and night without rest, forever and ever. (Dan. 12:2; Isa. 66:24; Mk. 9:43-48; Rev. 20:15 & 19:20; Mt. 25:41 & 8:12; Rev. 14:10 & 20:10)

Many Christians do not really believe that the wicked will be punished eternally with conscious torment. I do not like the idea, but the Scriptures are there, folks. Most Sabbath-keeping Christians tend to prefer the idea of annihilation and/or a "second chance" for the lost to repent at their resurrection. Will lost souls who do not know the Lord simply be annihilated and cease to exist? Or will they be given an opportunity to repent at the resurrection? I will concede that the Scriptures do not absolutely rule out these possibilities for at least some of the lost. Jeremiah spoke about some of the wicked who will "sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake" (51:39, 57). In Psalms there are verses that mention some of the wicked being consumed away into smoke like the fat of lambs and perishing as wax before the fire (37:20; 68:2). Passages like these suggest the possibility of annihilation for

at least some of the lost. Peter's obscure reference to Christ preaching to "the spirits in prison" who had been "disobedient ... in the days of Noah" (1 Pet. 3:19f) might serve as a basis for thinking that perhaps some of the disobedient of this age might possibly get another opportunity of some sort. However, these passages are somewhat vague and only *suggest* the *possibility* that *some* of the lost may be annihilated or given a post-resurrection opportunity to repent. I would be reluctant to use suggested possibilities such as these as the foundation on which to build a theological doctrine about the afterlife. And besides, we still have all those other verses which speak about eternal conscious torment, and they are not so vague.

Even if we admit that there is a possibility of annihilation or a post-resurrection opportunity for some of the lost, we must in all fairness also admit that at least some of the wicked will suffer eternal conscious torment. Which brings us back to our current national problem of evil young people who want to leave this life in a blaze of glory by committing as many murders as they possibly can.

"Fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell," Yeshua said. (Mt. 10:28) If children were taught to fear the retribution and fierce wrath of a holy God who is angry with the wicked, they would be far less likely to commit murder. Even if they were not 100% convinced that they would suffer eternal torment, just the notion that it *might* be true would be enough to deter many. The people of Nineveh had no proof that Jonah's prophecy of destruction would come to pass, yet they repented. I don't think they would have repented if Jonah had said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown - but to be honest with you, I don't think God will really do it. I think He's bluffing." Yet this seems to be the message people are hearing today. Children are not taught that they will go to hell if they continue in their sins.

I rarely write or teach about hell and

eternal punishment because most of my listening and reading audience is made up of people who are not lost. The lost, however, do need to know that there is a place of eternal torment for the wicked. Unfortunately, fewer and fewer people are believing this. I have a newspaper article from around 1980. The article is titled "Updated View of the Afterlife: Hellfire's Going Out." The results of surveys about hell are written about in a way that suggests that these issues are determined by the opinion of the majority. The article quotes Rev. Martin Marty, a prominent theologian: "There is little fear of hellfire anymore," he says. "The decline in the belief in hell is one of the most important changes in our history."

I agree that this is an important change, but it is not a change for the better. In the twenty or so years since the above-mentioned article was written, the lost have become increasingly more wicked. In past generations the fear of retribution in an afterlife acted as a moral restraint. The wicked were afraid to be as wicked as they really wanted to be. But in this generation the fear of God's retribution has been removed, and the moral restraints have disappeared. Now the wicked are as wicked as they want to be. If they feel like killing innocent people just for the thrill of it, there is no fear of Divine retribution to stop them.

I realize that some of my readers do not believe that God will punish anyone forever and ever. The idea is distasteful. We must realize, though, that God can do whatever He wants, and He is under no obligation to explain His actions to His creatures. Perhaps our problem is that we simply do not see sin as God sees it. If we did, maybe we would see that sinners really *do* deserve to be tormented day and night forever and ever. If this is the best existence God has to offer unrepentant sinners for their eternal home, then sin must be far more evil and hideous than we can possibly imagine. And eternal torment may be far more terrible than we can imagine. □

LIFEBOATS

A PARABLE

-Daniel Botkin-

"And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates: And thou shalt say, 'Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise...'"

-Jeremiah 51:63f

I did not see the movie *Titanic*, but I do know something about the real *Titanic*. When the *Titanic* struck the iceberg, it became a sinking ship. It did not sink instantly, but for all practical purposes it was doomed. The world system of this present age is much like the *Titanic*. This world system is not yet destroyed, but for all practical purposes it is doomed. And when it finally goes down, it will take with it all those people who remain trapped in the system.

No man could stop the *Titanic* from sinking, and no man can salvage this world system. The only hope in the *Titanic* disaster was to rescue as many individual survivors as possible and to make their stay in the lifeboats as comfortable as possible until deliverance came. With this thought in mind, let us look at our local congregations as the "lifeboats" in which we reside while we await our final deliverance from this doomed world system.

Ideally, each lifeboat/congregation should meet three general requirements. First, it should have Yeshua as the Captain. Second, it should have sufficient supplies for the survival and well-being of the passengers. Third, it should not have excess weight that might cause the boat to sink. Let's consider each of these three requirements.

CAPTAIN OF THE SHIP OR JUST ONE OF THE CREW?

In some congregations Yeshua is there, but He is not really the Captain of the boat. Other people in the boat make the decisions, and Yeshua's will is overruled. Maybe the passengers will come to their senses one of these days and let Yeshua be the Captain. Or maybe the passengers will grow tired of His presence and just throw Him overboard, like so many churches have already done. That certainly makes it easier for the passengers to do things their own way instead of His way.

THE WELL-EQUIPPED LIFEBOAT

The ideal lifeboat should have a number of things: food, drinking water, blankets, ropes with lifesavers, and flares. An ideal congregation should have similar supplies and equipment of a spiritual nature: pastors and teachers who can give spiritual food and drink to the people; intercessors who can blanket the people in prayer; evangelists to throw out the lifeline and save the lost; prophetic seers with eyes that can pierce the darkness like a flare and see dangers that others cannot see.

Some lifeboats are well-equipped; others are not. Sometimes the passengers argue among themselves because each person thinks that his job is more important than anyone else's job. Sometimes the passengers end up fighting and trying to throw one another overboard. And sometimes they succeed.

EXCESS WEIGHT

Too much excess weight on a lifeboat can endanger the boat and everyone in it. The same is true of a local congregation. In some congregations, much of the excess weight consists of people who do little or nothing to contribute to the well-being of everyone in the boat. These are the freeloaders and moochers who are just along for the free ride. They want their share of everything in the boat, except for their share of the work. They expect the other passengers to do all the work. These are the spiritual

parasites in the Body of the Messiah.

Excess weight in a congregation comes in other forms, too. One form of excess weight is worldly ideas that are contrary to the Word of God. Another form is man-made traditions that are more of a burden than a blessing. Yet another form is useless religious activity that is born of the flesh. Sometimes a lost person swims over to a lifeboat, looks inside and sees all the excess weight, and says to himself, "It looks too crowded in there for me. I don't see any place where I can fit in." Then he swims off in search of a different lifeboat.

I heard a story once about a man on a sinking ship. The ship was hauling gold, and the man filled his pockets with gold before the ship went down. The man abandoned ship and started swimming toward the lifeboat. Unfortunately, the weight of the gold prevented the man from reaching the lifeboat. He refused to empty his pockets of the gold, and he sank to the bottom of the sea. Too much excess weight in a congregation can result in similar tragedy, regardless of what form the excess weight takes. If excess weight is endangering the boat, it needs to be thrown overboard.

WHEN NO IDEAL LIFEBOAT IS ANYWHERE IN SIGHT

Some believers rightly discern that every congregation they see is flawed. What should a person do when no ideal lifeboat is in sight? Years ago I knew a zealous young brother who thought that it was wrong to go to any congregation that was not perfect. Consequently, he refused to go anywhere for fellowship. Today he is a backslidden, pot-smoking alcoholic, and still rails against the churches. If he had his way, his solution to the

problem would be to simply sink all the lifeboats. This "solution" is no solution at all, for three reasons. First, it fails to take into account the fact that those lifeboats without Yeshua will sink by their own weight without our help. With just three words Yeshua instructed His disciples how to deal with blind religious hypocrites: "Leave them alone" (Mt. 15:14). Second, sinking all the imperfect lifeboats leaves us with few if any lifeboats, and no better alternative. This zealous young man that I knew had no lifeboat for believers to climb into. The only alternative he had to offer was to keep treading water and curse the lifeboats. Third, this attitude fails to acknowledge that the presence of Yeshua is still in some churches. Though the churches may be flawed and ill-equipped lifeboats, there are still people being saved.

When looking for a congregation, different people look for different things. The most important thing to look for is a place where people are willing to let Yeshua be the Captain of the boat. Even if the passengers sometimes have difficulty hearing and understanding His orders, at least there is hope in such a congregation. If a boatload of passengers sincerely wants Him to be the Captain, He will steer the ship, He will stir up the spiritual gifts for ministry, and He will see to it that the excess weight is thrown overboard. □

"LEGALISM!"

by Daniel Botkin

When a disciple suggests obeying the commandments of God, especially commandments which are generally neglected by most Christians, many people will dismiss the suggestion by bringing out their secret weapon, the L-word: "That's Legalism. We musn't get Legalistic."

Ask a group of Christians to give a clear definition of legalism, and you will get a wide variety of answers. Legalism is considered a very dangerous sin, yet there is no consensus as to what constitutes legalism. Maybe that's because the words *legalism*, *legalist*, and *legalistic* are not found anywhere in the Bible, at least not in the KJV. As a matter of fact, the English words *legalism* and *legalist* do not appear on any known document before 1864, according to Webster's. These words have found their way into the English language, though, and have now become an important part of the English-speaking Christian's vocabulary.

How do we determine who is a legalist? Christians who do not believe in keeping the 7th-day Sabbath call Sabbath-keepers legalists. Women who want to dress modestly call modestly-dressed women legalists. Christians who smoke cigarettes call non-smoking Evangelicals legalists. Christians who enjoy carnal, worldly dancing call non-dancing Baptists legalists. Everyone seems to have their own definition of what a legalist is. Here's my definition of a legalist: A legalist is someone whose moral standards are higher than yours.

Some people have called me a legalist. Perhaps they are right. If that's the case, I'd rather be a legalist than an illegalist. I'd rather be accused of doing God's work legally than illegally. The Apostle Paul wrote about the blessings and rewards that await a man for his service to the Lord. Paul added this warning: "...yet he is not crowned, except he strive lawfully" (2 Tim. 2:5). The word *lawful* is a synonym for *legal*. God has laws, and He expects us to operate legally, within these laws. This is not some negative, over-excessive form of dangerous legalism. This is simple obedience to a Heavenly Father who expects obedience from His children.

The terms *legalism*, *legalist*, and *legalistic* have been misused for far too long. Carnal Christians have used these words to slander their brothers and sisters who are doing their best to humbly walk in obedience to the Heavenly Father's commandments. By labeling these brethren as legalists, the carnal Christians seek to justify their own sinful habits. Anyone who suggests that these unlawful people need to repent of their sins is simply dismissed as a

AT HOME, REV. TWISTRUTH READS THE PERNICIOUS PROPAGANDA AND DISCOVERS THE DEPTH OF THE DEVIOUS DECEPTION! IT IS CLEAR THESE HEARTLESS HERETICS WANT ONLY ONE THING FROM GOD'S PEOPLE: OBEDIENCE TO THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD--
LEGALISM!! REV. TWISTRUTH'S BRAIN FESTERS WITH CONCERN FOR HIS FLOCK-- HE MUST PROTECT THEM FROM SUCH BONDAGE!



