

I HAVE A DREAM

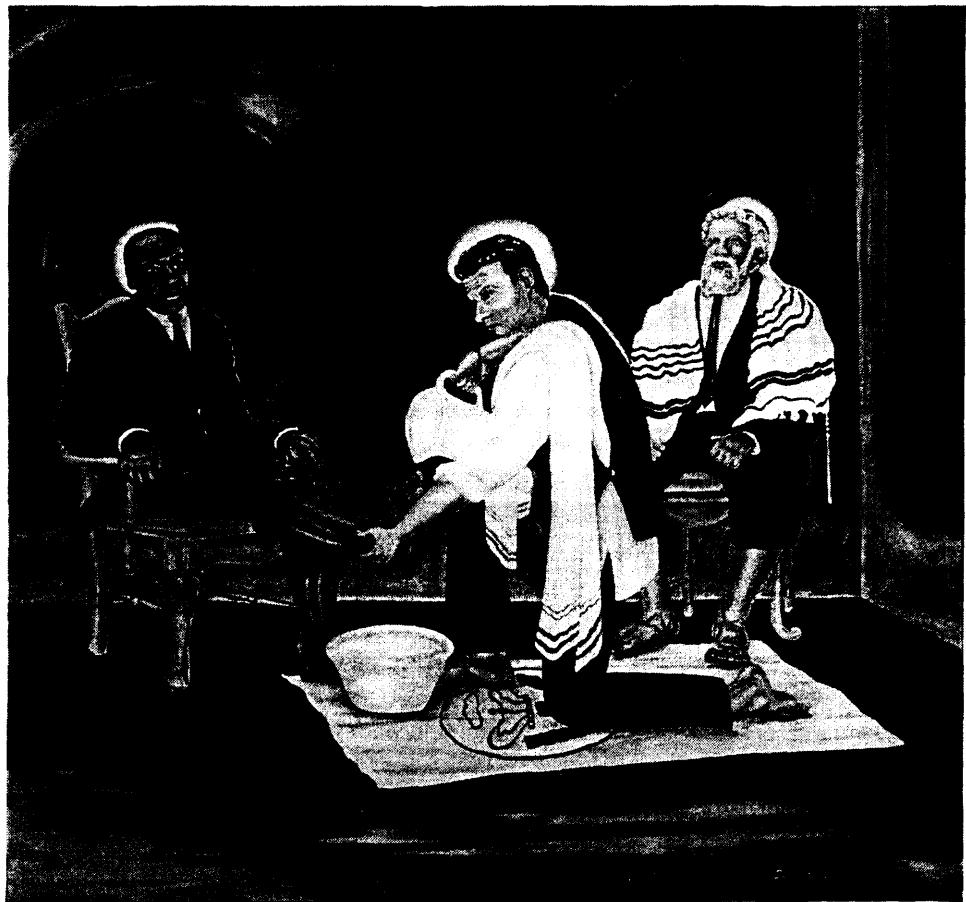
Matt Hale Doing Penance

MATT HALE is the leader of the World Church of the Creator, an anti-Semitic, white supremacist hate group. In the summer of 1999, one of Hale's disciples, Benjamin Smith, went on a shooting rampage, targeting Jews, Blacks, and Asians. Smith killed two people and wounded several others before killing himself. Hale had been in the news before this, but he began receiving even more attention in the national media after this tragic event. Since then, Hale's name still pops up in the news quite frequently. I see his name mentioned in *The Jewish Press* from time to time. Hale and his World Church of the Creator were recently mentioned in a front-page story in the national Jewish newspaper *Forward*.

Hale claims that his World Church of the Creator has been growing and gaining new members since September 11. Hale's claim is apparently not bogus. The Southern Law Poverty Center, a watchdog group in Montgomery, Alabama, has recently labeled Hale's World Church of the Creator as "the fastest growing hate group in the nation."

Matt Hale happens to be my neighbor. He lives just a few doors down from my house. Many (probably most) of Hale's followers live outside the Peoria area, but local authorities are concerned because Hale is trying to consolidate his followers in this area. According to a recent article in the East Peoria *Times-Courier* (11/7/01), the U.S. Department of Justice has warned Peoria area authorities to be prepared for the possibility of domestic terrorism because of the kind of people Hale attracts. Hale says he does not condone terrorism or other illegal acts. Hale may be sincere, but that is no guarantee that everyone attracted to Hale's "church" will embrace Hale's philosophy of using only non-violent, legal means. Benjamin Smith is a case in point.

After the Benjamin Smith shootings in 1999, I went to Hale's house, introduced myself, and interviewed



I Have a Dream: Matt Hale Doing Penance

Oil on canvas by Daniel Botkin, 2001

42 inches x 45 inches

him. (The interview appeared in the Sept.-Oct. issue of *Gates of Eden*.)