From a not-yet-published, six-page story,
"Reverend Twistruth's Nightmare"

legalist. I would not be surprised to learn that even the sodomite "Christians" make use of these words to justify their sins. The illegalists do not see the importance of obedience. To close this article, here are a few verses which should be seriously and prayerfully pondered:

- ◆ "And why call ye Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not the things which I say?" Lk. 6:46
- ◆ "If ye love Me, keep My commandments ... He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me ... If a man love Me, he will keep My words." John 14:15, 21, 23
- ◆ "Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." John 15:14
- ◆ "And hereby do we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, 'I know Him,' and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." 1 John 2:3f
- ◆ "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous." 1 John 5:3
- ◆ "And this is love, that we walk after His commandments." 2 John 6
- ◆ "...the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey Him." Acts 5:32
- ◆ "And being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." Heb. 5:9
- ◆ "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah." 2 Thes. 1:8 □



FILM REVIEW

I could never recommend conversion to Hasidic Judaism, because a person cannot openly confess faith in Yeshua as the Messiah and remain a good Hasidic Jew. (It's apparently okay for a Lubavitcher Hasid to believe that the dead rebbe Menachem Schneerson was/is the Messiah, though.) There are other problems, too. This film shows Hasidic Jews tossing prayer notes on the graves of rabbis, asking the dead rabbis to intercede for them in heaven. This not-so-kosher custom reeks of necromancy, and is every bit as superstitious as the Roman Catholic practice of praying to Mary and other dead saints.

I could never recommend conversion to Hasidic Judaism, but I do highly recommend this 95-minute documentary film on Hasidic Judaism. All Christians who take their faith seriously should view "A Life Apart" for the challenge it presents. What challenge? The challenge of living "in the world" without being "of the world." The New Testament is filled with passages that instruct us to live a holy, separated life and to not conform to the world around us. Hasidic Jews seem to do a better job of maintaining their identity as a separate people than most Christians do. Christians could learn from the example of the Hasidim about refusing to compromise with the world.

The Hasidic movement was started in the 1700s by Rabbi Israel Ben Eliezer, known as the Baal Shem Tov, who taught

that every Jew, even the non-scholarly, could experience God through joyful prayer. The disciples of the Baal Shem Tov spread his teachings, and within a few generations of the Baal Shem Tov's death, half of the Jews of Eastern Europe were Hasidim. After Hitler came to power, 80% of the Hasidim perished in the Holocaust.

When surviving Hasidim came to America after World War 2, they did not come to pursue the American Dream or to assimilate into the "melting pot" like immigrants from other cultures did. "They came in search of a place where they could do what they had always done," the film tells us. The Hasidic leaders who came to America in the 1950s said, "We're going to re-create our societies here in America. We don't care how funny it looks, or how bizarre, or how many people laugh at us, or how difficult it's going to be... We're going to re-create it right here in America."

The non-Hasidic Jews of America resented the arrival of Hasidic Jews who had no intention of blending in with American culture. It was taken for granted that new immigrants would shed their ethnic peculiarities. But as this film's narrator says, "The Hasidim refused to follow the script."

The film incorporates some interesting archival footage, including part of a 1933 speech given by the Munkatch rebbe of Hungary, in which he thundered against American Jews for their compromise. There is also a short clip of the Lubavitch rebbe's 1929 visit to the United States. His American followers begged him to settle in the U.S. The rebbe replied, "America is not yet ready for Hasidism. Here even rabbis have compromised and shaved their beards."

The Hasidic communities are very close-knit and everyone has a clearly-defined role. Men, women, and children know what is expected of them. Outside influences such as TV and radio are not welcome in the community. Match-makers are employed to help arrange marriages. As for jobs, the Hasidim prefer to work within their own community whenever possible. If they must find work outside their community, they look for something which will not interfere with their lifestyle. "Hasidim limit themselves to occupations which are consistent with their lifestyle," we are told. "They do not accept jobs that require them to compromise their dress, beliefs, or rituals."

Hasidim also refuse to go to secular colleges and universities, which means that most will be poor or middle class at best. The Hasidic community "decided to deny its children the great opportunities of America" in order to live as they believe the Torah teaches. If Hasidim wish to move to a different neighborhood, their choices are limited to those areas which have a Hasidic community.

According to an article in the 8/7/97 issue of *The Jerusalem Report*, the film-makers "seem to think that many non-Jewish Americans, particularly fundamentalists and evangelicals, will be attracted by the modesty and conservatism of Hasidic life, as well as the ongoing effort of hasidim to draw closer to God."

-Daniel Botkin

The film is available from First Run Features, 153 Waverly Place, New York, NY 10014. Ph. 1-800-229-8575. Website at www.firstrunfeatures.com

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI AND THE BAAL SHEM TOV

Daniel Botkin

One man lived in Western Europe during the 12th and 13th centuries; the other man lived in Eastern Europe in the 1700s. One man was a Christian, the other a Jew. We would not expect two such men to have so much in common, yet they did. *St. Francis of Assisi and Rabbi Israel Ben Eliezer, known as the Baal Shem Tov, were two men who each made a profound and lasting impact on their respective religions, Christianity and Judaism.*

St. Francis and the Baal Shem Tov both emerged as powerful religious leaders under similar circumstances. The world in which Francis lived was filled with violence, strife, wars, and murder. Towns and homes were built to resemble fortresses because of the danger to life and limb. The Baal Shem Tov's world was likewise marked by violence. The Jewish people endured pogroms and persecutions from the Church, from the civil authorities, and from the general populace. The Jewish people had also recently suffered great disappointment and disillusionment due to the failed efforts of two self-proclaimed messiahs, Sabbatai Zvi and Jacob Frank. The Christians of Francis' world were disillusioned, too. The clergy of the Roman Catholic religious establishment was distant and aloof from the common people. Out of these times of disillusionment and disenchantment emerged St. Francis of Assisi and the Baal Shem Tov, two eccentric mystics who would change the worlds in which they lived.

Both men spent time alone in the mountains and woods. Francis first went to the broken-down abandoned church of San Damiano outside town, where he lived in solitude for some time. Like Francis, the Baal Shem Tov wandered alone in the mountains, often for days at a time, deep in meditation. The time that these two men spent in the mountains and woods gave them both a deep love and appreciation for God's creation. Francis thought of everything in nature as his brother or sister, thanking God for "Brother Sun" and "Sister Moon." Once when Francis was ill, a nobleman sent him a pheasant, and Francis was delighted - not because he planned to kill it and eat it and thus restore his strength, but because he could "rejoice in its beauty and thus intensify his love for the Creator." The Baal Shem Tov viewed all creation as holy, and took great delight in every living thing. It is said that the Baal Shem Tov "learned the speech of animals and birds." In one legend, he drives away attacking lions and tigers with a short prayer. Francis is best known for preaching to a flock of birds that sat without moving and listened in total silence until Francis was finished, "their gaze fixed on Francis' face." Francis is also famous for taming a fierce wolf that terrorized the village of Gubbio.

The love that Francis had for nature did not cause him to withdraw from the world of men, nor did the Baal Shem Tov isolate himself from people. Both men had a deep love

for their fellow man, and they mingled with the common people, especially the poor and destitute. Most of their preaching was done in the fields and streets and inns and marketplaces rather than in cathedrals or synagogues. There is no description of the Baal Shem Tov preaching in a synagogue.

Neither Francis nor the Baal Shem Tov were highly-educated theological scholars. Francis had no formal theological training, and had no thought of ever becoming a monk or priest, because he wanted to identify with the common people, the laity. Of the Baal Shem Tov, it is said that his teachings "do not indicate any talmudic scholarship." Both men were criticized by religious leaders for their lack of formal theological training. These two men did not regard scholarship as wrong; they simply did not emphasize it a great deal because they knew that most of the common people would never have the opportunity to become great church theologians or great rabbinical scholars. Besides, there were more important things than bickering over the minute details of theological questions which had little relevance to people's everyday lives. Experiencing the joy of God's Presence was what Francis and the Baal Shem Tov emphasized, and this Presence was what the common people thirsted for. One did not have to be a theologian or rabbinical scholar; even the common laborer could experience spiritual joy. This was the reason that so many disciples were drawn to these

men.

Both Francis and the Baal Shem Tov had charismatic, magnetic personalities. The fervor and joy in these men attracted people to them. Francis is sometimes thought of by uninformed people as a sad-faced ascetic. Francis did lead a very strict life himself. However, in *The Rule of St. Francis*, the brothers are warned against the hypocritical appearance of asceticism. Instead, they are told to be "happy, joyful and gracious." In one place Francis is quoted as saying, "Just as we must try not to eat too much, which harms the body and the soul, so, even more, we must avoid excessive abstinence, since the Lord prefers mercy to sacrifice." The Baal Shem Tov also rejected asceticism and taught his disciples to be joyful.

The number of disciples that these men attracted grew at an incredible rate, and the movements of St. Francis and of the Baal Shem Tov quickly spread across the land, carried by zealous disciples eager to share their joy. Rapid growth in numbers brought problems to both these movements, too. The original simplicity and purity of the founders faded as greed and lust for power corrupted the movements.

During the lifetime of St. Francis and immediately after his death, faithful disciples recorded his wondrous words and deeds. The disciples of the Baal Shem Tov did the same, and the legends of these two men became fixed (not to mention sometimes exaggerated) in Church tradition and

in Jewish tradition.

There was one negative thing that Francis and the Baal Shem Tov had in common. They both failed to acknowledge the major flaws in the religions into which they were born. They both remained in the errors of their ancestors. Francis remained a devout Roman Catholic his whole life, and would not speak out against the sin and corruption which he saw in the Church. "Anyone who is familiar with the saint's life," writes Lawrence Cunningham, "will immediately recognize that nowhere does he criticize the Church, no matter how much its excesses and deficiencies pained him." In his refusal to speak out against corrupt religious leaders, Francis was not following the example of the Messiah, who publicly denounced the hypocrites of His day. (Matt. 23 et.al.) The Baal Shem Tov, too, remained in serious theological error. He did not recognize Yeshua of Nazareth as the Messiah of Israel. The Baal Shem Tov's abhorrence for Yeshua is evident in the following story: There was a belief that a *tsadik* (a righteous man) could intercede for the dead and "raise the wicked from hell" through prayer. The Baal Shem Tov considered attempting to elevate the soul of the false messiah Sabbatai Zvi. He abandoned this idea, though, "because he realized that what holds true for Sabbatai Zvi would also be true for Jesus."

God will be the Judge of Francis and of the Baal Shem Tov. He will also be our Judge. As the end of the age approaches, God is calling on Christians and Jews to abandon the errors of their fathers. Jewish people are embracing Yeshua as their Messiah, and Christians are embracing the Torah as the Heavenly Father's instructions for life. We are seeing the formation of God's end-time remnant, described in Revelation 12:17 as those "who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Yeshua the Messiah." The song we will sing together is described in Revelation 15:3: "And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb." Moses represents the Torah; the Lamb represents Yeshua. Imagine a St. Francis preaching Torah or a Baal Shem Tov preaching Yeshua. That might give us some idea of what God is seeking from His two corporate witnesses as they are re-united into one Body, the Body of our Torah-honoring Messiah, Yeshua of Nazareth. □

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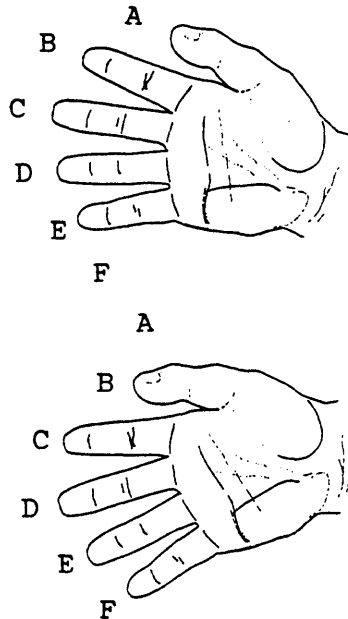
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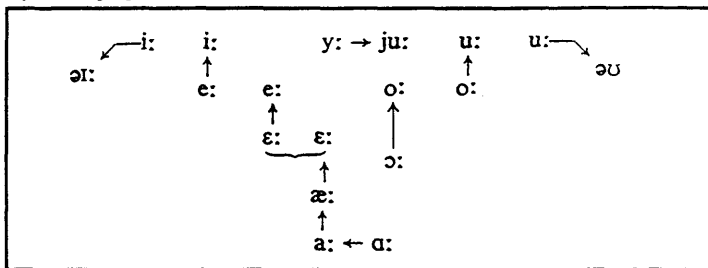
CHRISTIANITY'S THEOLOGICAL PARADIGM SHIFT

Dr. Daniel Botkin

A paradigm shift is a change of position that alters the way things are viewed and perceived. Perhaps the simplest way to demonstrate a paradigm shift is with an illustration. On the top hand, the thumb corresponds to "A," the index finger to "B," etc. When the hand is rotated just one unit, a paradigm shift occurs and changes everything. It is still the same hand, but the thumb, which formerly corresponded to "A" now corresponds to "B"; the index finger, which formerly corresponded to "B" now corresponds to "C," etc.



Another example of a paradigm shift is a linguistic paradigm shift which took place in the English language. No one knows exactly why or how it happened, but the vowel sounds of the English language underwent a paradigm shift during the 15th century. The diagram below shows how an upward raising process caused the "aw" sound [ɔ:] to be replaced by long "oh" [o:]; the long "oh" [o:] by "oo" [u:], etc.



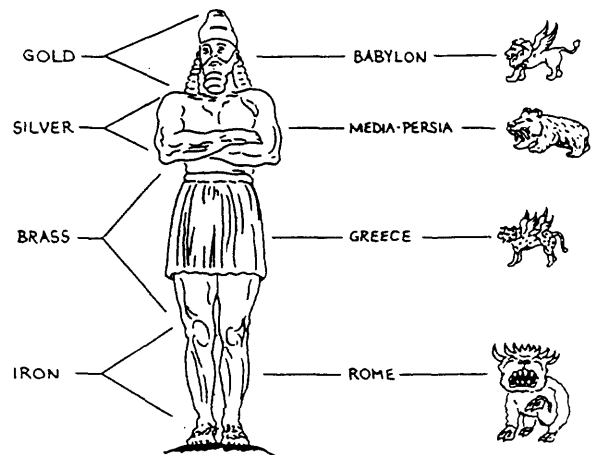
Linguistic historians refer to this phenomenon as The Great Vowel Shift. When the Shift was complete, shepherds no longer tended "gawts"; now they tended "goats." People no longer ate "foad"; now they ate "food." (It was pronunciation that shifted, not spelling. Spelling was not

yet standardized.)

Of interest to us, though, is a Great Theological Paradigm Shift which took place in the Christian religion. This paradigm shift was prophesied in the Scriptures. We will look at the verse which prophesied this paradigm shift, but first a little background.

King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of a great image made of four different metals. The Prophet Daniel interpreted this dream and explained that the four metals represented four great kingdoms. Babylon, the kingdom which Nebuchadnezzar was then ruling, would be followed by three more kingdoms. We know from history that the three kingdoms which followed Babylon were Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome. No reputable historian or Bible scholar will deny this.

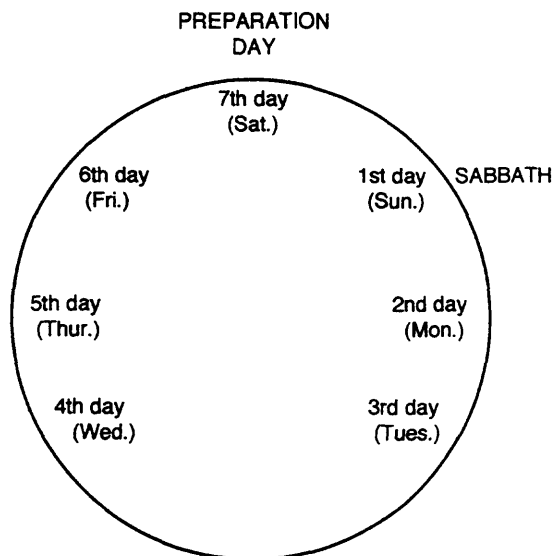
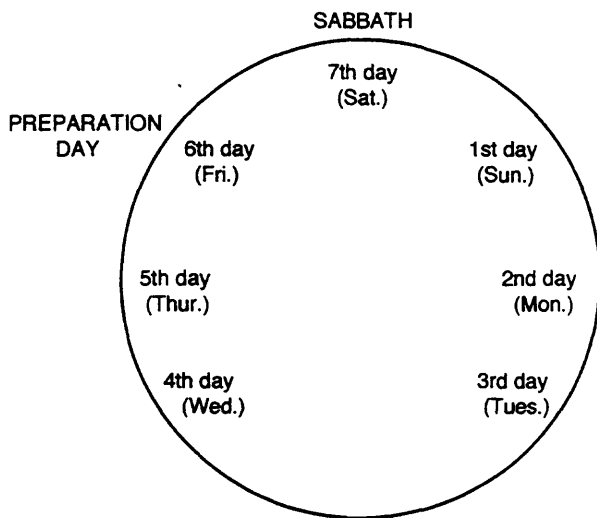
Years later, Daniel had a dream. He saw four great beasts come up from the sea. The first was like a lion with eagle's wings; the second was like a bear; the third was like a leopard with four wings; the fourth was unlike the others, and described by Daniel as "dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth ... and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it" (Dan. 7:7). Daniel asked for an interpretation of this vision, and he learned that these four beasts corresponded to the same four kingdoms which had been represented by the four metals in Nebuchadnezzar's dream.



The fourth beast, Rome, especially intrigued Daniel: "Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast," Daniel said to the one who was explaining the vision. Among other things, Daniel was told that this fourth beast, Rome, would "speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws" (Dan. 7:25).

Here is the verse which prophesies Christianity's Great Theological Paradigm Shift. Rome gained control of the Church after Constantine embraced Christianity. Daniel

tells us that Rome, the enemy of the Most High and the enemy of the saints, would “think to change times and laws.” The word translated “times” here means “appointed times.” (See Strong’s or any lexicon. Mons. R. Knox’s Catholic Version translates “times and laws” as “calendar and ordinance.”) The only appointed times and laws that Rome would want to change would be God’s appointed times and God’s laws. Rome did this very thing when she declared the seventh-day Sabbath, the very first of God’s appointed times, to be changed to Sunday. (Anyone who doubts that Rome changed the Sabbath, please write for a copy of *Roman Catholic and Protestant Confessions about Sunday*.) The diagrams below illustrate Christianity’s Great Theological Paradigm Shift. The first diagram shows the weekly cycle as God originally ordained it. The second diagram shows the weekly cycle after The Great Theological Paradigm Shift.



“So what?” some people respond. “So Christians keep the Sabbath a day late. Does God care? Does it really matter which day of the week is used for the Sabbath?” Let me ask a very significant question: If it *doesn’t* matter, why would Rome, the enemy of God and the enemy of the saints, want to change it? *Why would Rome want “to change [appointed] times and laws” if it does not matter?* What would Rome have to gain from this change if it does not matter?

If we look at the issue of the seventh-day Sabbath versus Sunday worship from a mere human standpoint, with our natural understanding, we might be inclined to think that it doesn’t matter which day of the week is used for the Sabbath. However, there is something supernatural at work here, something that goes beyond our natural understanding.

“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him,” Paul wrote, “neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). The Sabbath issue will seem foolish and unimportant to those who look at it with only their natural minds. The Sabbath most assuredly is one of “the things of the Spirit of God,” and therefore it must be spiritually discerned.

Those who have not yet discerned it need to undergo a personal theological paradigm shift. They need to step out of the shoes that Rome has shod them with, and put themselves into the shoes of someone who believes in the Sabbath, and then re-read the Scriptures. As God gives light, the paradigm of God’s appointed times and God’s laws will shift back to the way that God originally designed it. When that happens, it alters the way that many Scriptures are understood. And when enough Christians undergo this personal paradigm shift, then we can look forward to the fulfillment of the rest of Daniel’s prophecy: “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him” (Dan. 7:27). □

THE ANTI- MISSIONARIES

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Dr. Daniel Botkin

The anti-missionaries are Jewish people who actively and aggressively oppose the Messianic Jewish movement. Through literature, tapes, public lectures and personal contacts, the anti-missionaries try to persuade people that Yeshua of Nazareth (Jesus) was *not* the Messiah. Their goal is to prevent Jews from believing in Yeshua and to change the minds of those who do believe. The anti-missionaries are usually bright, articulate, knowledgeable, and charming. In response to this aggressive activism, Messianic Jews have done an excellent job of exposing the unscrupulous methods, the flawed arguments, and the hypocrisy of the anti-missionaries. (See, e.g., Dr. Michael L. Brown's "Unequal Weights and Measures, A Critique of the Methodology of the Anti-Missionaries," *Messianic Outreach* 12:2, and Moishe Rosen's "A Thoughtful Response To Anti-Missionaries," *Messianic Outreach* 17:1.)

Some Messianic Jews regard the anti-missionaries as enemies, and strongly discourage other believers from having any dialogue with the anti-missionaries. Other Messianic believers treat the anti-missionaries more like misguided friends, in hopes that the anti-missionaries will respond favorably to expressions of love and kindness, and eventually believe in Yeshua. Which of these two approaches is right? Or we might ask, Which approach is Biblical?

The Bible describes the Apostle Paul's approach in Acts 13. Paul and Barnabas were talking to the proconsul of Paphos, a man who was interested in hearing about the Messianic faith. A Jewish man named Elymas "withstood them, seeking to turn away the proconsul from the faith." Here is how Paul responded to this anti-missionary: "Then Saul (who also is called Paul), filled with the Holy Spirit,

set his eyes on him, and said, 'O full of all deceit and fraud, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season.' And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand."

A few months ago a Messianic Jewish sister called and told me that she and some other believers had attended the lecture of a well-known anti-missionary. After the presentation, one of the Messianic believers went up and gave the anti-missionary a big hug and said something about loving him in spite of their differences. That may sound sweet and noble, but it is not Biblical. The Apostle Paul did not embrace the anti-missionary Elymas and give him a sweet "Jesus loves you" message. Paul called him the worst names imaginable and then called down the curse of God upon him, blinding him for a season. And the Bible is careful to tell us that Paul did this while he was "filled with the Holy Spirit"! If the Biblical example of Paul means anything at all to us, then we have absolutely no business giving smiles and hugs and warm greetings to the anti-missionaries. We can and should give our smiles and hugs and warm greetings to Jewish people who are not actively engaged in aggressive attempts to turn people away from faith in Yeshua. We have no business, though, being friendly with the anti-missionaries who do their utmost to destroy the faith of Messianic believers. This is not being anti-Semitic or hateful; it is simply being Biblical, and following the example of Paul as he followed the example of Yeshua, who said to the religious hypocrites of His day, "Ye are of your father the devil" (John 8:44).

"But didn't Jesus say to love your enemies and to bless those that curse you?" Yes, He said to love *your* enemies, but He did not say to love *God's* enemies. He said to bless those that curse *you*, but He did not say to bless those that curse the Son

of God. We can pray for the anti-missionaries and ask God to open their eyes, but as long as they try to turn people away from the faith, we should not treat them like buddies.

The Messianic Jewish sister who told me about the warm hug being given to the anti-missionary also told me that the anti-missionary had expressed a desire to continue dialoguing with believers. This sister asked me if I thought it would be a good idea for her to continue communicating with this anti-missionary. I answered her with a parable, in these words:

"My wife and I have been married for over twenty years. There is a man who is determined to break up my marriage. This man has stated that destroying my marriage is his chief goal in life. Now he wants to know if it's okay for him to have a personal conversation with my wife from time to time, so he can slander me and try to persuade her to divorce me. Do you think this is a good idea?"

We are talking about life and death matters -- eternal life and eternal death. Yeshua said, "Whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:33). The anti-missionaries have persuaded some Messianic Jews and non-Jewish Christians to abandon their faith and deny the Lord Yeshua who died for them. By their denial, these people damn their own souls.

It is bad enough for a person who never followed Yeshua to deny Him. It will be far worse for a person who once followed Him to deny Him. As Simon Peter wrote, "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (2 Pet. 2:21). I would not want to be in their shoes on the Day of Judgment, nor in the shoes of the anti-missionaries who convinced them to deny the Lord. □

הנה מה טוב...
HINEH MAH TOV...
"Behold how good..."

Daniel Botkin

PSALM 133

Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there Yahweh commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

There is something very good and very pleasant about brethren dwelling together in unity. It is so good and so pleasant that the Holy Spirit inspired David to write this psalm about it. The camaraderie of this corporate life is something that hermits will never know or experience, for it cannot be experienced alone. It can only be experienced with other brethren.

It is not enough for brethren to merely dwell together; they must dwell together *in unity*. The New Testament emphasizes the importance of unity in the Body of Messiah. (See, e.g., Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 3:3; Eph. 4:3; Ph'p 2:2.) Why is the unity of believers so important? Listen to the words of our Master on the night of His betrayal, as He prays for all His disciples of all generations: "That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me" (John 17:21).

These words in Yeshua's High Priestly prayer tell us how important it is for brethren in Messiah to dwell together in unity. When the world sees how good and how pleasant it is for the brethren to dwell together in unity, it makes it much easier for the world to believe that Yeshua was sent by God. In another place Yeshua said, "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). A corporate body of brethren dwelling

together in unity is a very powerful testimony. It can be even more persuasive than miraculous signs and wonders. Unfortunately, the world rarely sees Christian brethren dwelling together in unity. The world usually sees brethren dwelling separately in disunity, and it is neither good nor pleasant. It makes it difficult for the world to believe in our Lord Yeshua.

What is the source of unity? How do brethren find a way to dwell together in unity? Some people think the solution is to appoint some old bachelor in Rome as "the Vicar of Christ" and invest him with infallible authority. Other people think that they themselves are infallible, and they try to create unity by forming a new cult and appointing themselves as supreme dictators for life. Others think unity can be accomplished by discussing and comparing beliefs and then writing creeds and doctrinal statements that are agreeable to everyone. Still others think the best way to achieve unity is to have an "anything goes" attitude. In other words, let each individual decide for himself what is true and right, as the Israelites did in the days of the Judges.

Each of the above suggestions can produce a degree of unity, but with disastrous side effects. The real source of Biblical unity is in David's description of what that unity is like: "It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments."

The anointing described in this psalm is the anointing of Aaron, Israel's first High Priest. Aaron is a picture of our Messianic High Priest, Yeshua the Messiah. The word *Messiah* (מָשִׁיחַ, *mashiach*) means "anointed one." This anointing of Aaron is a picture of the anointing of the Spirit upon the Body of Messiah. The unity of which David sang cannot exist apart from the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Any unity apart from this anointing is an artificial, contrived unity. Brethren must have the anointing in order to dwell together in unity.

Notice where the anointing starts and the direction it flows. It starts at

the Head. Our High Priest, Yeshua HaMashiach, "the Anointed One," is the Head of His Body. The Body cannot experience the anointing apart from the Head. The Body must receive the anointing as it flows down from the Head. The anointing eventually flows down to even the lowest parts of the Body, "down to the skirts [hem] of his garments." But before the anointing reaches the lowest parts, it first runs down "upon the beard, even Aaron's beard." Why such emphasis on the beard?

The Hebrew word for *beard* is זָקֵן (*zakan*). The Hebrew word for *elder* is זָקֵן (*zaken*). The words are written with the same three letters; it is only the vowel sounds that distinguish the two words from each other. What does this teach us? It teaches that if the anointing flows down upon the elders ("the beard"), we can expect that anointing to continue flowing down to the lowest members of the body, "down to the skirts of his garments." In a local body of believers where brethren are dwelling together in unity, the anointing should flow from Yeshua, the Head, down to the elders of the body, then down to the members that are least in the body. (When the Bible speaks of some members being "lower" or "least," this does not imply lower value or less worth. An elder is "greater" only in a positional and functional sense. An elder is not even necessarily spiritually greater

than a non-elder: the church secretary or church janitor may love God more deeply than the pastor does.)

There are conditions which must be met if a local body wants to experience the anointing of the Spirit. The anointing described above presupposes that the individual members are receptive to the Spirit and want to dwell together in unity. What causes the unity-producing anointing to flow? A.W. Tozer, in his classic *The Pursuit of God*, offers some excellent insight:

Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? They are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which each one must individually bow. So one hundred worshippers met together, each one looking away to Christ, are in heart nearer to each other than they could possibly be were they to become "unity" conscious and turn their eyes away from God to strive for closer fellowship. Social religion is perfected when private religion is purified. The body becomes stronger as its members become healthier. The whole Church of God gains when the members that compose it begin to seek a better and a higher life.

We saw earlier how Yeshua prayed for His disciples to be one, so that the world may believe. In the very next verse, we see that the key to that oneness is the glory of God: "And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one" (John 17:22). As all the individual members of the body focus on the glory of God, the anointing of the Spirit will flow to create unity. Paul described it this way: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18).

The more faithfully and consistently we all focus our inward gaze on the glory of Yeshua, the more faithfully and consistently the unity-producing anointing will flow, from the Head, to the beard, and all the way down to the skirts of the garments. □

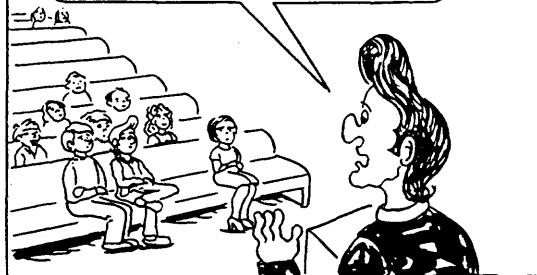
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THE ONLY "K.K.K." IN THIS PUBLICATION!

REVEREND
TWISTTRUTH
& HIS DISCIPLES
by Daniel Botkin
"A PRIESTLY PUN"



NADAB AND ABIHU, SONS OF AARON, DIED FOR OFFERING STRANGE FIRE BEFORE THE LORD! THIS STORY IS SO *IRONIC*! HERE THEY WERE, PRIESTS, CONSUMED BY THE GOD THEY WERE ATTEMPTING TO WORSHIP!



DO YOU SEE THE *IRONY* OF IT, FOLKS? I DON'T THINK THERE'S A STORY IN THE BIBLE MORE IRONIC THAN THIS STORY OF THESE TWO SONS OF AARON THE HIGH PRIEST!



SO *THAT'S* WHY THE JEWS CALL THAT PRIESTLY BLESSING "THE IRONIC BENEDICTION"!



THE TORN VEIL

Daniel Botkin

"And the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us; and we beheld His glory, glory as of an only-begotten from the Father, full of grace and of truth." -John 1:14 KJV II

The Feast of Tabernacles (called *Sukkot* in Hebrew) is my favorite holiday. Every year, our congregation works together to erect and decorate a *sukkah* (booth) at the campground that we rent. Then we meet together every evening during the eight days of the Feast. We begin each evening by sharing a common meal. Then we have a meeting and devote some time to singing and praising the Lord, reading of the Scriptures, teaching and prayer. Afterwards, we sit around a campfire in front of our *sukkah* and enjoy fellowship with one another until we are tired. Then we go home until the next evening. When the weather is not too cold, some of us stay and sleep in the thick layer of straw that covers the floor of our *sukkah*.

Tabernacles is my favorite time of the year, not only because of all the great fellowship, but also because Tabernacles reminds us that the Messiah came to tabernacle among us, as John tells us in his gospel (1:14, literal translation). Many Messianic disciples believe that Yeshua was actually born during the Feast of Tabernacles. While there is no absolute proof of this, various writers and teachers have presented many very compelling arguments that strongly suggest that the Messiah came to tabernacle among us during Tabernacles. Tabernacles is certainly a very appropriate time to focus on the significance of His coming to tabernacle among us. Let's consider the concept of "tabernacling."

God first told Moses to construct the Tabernacle in the wilderness: "And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell [יִשְׁכְּנֵנִי, SHaKHaNti] among them. According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the

tabernacle [מִשְׁכָּן, miSHKaN], and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it" (Ex. 25:8f).

Many Christians are familiar with the term *Shekinah* (שְׁכִינָה, SheKHaNah), the word used to refer to God's Divine Presence. This Hebrew word is related to the words *dwell* and *tabernacle* in the above verses from Exodus. The word also appears in the Hebrew translation of John 1:14, where we are told that He "tabernacled [שָׁכַן, SHaKHaN] among us, and we beheld His glory."

When we speak of God's Presence, we know, of course, that God is present everywhere. This is what some have called His universal Presence - there is no place in the universe where God does not exist. However, it is not enough that God is merely present; He wants to manifest His *Shekinah* in a way that can be perceived by man. He did this when the Tabernacle in the wilderness was completed: "...So Moses finished the work. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle" (Ex. 40:34).

When Solomon's Temple was completed, He did it again: "...then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of Yahweh, so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of Yahweh had filled the house of God" (2 Chron. 5:13f).

He did it again in a tabernacle of flesh: "And the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us; and we beheld His glory" (John 1:14).

When Yeshua lived on this earth,

the *Shekinah* was manifested in Him for a few short years. Then He died, rose from the dead, and returned to the Father, leaving later generations of Christians wishing that they had been born in Israel in that generation that witnessed His coming. But was no generation other than His own meant to experience His actual Presence? That is the way it has been for most Christians, but that is not the way it was intended to be. If we understand the significance of the torn veil, we can get a glimpse of how it was meant to be, and hopefully press in through the torn veil and experience His Presence.

The veil to which I refer is the veil which hung over the entrance to the holy of holies in the Temple. The Temple was patterned after the wilderness Tabernacle, which consisted of three main areas: the outer court, the holy place, and the holy of holies. It was in this innermost room, the holy of holies, where the *Shekinah* dwelt in fiery manifestation. There was only one man in every generation who could enter this place, and that was the High Priest. Even he was allowed to enter only one time a year, on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

A thick, heavy veil hung over the holy of holies, separating man from the *Shekinah* glory of God. The coming of the Messiah was going to change that, though. When a Samaritan woman tried to engage Yeshua in a debate about the proper place to worship, He told her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father ... the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him" (John 4:21, 23). Very soon, access to the dwelling place of God's fiery *Shekinah* was not going to be restricted to just one man, one day of the year. The death of the Messiah was going to change that.

At the instant of Yeshua's death, the veil in the Temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom. (Matt. 27:51) The torn veil tells us that we now have access into God's Presence: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Yeshua, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith..." (Heb. 10:19-22). Through the sacrifice of Yeshua we have access into the holy of holies any day of the year, a privilege that formerly belonged to only one man, one day of the year.

How do we "enter in" to the holy of holies where God's Shekinah dwells? Must we go to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and find the exact spot where the holy of holies was, in order to find the Shekinah? No, this is not necessary. The Shekinah can be found in any part of the world, for the Shekinah is no longer restricted to the holy of holies in Jerusalem. When the veil was torn, the Shekinah was released. It was no longer shut up inside the holy of holies. The Divine Presence was set free to spread throughout the earth, so that anyone, at anytime, in any location, can experience the Presence of God.

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16). Understanding that our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit can help us grasp the benefits of this wonderful truth. The manifestation of the Shekinah in the Temple that Solomon built is a picture of the manifestation of the Shekinah that we can experience. What happened in the innermost room, the holy of holies, should happen in the innermost part of our being, our spirit. Let's look at what happened in Solomon's Temple.

In 2 Chronicles 5 we read about the completion of Solomon's Temple. The final step was bringing the ark of the covenant into the holy of holies. This was the place where Yahweh's Shekinah would dwell, between the

wings of the cherubim. Inside the ark were the two stone tablets with the Ten Commandments written on them, "which Moses put therein at Horeb" (5:10). In the temple which is our body, our spirit corresponds to the holy of holies. The ark is in our spirit. We have in our spirit the same Ten Commandments, written with the Spirit of the Living God, not on tablets of stone, but on the fleshly tablets of our heart. (2 Cor. 3:3)

When the ark was put into its place in Solomon's Temple, there was singing and shouting, and the glory came down. The glory of Yahweh's Presence was so thick that "the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of Yahweh had filled the house of God." When the ark containing the Ten Commandments is given its rightful place in our heart, we can experience this same glory. God has declared our body to be a temple of the Holy Spirit; therefore, we have every reason to expect the arrival of that same Divine Presence which came into Solomon's Temple.

The Shekinah glory came into Solomon's Temple during the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles is a good time for us to remember the manifestation of the Shekinah in Solomon's Temple. It is also a good time to remember the manifestation of the Shekinah in Yeshua, when "the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us." It is also a good time to experience the Shekinah in our spirits as we fellowship with brethren during the Feast of Tabernacles. □



INTERVIEW WITH AN ANTI-SEMITIC

By Daniel Botkin

This past July 4th weekend, 21-year-old Benjamin Nathaniel Smith went on a shooting spree in Illinois and Indiana, targeting Jews, Blacks, and Asians. He killed two people and wounded several others before killing himself. Benjamin Smith was a member of the World Church of the Creator, an anti-Semitic, white supremacist organization whose world headquarters are here in East Peoria, Illinois. The World Church of the Creator (which is neither a true church nor of the Creator) is led by Matt Hale. Matt Hale has received wide attention in the national media due to the actions of his disciple Benjamin Smith. Matt Hale happens to be my neighbor. He lives just a few doors down from my house. One of my cousins who grew up in this neighborhood was Matt's babysitter when he was a boy.

Recently Matt has been distributing literature throughout this area to promote his "gospel." A copy of Matt's publication was delivered to my house, so I decided to go to his house and talk to him. I recorded our conversation and present it here verbatim, with no editing. I want readers to be aware of what kind of philosophies and ideologies are floating around out there. If people's hearts and minds are not filled with the truth, their hearts and minds are in danger of being filled with this sort of deception. This should motivate us to boldly share the truth with people who do not know God. I also hope the publication of this interview will motivate readers to lift up their voices in prayer and ask God to either bring Matt Hale to repentance or to remove him. Humanly speaking, it is not likely that Matt Hale will repent. Humanly speaking, it is more likely that a car bomb or a sniper's bullet will one day dispatch his soul to hell. However, the God to whom we pray is not limited to what is only humanly possible. Humanly speaking, it was not likely that Saul of Tarsus would repent and become a disciple of Yeshua, either.

Here is my interview with Matt Hale:

DB: Did you have any religious upbringing as a child?

MH: Our family was ostensibly Christian, but it was not promoted much. I did not go to church. The Bible was in the house but nobody really read it, and my beliefs were limited to the idea that there was a God. I believed there was a God, and I was told, anyway, that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, but I really didn't know much about that. I didn't think about it much.

DB: So did your religious upbringing have any effect on your current views of Jews and Blacks and other non-whites?

MH: No. I'd say no to that.

DB: You have been described as a "hate monger" and accused of promoting hatred of Jews and non-Whites. Do you hate people?

MH: Certainly we feel that hatred is a fundamental emotion, that everyone loves and everyone hates. And with that being the case, yes, we do hate. However, we do not consider our religion to be a "hate-monger" religion or anything of the kind, because we are not motivated by hate to do what we do. We are motivated by love of our own people.

DB: So do you have anything but hatred for non-Whites?

MH: It's more a matter of indifference towards the other races. We feel the other races can take care of themselves. We do hate some of the things they are doing in this country and around the world. We hate the crime, we hate the drugs, we hate the attitude. We don't believe in race-mixing, for example. It's really, though, a matter of indifference. In a pure state, if non-Whites weren't in our country, we would be completely indifferent towards them; we just wouldn't care. But it is true that we wish to make this an all-White country, and as such, we have to have polarization that comes from having some animosity towards the other races.

DB: What would you like to see done with all the Jews and non-Whites? If you were the supreme dictator of the world or of the country, what would you do?

MH: We would isolate the non-Whites and simply withdraw all of our aid from

them, and let them have their own areas. If we had our way completely, the other races would simply be forced to take care of themselves. They would no longer receive aid of any kind, any kind of influence, any kind of technology, things of this nature. We do believe if that happened, the non-White races would decrease in their populations substantially, because their numbers at this time have been inflated due to White aid and subsidization. India's a good example. At one time there were 300 million Hindus, in 1920; now there's almost a billion of them. Starvation is rampant and everything else, their being artificially subsidized. So, I think that's a long answer to a short question.

DB: Do you advocate or condone violence as a means of achieving your goals?

MH: No, we don't. And the reason for that is that "a person convinced against his will is of the same opinion still." And also, our founder Ben Klassen made it very clear that we intend to obey the law, all *Constitutional* laws. We seek to promote our religion just as other people promote their religions.

DB: What about your alleged call for a "holy racial war"?

MH: I'm glad you asked that, because that is a phrase, a slogan, that has been wildly misinterpreted by the media and others. And I'll reveal it by way of analogy. In the [Peoria] *Journal Star* on Sunday, there was an article saying something like "War On Racism Continues." Well, that's a war, and no one's trying to argue that that's being done by violence. Now why is it that our racial holy war struggle has to be by violence? It isn't; it's basically saying that we care about our White race and that we need to struggle for it. That's all it means.

DB: So you're talking about a "war" in the same way that they use the word?

MH: Yes, exactly.

DB: I wanted to ask a couple questions about Benjamin Nathaniel Smith. First, I'm really curious about the "Sabbath Breaker" tattoo on his chest. Do you know why he had those words tattooed on his chest?

MH: I don't know. And in fact, until this happened, I didn't even know he had

that tattoo. He never had his shirt off; I didn't even know it existed.

DB: According to the newspaper, you expressed no remorse for the victims who were killed. Do you have any remorse, any sympathy, any pity for the victims? For example, what about the children of Rick Byrdsong, who were walking with their father and witnessed him being shot to death for no apparent reason by a stranger. Do you feel any pity for those children?

MH: Well, our religion does not teach pity. Our religion teaches compassion, but only towards our own kind. The other races are simply outside of our moral system, our value system. So I *don't* feel compassion or pity or sympathy for them. They have to have that in their own community and take care of themselves.

DB: In your publication *Facts That the Government and the Media Don't Want You to Know*, you write that your organization is dedicated to "the pursuit of justice." If Benjamin Smith had lived and it had been conclusively proven beyond any doubt that he did the shootings, what would you consider to be "justice" in such a case?

MH: That's a very good question. As long as it is the law to have punishment for crimes in this country, racial crimes or whatever, then he should have been punished. However, it's true that we believe that the non-Whites *should be* outside of the law, and therefore when we have our way, the society will be completely White, our society, and perhaps it would *not* be a crime to kill non-Whites. We don't believe it should be encouraged in any case. No one believes, including in our church, that killing is morally right. However, the main point is that the non-Whites are simply outside of our moral code. So we're trying to change the government, change the system, so that our moral code is the legal code.

DB: In your publication you have 25 quotes from the Talmud that say terrible things about Gentiles. I'm not a Talmudic scholar, but I've read enough to know that the Talmud does contain statements like these. I'm curious to know: Where did you get this list of 25 quotes?

MH: I received some of them from a

Jew, believe it or not, who was well-studied in the Talmud and who felt that the Talmudic passages were wrong, and very hostile. Also I received some of the passages from other White movement publications. And I did cross-reference them, and they were consistent with one another. Groups that were very different from one another were coming out with the same quotes, and so I was comfortable at that point that they were, indeed, accurate.

And one thing I'll mention, too, is that no one ever denies their accuracy. Usually people simply say, "They're full of hate," but I think the hatred is actually shown by the teachings themselves.

DB: Then you didn't compile these quotes yourself, through your own personal study of the Talmud?

MH: No, I didn't.

DB: Are you aware of the fact that much of the Talmud is simply the record of various rabbis' opinions, and is, therefore, full of contradictory statements? For example, you quote Sanh. 59a, which says that "a Gentile who occupies himself with the study of Torah is deserving of death." However, another place in the Talmud says that "a Gentile who obeys the Torah is the equal of the High Priest" (Sifra to xviii.5). And there are other statements in the Talmud that speak highly of Gentiles who live a righteous life. Are you aware of the positive things the Talmud says about Gentiles?

MH: I have seen some of them. It's true that there are some contradictions in the Talmud. I agree with you there. However, we believe that if these sayings are *not* the teachings of the Jews, if Jews do not endorse the Talmudic phrases outlined in the *Facts* booklet we present to people, then they need to say so. We need to have a public statement from the Jews disclaiming these statements. And thus far, we haven't had it.

DB: After stating that the Talmud is "The Real Essence of the Jewish Creed" and listing the 25 anti-Gentile quotes from the Talmud, you then make reference to the Jews' "Talmudic conspiracy," which you call "a conspiracy against all mankind." As evidence of this Talmudic conspiracy, you fill four pages with information

about various Jews in the media. You then express your concern about "allowing a people with beliefs such as expressed in the Talmud to determine what we get to read or watch." Are you saying that the Jews in the media use the media to promote Talmudic ideas?

MH: I think not Talmudic ideas per se, but the intent or drive of the Talmud for Jewish domination. I think the Talmud talks at many points about how Jews are the masters of the world, things of this nature, that God chose them to be number one. And so the media does push that reputation that the Jews can do no wrong and that they are the victims rather than the persecutors throughout history.

DB: One point that I want to bring up is that the Jews in the media are not practicing Orthodox Jews who take the Talmud seriously. The Jews in the media are primarily secular Jews who probably know less about the Talmud than I do. So to describe the Jews in the media as "a people with beliefs such as expressed in the Talmud" is unfair and inaccurate, because if Jews really believed the Talmud, they wouldn't marry Gentiles, because (as you point out), the Talmud forbids a Jew to marry a Gentile. And even if the Talmud didn't forbid marriage to a Gentile, if Jews really believed that Gentiles are sub-human beasts in human form, they wouldn't marry them. Yet intermarriage is continually increasing among American Jews. This would indicate that most American Jews do *not* take the Talmud seriously.

MH: I think that as much as there are some Jews, or many Jews, who are secular Jews, the basic crux of the Talmud still permeates their thinking; it still guides their thinking. Maybe not specific passages, but the overwhelming sentiment that the Jews are special, and the non-Jews are to be used and exploited. I think that the media very much takes that attitude. They may not take the attitude on intermarriage, and that's a good point. But I think they do in other respects.

DB: What do you say about the Holocaust?

MH: Well, I think the Holocaust is a form of blackmail, really, upon the Gentiles of the world. It is by no means

a unique phenomenon in history, though the Jews like to call it that. There have been many atrocities by many people throughout the ages. We don't believe this business of mass gassings, because it's not supported by the evidence. The Red Cross in 1946 said that 250,000 Jews died in the Second World War. We think that is a much more accurate figure. It [the Holocaust] was used to justify the creation of the state of Israel. It's used to justify all kinds of foreign aid to Israel. It has been incredibly good, really, for the Jews overall, in the vast scheme of things. And we believe that it's being used, of course, to justify guilt in the German people. And so that's our take on that.

DB: So you believe it was more like 250,000 who died?

MH: Yes. Yes.

DB: There are literally thousands of first-hand witnesses who tell a story different from yours. I've read first-hand accounts of survivors and liberators of the camps; I've seen the U.S. government films of the death camps; I lived in Israel for two years and saw people with the numbers tattooed on their arms; I have personally spoken with survivors; I've read the testimonies of godly Christian people like Corrie Ten Boom. Tell me why I should believe you instead of all these first-hand witnesses. Can you give me a good reason why I should believe that your account is more accurate than theirs?

MH: Okay. Simply go by the facts. Study, for example, the supposed gas chambers themselves, and you'll find there's no residue of Zyklon-B in there. And that's a cyanide prussic acid gas, and it left no acid on the walls, which is impossible if gas was being pumped into that facility. According to Dr. Fred Leuchter, who actually creates gas chambers for a living in Florida, he went to Auschwitz, he studied the supposed gas chambers, and he concluded that it was impossible, technically impossible, to gas people such as the claims that have been stated. Also, we have the fact that the doors of the supposed chambers opened inward, which doesn't make much sense if people are standing and stacked in these facilities, as many as they could hold. It would make no sense to open a door inward.

Also there was no exhaust system in the supposed gas chambers, which, if you are pumping high-pressured gas into a facility, you need an exhaust system; otherwise the place would explode. We have the facts of the numbers themselves. There were never more than 4 million Jews in the entire occupied territories during World War 2, so obviously you can't make 6 million out of 4 million. We have the fact that the Jewish population after the War actually increased. I believe it's the Jewish Almanac that stated that world Jewish population in 1945 was larger than it was in 1938. And for that to have been the case, the Jews would have had to have the most fertile group of people in human history, to lose 6 million and still increase the population in seven years. We have the fact that to this day, many Jews around the world have found relatives they thought were dead. They had assumed they were dead, and they come across them in Israel and other countries. We have the fact that over 4 million Jews have asked for reparation payments from the German government these past 50 years. That's 4 million on top of the 6 million that supposedly died, when there were only 4 million in occupied Europe, we submit. So there are a lot of technical, logistical, statistical problems with the Holocaust. We don't deny for one minute that people were put in camps. We don't deny that people were forced to work slave labor. We don't deny that there were also some atrocities. But they were not done to the extent that is being claimed.

DB: Do you consider white Jews part of the White race?

MH: Those Jews which are converts, that were actually of European-only ancestry, yes. Those Jews, though, who have Semitic ancestry, but less Semitic ancestry than other Jews in the Middle East, for example, no. And I don't know if you're familiar with Kessler's book, *The Thirteenth Tribe*, in which he talks about how 90% of all Jews are not even from Israel (or Palestine, as the Palestinians would call it). They're actually from the Khazar region of Russia, the Caucasus Mountains, actually the Caspian Sea, I believe, but in any case, Jews are not a race per se, but a mongrelized group of

racess – Whites, Orientals, even some Blacks.

DB: If you are correct about the superiority of the White race, shouldn't we Whites help the "inferior" races to achieve higher levels of living, instead of degrading them? How does your referring to Martin Luther King as "Martin Luther Coon" help anyone? If we Whites were superior, it seems like there would be a nobler way to solve the problems.

MH: Well, I think that through history, White people have tried to bring the races up to our level, but it's actually been damaging to our own race. And that's the only concern we have, our own race. The other races are simply not our concern. Bringing the non-Whites up is impossible without bringing us down.

DB: What do you say about Jesus?

MH: Well, we think that Jesus Christ is a historical invention, a myth. We don't believe that such a person ever even existed. And in fact, at the time he supposedly lived, not one historian wrote about him. It was only after he was supposedly crucified that historians talked about him. And there wasn't even a Christian Bible put together until Constantine, in 313. So we submit that it's like a lot of other religions, it was formed on myths, and the Christian religion is simply not valid.

DB: Last question: What are you going to say to God on Judgment Day if He says, "Matt, you were wrong. You should have listened to your neighbor Dan, who lived down the street from you."?

MH: Well, I'm thoroughly confident there won't be a Judgment Day, and that when I die, just like all other creatures on earth, human arrogance notwithstanding, that's the end of life, and I'm ready for that.

DB: So you don't believe in any kind of afterlife?

MH: No.



After this interview, I spoke to Matt for some time, and urged him to repent and seek God. As I walked away from Matt's house carrying my tape recorder and note pad, another neighbor saw me. "Daniel in the lion's den!" the neighbor shouted. □

THE MESSIAH'S HEBREW NAME: "YESHUA" OR "YAHSHUA"? Dr. Daniel Botkin

The Messiah's Hebrew name is usually transliterated as either *Yeshua* or *Yahshua*. Under normal circumstances I would not bother to write an article about something as trivial as the difference between the vowel sounds "e" and "ah." There is a need to address this subject, though, because some people who use the *Yahshua* form say untrue things about those who use the *Yeshua* form. The opponents of the *Yeshua* form claim that this pronunciation is the result of a Jewish conspiracy to hide the Savior's true name. Those who call the Messiah *Yeshua* are accused of perpetuating a Jewish conspiracy and "denying His name" or "degrading Him" by their use of the *Yeshua* form. If you have never read or heard these outlandish accusations, you probably will eventually. From time to time I receive printed articles and personal letters to this effect.

The proponents of the *Yahshua* form claim that the Messiah's Hebrew name was the same as Joshua's, written יהושע or יהושה (Strong's #3091). The only problem is that neither of these Hebrew spellings of Joshua's name can possibly be pronounced "Yahshua." The third letter in Joshua's name (reading from right to left) is the letter *vav* (ו) and a *vav* cannot be silent. The letter *vav* must be pronounced as either a "v" or an "o" or an "u." (In the case of *Joshua*, it takes an "o" sound, giving us "Ye-ho-SHU-a." Strong's confirms this pronunciation.) For a name to be pronounced "Yahshua," it would have to be spelled יה-שוא, and no such name exists anywhere in the Hebrew Bible. You don't have to just take my word for it, though. Dr. Danny Ben-Gigi says of the *Yahshua* form that "there is no such name in Hebrew" and that "people invented it to fit their theology."¹ Dr. Ben-Gigi is an Israeli and the former head of Hebrew programs at Arizona State University. He is the author of the book *First Steps in Hebrew Prayers*, and he designed and produced the "Living Israeli Hebrew" language-learning course. Dr. David

Bivin, a Christian, says that the *Yahshua* pronunciation "is rooted in a misunderstanding."² Dr. Bivin is a renowned Hebrew scholar and teacher and author of *Fluent Biblical Hebrew*.

I do not know of a single individual who knows Hebrew well enough to actually read it and understand it and converse in it who uses the *Yahshua* form.

Please do not misunderstand. A person does not need to know Hebrew and Greek and linguistics in order to be spiritual. However, if a person is going to take it upon himself to instruct others about subjects of a linguistic and Hebraic nature, he should know the Hebrew language and he should know some basics about linguistics. This is especially true if he is going to use his Hebrew-based linguistic teachings to accuse his brethren of being part of a "Jewish conspiracy" to "deny the true name of the Savior."

To people who actually know Hebrew - people like Dr. Ben-Gigi, Dr. Bivin, and others - it is very obvious that those who insist on the *Yahshua* form know very little about the Hebrew language. The only Hebrew that most of these self-appointed scholars know is what they can learn from a Strong's Concordance.³ Strong's is a great study tool and a fine place to start, but it is not a means by which a person can learn the Hebrew language.

The English form *Jesus* is derived from the New Testament Greek name Ἰησοῦς, pronounced "Yesous." According to Strong's, *Yesous* (#2424) is "of Hebrew origin" and can be traced back to Joshua's Hebrew name, *Yehoshua* (#3091, יהושע). But how do we get the Greek *Yesous* from the Hebrew *Yehoshua*? Someone armed with nothing more than a Strong's Concordance may have difficulty answering that question. Someone who reads the Bible in Hebrew, though, knows that the name *Joshua* sometimes appears in its shortened form, *Yeshua* (יֵשׁוּעַ). In Neh. 8:17 it is apparent even in English: "Jeshua the son of Nun." (The letter *J* was pronounced like a *Y* in Old En-

glish.) Strong's does not tell the reader that the Greek *Yesous* is actually transliterated from this shortened Hebrew form, *Yeshua*, and not directly from the longer form *Yehoshua*. The process from "Yehoshua" to "Jesus" looks like this:

Hebrew *Yehoshua* → Hebrew *Yeshua*

Hebrew *Yeshua* → Greek *Yesous*

Greek *Yesous* → English *Jesus*

There is no "sh" sound in Greek, which accounts for the middle "s" sound in *Yesous*. The "s" at the end of the Greek name is a grammatical necessity, to make the word declinable.

In Neh. 8:17, Joshua's name is 100% identical to the name which today's Messianic Jews use for the Messiah, *Yeshua* (יֵשׁוּעַ). Strong's confirms this pronunciation, and tells us that there were ten Israelites in the Bible who bore this name (#3442). Therefore the shortening of *Yehoshua* to *Yeshua* predates the Christian era by at least 500 years, and cannot be the result of a Jewish conspiracy to hide the Savior's true name.⁴ To claim that the shortened form *Yeshua* is the result of a Jewish conspiracy is to ignore the facts of history and the facts of the Hebrew Scriptures. The form *Yeshua* existed for several hundred years before the Messiah was even born. Even in the pre-Christian Septuagint, we see the Greek form ἸΗΣΟΥΣ (*Yesous*) in the title of the Book of Joshua. (This is also proof that *Yesous* has no connection to the pagan god Zeus.)

So where did the transliteration *Yahshua* come from? This form of the name can be traced back to the beginnings of the Sacred Name movement, a movement that grew out of the Church of God, 7th Day, in the late 1930s. I have in my files an article entitled "A Brief History of the Name Movement in America" by L. D. Snow, a Sacred Name believer.⁵ According to this article, "John Briggs and Paul Penn were the FIRST to pronounce and use

the name Yahshua" (emphasis Snow's). This was in 1936 and 1937, the article states. No information is given about how Briggs and Penn came up with this (mis)transliteration.

Later Sacred Name literature appeals to the Messiah's statement in John 5:43 as "proof" of the *Yahshua* form: "I am come in My Father's name," He said. In the minds of Sacred Name believers, this means that "*Yah*," a shortened form of *Yahweh*, must appear in the name of the Son. However, the Messiah did *not* say "My name contains My Father's name" or "My Father's name must appear inside My name" or any such statement. He said absolutely nothing here about His own name. The only "name" He mentioned here was the Father's name. He said, "I am come in My Father's name," which simply means that He was coming by His Father's authority, on His Father's behalf. If we take Yeshua's statement "I am come in My Father's name" to mean that His own name must contain the Father's name, then we ourselves cannot do anything "in the Father's name" unless our own personal name happens to contain the syllable "*Yah*." The folly of this interpretation is also evident if the same line of reasoning is applied to the rest of Yeshua's statement: "...if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." If the logic of Sacred Name believers is applied to this half of the verse, it would be saying "a person's name must contain his own name," which is meaningless. If, on the other hand, "in his own name" means "by his own authority," then the statement makes sense.

Why is the *Yahshua* form used by no one but Sacred Name believers and people who have been influenced by Sacred Name believers? Probably because no such name exists in the Hebrew Bible and, to my knowledge, no such name exists in any extra-Biblical Hebrew literature. It appears that Dr. Ben-Gigi is correct when he says that people invented the name *Yahshua* to fit their theology.

I have read a lot of literature from writers who seek to expose the "errors" of those who refer to the Messiah as *Yeshua*. The only thing these writers actually expose is their lack of knowl-

edge. I could give several examples of statements which are absolutely ridiculous. I do not have the space in this publication to give all the examples I have in my files, and I do not wish to embarrass sincere people for their honest but misguided efforts. There are some examples, though, that grossly misrepresent the facts, and some of these examples need to be exposed.

In one popular booklet published by a well-known Sacred Name organization, the anonymous author makes this statement: "Most reference works agree with *Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the NT* statement on page 284, which states that the name Yahoshua was shortened after the exile to the short form Yahshua." This statement makes it sound like Kittel's uses the forms *Yahoshua* and *Yahshua*. I went to the library and looked at this page in Kittel's. The words *Yahoshua* and *Yahshua* do not appear even one time on this page. This can be verified by going to a library and looking up this page. (It's in Volume III.) If your library does not have Kittel's, I can send a photocopy of this page to any skeptics.

This same Sacred Name organization which misrepresents Kittel's also misrepresented a Jewish author. In a magazine article written by this organization's main leader, a lengthy segment is quoted from a book published by KTAV, a Jewish publishing house. When copying the quotation for his magazine article, this Sacred Name author freely used *Yahshua*, making it appear that the Jewish author used that transliteration in his book. I got the book from the library, though, and discovered that "*Yahshua*" did not appear in the book. I wrote to this Sacred Name leader asking for an explanation. I told him that unless he had some other explanation, I could only conclude one of three things: either he deliberately misrepresented the facts, or he did it accidentally, or the book I got from the library was a different version from his, in which case I would owe him an apology. My letter was sent September 1, 1997, and I am still waiting for a reply. I will not embarrass this man by mentioning his name or the name of his ministry. It is not my wish to embarrass anyone.

I am not writing this article to

persuade people to quit saying "*Yahshua*." If people want to continue using a mistransliteration that was erroneously contrived by early Sacred Name pioneers who didn't know Hebrew, it really doesn't matter to me. I doubt that the substitution of an "ah" sound for an "e" sound matters much to the Lord, either. What does matter, though, is the spreading of false accusations against Messianic Jews and others who call the Messiah "*Yeshua*."

Paul warned Timothy about "doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings [suspicions]" (1 Tim. 6:4). Unfortunately, this is an accurate description of what goes on among many people in the Sacred Name movement. Personally, I would rather fellowship with non-contentious people who call the Messiah "*Jesus*" than with contentious people who insist that everyone call Him "*Yahshua*." □

FOOTNOTES

1 *Love Song to the Messiah* newsletter, March 1999, p. 1.

2 "The Fallacy of Sacred Name Bibles," *Jerusalem Perspective* Nov.-Dec. 1991, p. 12.

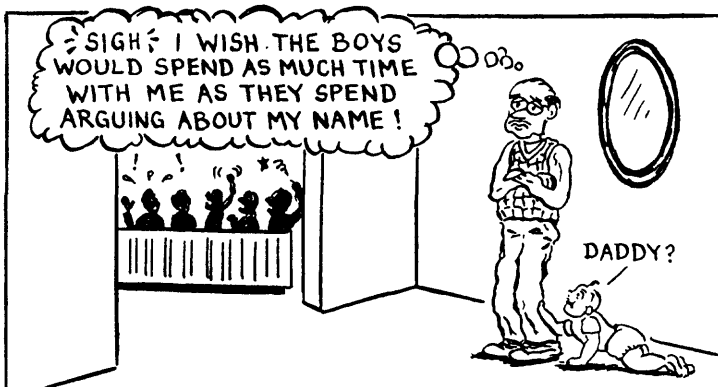
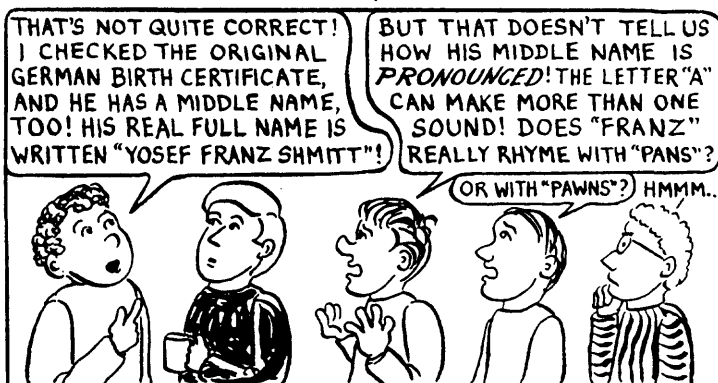
3 These teachers rely very heavily on Strong's Concordance, yet when Strong proves them wrong, as he does with the pronunciation of *Yehoshua*, they insist that Strong's rendering is erroneous! I have a Sacred Name publication which actually claims that Strong wrote down incorrect pronunciations because "his understanding of the Name was lacking." Anyone who wants to disprove this ludicrous assertion can simply look at Joshua's name in a Hebrew Bible and see that Strong used the very same vowel marks that are used in the Bible.

4 There is some debate over whether or not the Jews' final shortening of Jesus' name to *Yeshu* (יֵשׁוּ) was a deliberate attempt to avoid acknowledging Yeshua of Nazareth as the Savior.

5 This article first appeared in a publication called *The Elijah Messenger* in May-June 1966, and was reprinted in 1975 in *World Today Analyzed*, a publication of the Assembly of Yahvah in Tahlequah, OK.

THE SONS OF JOE SMITH

by Daniel Botkin



THE SONS OF

יהוה

by Daniel Botkin

In the Hebrew Scriptures the Creator's Name is written יהוה. People in the Sacred Name movement tell us that it is extremely vital for us to address God by His proper Hebrew Name. Yet Sacred Name believers cannot agree among themselves exactly how the Name should be pronounced. I have seen the Name transliterated as Yahweh, Yahveh, Yahvah, Yahwah, Yahueh, and other various ways. I have read articles written by believers who passionately insist that their pronunciation is the one and only true and acceptable pronunciation of the Name, and, we are told, anyone who disagrees with them is insulting the Creator by mispronouncing His Name.

No one can conclusively prove beyond any doubt exactly how the Name was originally pronounced. Sometimes one writer will quote one source to "prove" the correctness of one particular form of the Name, but another writer will quote an equally reliable source to "prove" that a different pronunciation is the correct form.

How important is it, really, to know the exact pronunciation of our Heavenly Father's Name? I did not know my earthly father's name until I was about 4 or 5 years old. I knew him only by the title "dad," the same generic title that all English-speaking heathens use to refer to their fathers. My ignorance of my earthly father's name and my use of the generic title "dad" did not affect my relationship with him one bit. When I called him "dad," he knew that I was talking only to him, and not to any of the other dads out there.

Some Sacred Name writers give the impression that our Heavenly Father is so stupid that He doesn't know which "god" or "lord" we are talking to if we address Him by the generic titles "God" or "Lord." Never mind that He is addressed as "God" and "Lord" hundreds of times in the Bible. (The Hebrew titles *elohim* and *adonai* are every bit as generic as the English titles *god* and *lord*, and can refer to either false pagan gods and lords or to the true Lord God. If our Heavenly Father is not offended by generic titles in Hebrew, why should He be offended by their English equivalents, especially when the English language, unlike Hebrew, offers us the option of capitalizing *God* and *Lord*, so there is no mistaking which God or Lord we are talking about?)

Knowing the exact pronunciation of our Heavenly Father's Name is not nearly as important as knowing *Him*. If you are fearful and worried about what to call Him, try addressing Him as "Abba, Father."

"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, 'Abba, Father.'" -Romans 8:15

THE MENORAH

by Daniel Botkin

During Hanukkah, Jewish people light the menorah each night in remembrance of the victory of the Maccabees over their pagan oppressors. Because the Hanukkah story took place long after the Old Testament was written, Hanukkah is not mentioned in the Old Testament. It is mentioned in the New Testament, though, in John 10:22, where it is called "the feast of the dedication." (*Hanukkah* means "dedication" in Hebrew.) Because Yeshua was participating in a Hanukkah celebration, some non-Jewish disciples celebrate Hanukkah as a kosher alternative to Christmas.

The menorah used in the Tabernacle had seven branches, but the Hanukkah menorah has nine - eight for the eight days that the oil miraculously burned when the Temple was rededicated, and one for the *shamash*, the servant candle that is used to light the other eight.

The menorah can teach us some lessons about being a disciple of Yeshua. The first and most obvious function of a menorah is to give light. The Bible uses light as a metaphor for knowledge and understanding of spiritual truth. To be in darkness is to be ignorant of spiritual truth. Therefore the menorah is a symbol of the mission of God's people to spread the light of the knowledge of God to all the world. Even the shape of the menorah suggests outreach. The branches look like arms reaching out from the center shaft. Our call is to shine, to reach out, to share the light of the knowledge of God, of His Torah, and of His Messiah Yeshua, who is the Torah made flesh.

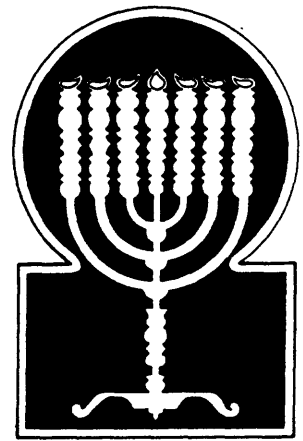
The rabbis used the seven-branched menorah as a symbol of the Torah. This symbolism was arrived at by counting the number of Hebrew words in the first verse of each of the five books of Moses. According to the rabbis, the seven branches remind us of Genesis 1:1, which has seven words. The eleven knobs remind us of Exodus 1:1, which has eleven words. The nine flowers remind us of Leviticus 1:1, which has nine words. The eighteen-handbreadth height (mentioned in the

Talmud) reminds us of Numbers 1:1, which has eighteen words. The twenty-two cups remind us of Deuteronomy 1:1, which has twenty-two words.

We can also think of the menorah as representing Yeshua. He was the Torah made flesh, and proclaimed Himself to be the Light of the world. We need to remember that we are called to be the light of the world, too: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Mt. 5:14-16).

The Messiah is the Light of the world, but we are the Body of the Messiah, the "arms" by which He reaches out to those in darkness. He is the center shaft; we are the branches. Turn the menorah upside down, and it looks like a grape vine, reminding us of John 15:5, "I am the vine, ye are the branches."

When the Tabernacle was built, the menorah was not made by shaping and joining separate pieces together. It was beaten into shape from one piece of solid gold. (Ex. 25:31) The branches or arms of the menorah had to be drawn out of the center shaft by hammering. In Messiah's role as the Menorah of God, He likewise had to be beaten and hammered onto the Cross in order for us, the branches, to be drawn out of Him.



Yeshua is like the center shaft of the menorah. In addition to being the source of the branches, the center shaft also gives stability to the menorah and upholds the branches. Yeshua gives stability to our lives and upholds us. On the Hanukkah menorah, the center shaft is higher than all the other branches, just as Yeshua is higher than all other men. The center shaft holds the *shamash* candle, which is used to light all the other candles. This reminds us that Yeshua is the Source of our spiritual light.

After all the candles are lit and burning, the center shaft becomes the focus of all the branches, because the wicks in all the branches are bent toward the center. (See picture at top.) This custom is based on the instructions in Num. 8:2. (This instruction is not apparent in most English translations, but can be seen in the Hebrew text.) According to the Talmud, the purpose of this was to create a combined blaze of light. This should remind us that it requires a united effort to shine brightly enough to penetrate the spiritual darkness around us. One candle burning by itself in obscurity cannot do much to overcome the darkness. God is not looking for cranky lone prophets who refuse to let their light shine along with other disciples in the setting of a local congregation. He is looking for people who are willing to take their place as a candle on the Menorah of God, bend their wicks toward the Messiah, and stay together in order to produce a combined blaze of light, so that seekers who are wandering and groping in darkness can find their way to God. □

ISOLATION OR EVANGELISM?

Daniel Botkin

Yeshua warned His disciples that before the end of the age, there would be many false prophets who would deceive many. This deception would result in "iniquity" (*anomia*, "lawlessness"). "And because iniquity [lawlessness] shall abound," He said, "the love of many shall wax cold" (Mt. 24:11f).

The Church began its departure from the Torah and its decline into lawlessness even before the first generation of Apostles were dead. About 66 AD, Jude wrote that there were "certain men crept in unawares" who were "turning the grace of God into lasciviousness [a license for immorality]" (Jude 4). About a decade earlier, Paul had written that "the mystery of iniquity [*anomias*, 'lawlessness'] doth already work" (or, "the secret power of lawlessness is already at work," as one translation puts it) (2 Thes. 2:7). By the time of Constantine, the leaven of antinomianism had done its work, and the whole lump was leavened. Although there were still godly individuals in the Church, the Church system was corrupted and growing more corrupt all the time.

What were those individuals who were sincere believers supposed to do about the increasing corruption in the Church? They had a few choices. They could stay in the Church, let lawlessness continue, and do nothing about it - just accept it. Or they could stay in the Church and fight against the lawless trend by calling the Church to repentance. Or they could officially separate from the Church and form communities to recover and maintain the original Biblical standards.

Many individuals did choose to separate themselves from the Church, but it was not an official separation. It was a geographical separation. Many people who were grieved by the sin and corruption in the Church decided to abandon civilization and retreat to the desert and live as monks, while still maintaining official affiliation with the Church. These men are now known as The Desert Fathers.

The Prophet Jeremiah experienced the same sort of grief and frustration that drove The Desert Fathers into the desert. "Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men," Jeremiah lamented, "that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men!" (Jer. 9:2)

Jeremiah only *felt* like abandoning God's people and going to live in the wilderness. The Desert Fathers actually did it. They formed their monastic communities in remote places, a safe distance away from the cities and the centers of population. There they lived in their isolated, insulated, holy huddles, attracting only those people who wanted to live in the desert as monks. The Desert Fathers succeeded in keeping themselves untainted from the world, but they failed to let their light shine before men. Men lived in the cities and towns and villages, not in the wilderness.

The separated, monastic life produced some strange but interesting fruit. Vows of silence were common, as were



long periods of voluntary sleep deprivation, which led to hallucinations of demons, often in the form of seductive women. Another common practice of monks was standing in one position without moving for several hours (sometimes neck-deep in water), while reciting over and over again a set prayer. Then there were the stylites. They were the men who opted for a solitary life on the tops of huge, high pillars. A stylite simply climbed up to the top of his chosen pillar, and there he lived, eating and drinking whatever bread and water his fellow monks placed into the basket at the end of his rope. Visitors to church ruins in Syria can still see the base of the pillar where a stylite named Simeon gained great fame for spending the last years of his life atop that pillar.

These forms of severe, extreme asceticism were the fruit of severe, extreme isolation from the world. We are certainly called to be separated from the unbelieving world *system* - the world's ways, the world's values, the world's views, the world's priorities, etc. - but we are not called to be geographically isolated from the *people* of the world. We are called to be a light to the world, not a light cloistered together under an agricultural bushel in some remote wilderness community where no outsiders will ever see the light. Let me repeat Yeshua's warning: "And because iniquity [lawlessness] shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." As we see both the Church world and the unbelieving world continue to reject God's Torah, we must be careful that we do not let our love for people wax cold.

As lawlessness increases, the temptation to let our love for people wax cold increases. In the very next verse, Yeshua said, "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." That word "But" ties this statement to the previous verse, suggesting that it is our love for lawless people which must endure unto the end.

I know that quite a few of my readers live in remote, rural locations, and I am not condemning those of you who have made that choice. Where you live is between you and the Lord. If the Lord has told you to live in your current location, so be it. My concern, though, is for those who have chosen their rural location for other reasons - reasons such as fear, a lack of trust in God's protection, or a heart whose love for the lost has waxed cold.

It's nice to have a big garden, some farm animals, and a country environment for children. It is no sin to have these things if the Lord is the One who has placed you in such a location. Let's be sure, though, that we are not motivated by that spirit of fear which caused the tribes of Reuben and Gad to insist on settling in the green fields outside the Promised Land simply

because they "had a very great multitude of cattle" and they saw that "the place was a place for cattle" (Num. 32:1).

These two tribes told Moses, "We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones" (v. 17). Their concern for the safety of their livestock and their children was certainly a legitimate concern, but it was more important to them than obeying God's plan for them to go into the Promised Land. Of course the Lord didn't expect the Israelites to take their livestock and children into battle, but He *did* expect them to take their livestock and their children into the Land, and then trust God to protect them from the evil in the Land.

Part of my childhood years were spent growing up on farms. My grandparents lived without electricity or indoor plumbing, and I am familiar with the simplicity of rural life. Country life appeals to me, but I want to be a light to people. And since most people live in cities and towns, I want to be in or near a city.

Again, I am not condemning people who live in remote places. If the Lord has truly led you to a remote place, this article should not make you feel

guilty or angry. (If it does disturb you, maybe you should pray about your situation.) Yeshua often went to remote places to pray alone, but He always returned to minister to the multitudes. We are called to evangelism, not to isolation. Those who live in remote places should at least pray about ways to reach out to those beyond the borders of their farms.

Let me close with some lines from a folk song written in the early 1960s. In this ballad, a blue-eyed prophet is asked where he has been and what he has seen and heard. After each question, the prophet gives an ominous warning of a soon-coming judgment, which he describes as "a hard rain." After these long, apocalyptic descriptions of imminent doom, the prophet is asked what he intends to do, now that he knows what's coming. It is interesting that he does not intend to retreat to the safety of a desert or forest. The only "forest" he intends to go to is a "black forest" which is populated by needy people who need to hear the prophet's message. Here is the prophet's reply:

I'm a-goin' back out
'fore the rain starts a-fallin',
I'll walk to the depth
of the deepest black forest,
Where the people are many
and their hands are all empty,
Where the pellets of poison
are flooding their waters,
Where the home in the valley
meets the damp dirty prison,
Where the executioner's face
is always well hidden,
Where hunger is ugly,
where souls are forgotten,
Where black is the color,
where none is the number,
And I'll tell it and think it
and speak it and breathe it,
And reflect it from the mountain
so all souls can see it,
Then I'll stand on the ocean
until I start sinkin',
But I'll know my song well
before I start singin'
And it's a hard, it's a hard
it's a hard, it's a hard,
It's a hard rain's a-gonna fall.

-B. Dylan



**BARUCH HA-BA
ברוך הבא
WHAT MUST PRECEDE
THE RETURN OF
YESHUA?**

by Daniel Botkin

In Matthew 24, Yeshua stated several things that would precede His return at the end of this age. Things preceding His return include false messiahs, wars, famines, pestilence, earthquakes, persecution, and false prophets whose teachings result in the abounding of antinomianism. "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations," Yeshua said, "and then shall the end come" (Mt. 24:14).

All of the above-mentioned events take place without the help or cooperation of God's people, except for the last one - the preaching of the gospel to all nations. As the Apostle Paul put it, "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:14)

Chronologically we are between the Messiah's first coming and His second coming. During this in-between time, God is taking out from among the Gentiles a people for His name. (Acts 15:14) The Messianic Kingdom will be made up of "all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues" (Rev. 7:9). One very important nation which also must hear the gospel is not a Gentile nation, but a nation which has as its capital the city of Jerusalem.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," Yeshua lamented, "thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee. How often I would have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye say, 'Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord'" (Mt. 23:37ff).

In what way is Yeshua's return dependent on the Jewish people?

The answer to this question lies in the implication of the statement "Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord." The phrase "blessed is he that comes" is a literal translation of two Hebrew words, *baruch ha-ba*. In Hebrew *baruch ha-ba* is an idiom that means "Welcome." What is significant about this? The significance lies in the fact that Yeshua must be welcomed by the people who have Jerusalem as their capital. He clearly stated that Jerusalem will not see Him again until the inhabitants of that city say to Him, "*Baruch ha-ba! Welcome!*" And since Jerusalem is the city to which He will return (Zech. 14), we can safely say that He will not return to this earth until the Jewish people (or at least a significant enough portion of them) welcome Him as their Messiah.

Preaching the gospel to all ethnic groups is important, but the Jewish people must not be ignored. Taking the gospel to the Jewish people presents a great challenge, because Jewish people, unlike any non-Christian Gentile group, already have a religion which has its roots in Divine revelation. The Torah was given by God, and Orthodox Jews know this, as do many non-Orthodox Jews. Orthodox Jews view Christianity as a foreign, pagan religion, and they are partly correct, because Christianity has incorporated into its worship many practices which have their roots in pagan idolatry. These practices must be abandoned. They are an offense to God and they are major stumbling stones that hinder Jewish people from believing in their Messiah.

The Apostle Paul said that one important role of the Gentile Church is "to provoke them [the Jewish people] to jealousy" (Rom. 11:11). Over the centuries the Church has done a very successful job of provoking the Jews, but it has not been a provocation that makes them want to embrace Jesus Christ as their Messiah. On the contrary, the Church has done more to drive Jews away from their Messiah than it has done to draw them to their Messiah. Orthodox Jews have the Torah, which they know is from God. They see a Church filled with white-

washed paganism and hear the Church say, "Why don't you Jews abandon that heavy yoke of Torah? Quit keeping the Sabbath, come over here to our church on Sundays, and have a ham sandwich with us." Until recent centuries the Church added, "And if you don't, we'll kill you." And the Church often carried out these threats in the most monstrous ways possible. Put yourself into the shoes of an Orthodox Jew. What would you see in Christianity that would attract you and provoke you to jealousy?

Christians who are eager for the return of Jesus need to be aware of the facts. The city to which Jesus will return is Jerusalem. Jerusalem will not see Him again until a significant proportion of the Jewish people say *baruch ha-ba* and welcome Him as their Messiah. For hundreds of years the Church has misrepresented the Messiah, which makes it very difficult for Jewish people to even consider saying *baruch ha-ba* to Jesus Christ.

If the Church is going to be instrumental in provoking the Jewish people to jealousy, then the Church must quit misrepresenting the Messiah as a Gentilized Jesus who came to abolish the Torah and start a new religion which would absorb and white-wash the practices and superstitions of pagan idolatry. The Church must present the Messiah as He is: Yeshua, the Torah-honoring Rabbi from Nazareth, who taught His disciples to honor and obey the Torah, and then told them to teach the Gentile nations to obey the Torah. (Mt. 5:17-19; 23:1-3; 28:18ff) If the Church wants to present Him as He truly is, then the Church must begin to honor and obey the Torah. Otherwise, we cannot claim to be His disciples. □