Not long after this, I felt impressed to let Hale know that if he ever decides to repent, he should show the sincerity of his repentance by publicly washing the feet of a black man and a Jew, just as Jesus showed His humility by washing the feet of His disciples. Since then, this has been my prayer and my dream for Matt Hale.

This winter I put my dream on canvas. The black man in the painting is Martin Luther King. The Jew is Abraham Joshua Heschel, a man who marched for civil rights with Martin Luther King. The flag on the floor is the flag of the World Church of the Creator. (Hale currently uses an Israeli flag for a doormat.) This painting is included in an exhibit of my artwork at the First United Methodist Church in Peoria this January and February. Join me in praying that Matt Hale will repent and get right with God.



Photo of Matt Hale

INTERVIEW WITH THE ARTIST

From the Editor: Last summer the East Peoria *Times-Courier* published an article about my artwork. Here are some excerpts from the interview that was used by the reporter to get information for the article. -DB

What is the title of your show?

The title of the project I'm currently working on is "Penance."

Where will it be displayed?

The project won't be entirely completed for probably at least a year. However, some of the pieces will be included in a show at the Freight House Gallery in El Paso, Illinois this September and October.

When did you start on it?

About a year ago.

How long did it take to complete?

How many hours were involved?

As I said, all the pieces aren't done yet. I hope to have at least 20 pieces, maybe more. Depending on the size and the amount of detail, an average size painting typically takes me approximately 25-40 hours.

What type of message do you want to convey? What is the theme, if any?

The message or theme of this project is summed up in God's instruction to the Prophet Ezekiel to inform his people about the sins of their fathers. "Cause them to know the abominations of their fathers," God told Ezekiel. Ezekiel's people needed to know about the abominations of their fathers because they were still walking in the errors of their fathers. The purpose of my "Penance" project is to inform Christian people about the abomination of anti-Semitism that was established by their spiritual forefathers, the leaders of the Church. Unfortunately, many Christians still walk in the error of anti-Semitism, and don't even realize it.

Can you explain anti-Semitism?

It would require a book to adequately explain anti-Semitism. The dictionary defines it as "hostility toward or discrimination against Jews as a religious or racial group." That's a brief, accurate definition, but it doesn't tell you anything about the roots, the reasons, the origin of anti-Semitism. That's what my "Penance" project is about, the Christian roots of anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism has survived because early church leaders taught that all the Jews, even those of future generations, are collectively guilty for the death of Christ. Yet the Bible makes it clear that it was only a handful of hypocritical religious leaders who conspired to put Jesus to death. Multitudes of Jewish people, including some of the religious leaders, loved and followed Jesus. People need to understand that the Holocaust was simply the final, awful culmination of nearly two millennia of church-spawned and church-sponsored anti-Semitism.

How did you come up with this idea [for your project]?

Ever since I first learned about the Church's role in the history of anti-Semitism, I wished there was something I could do to help mend Jewish-Christian relations. I hope that educating Christian people through this exhibit will make people think before they act and speak. The idea to use my artwork to educate people about anti-Semitism was an idea partly inspired by the activities of my neighbor, Matt Hale. After receiving some of his anti-Semitic, racist literature, I felt inspired to do something to counteract the message of Jew-hatred that Matt promotes.

Can you describe some of the works?

Some of the works portray events that actually happened. Others illustrate recommendations that church leaders suggested but did not actually carry out themselves. Some deal with the paganism that crept into the Church, paganism that provided more motivation for anti-Jewish actions. Some of these works are dark and unpleasant,

but that's because we are dealing with a dark, unpleasant subject.

How long have you been an artist?

I've loved doing artwork for as long as I can remember. I still have a pencil-and-crayon drawing I did in 1952, when I was 3 years old, and a couple of drawings I did when I was 5. I've done artwork on and off all my life. It's just been in the past 6 years, though, that I've actually started exhibiting my work extensively.

Do you have any formal training?

I took art classes at Illinois Central College. After graduating from there, I transferred to Illinois State University, where I majored in art and got my Bachelor's Degree.

What types of paintings are these?

Oils?

A few of them are oil paintings, but the majority are mixed media. I include burlap and other fabrics, rope, string, yarn, glass eyes, etc., along with the paint.

What is painting for you? A hobby? A way of expression? Both? A career?

I guess I'd say it's the expression of the creative urge inside me. I certainly don't think of it as a mere hobby; it's much more than that. I don't think of it as a career, either, because it's not my source of income. In some ways I consider it a calling, one of the things that I'm meant to do.

Do you always feel passionate about your work? Why or why not?

Yes, always. Why? Because we are created in the image of God, and one of God's attributes that He has imparted to mankind is the urge to create. I feel passionate about my creative work for the same reason God feels passionate about His creation.

Will this group of paintings be for sale?

Yes. But this will not be typical living room art; it won't match your couch. People interested in buying these works will probably be serious collectors, people buying it as an invest-

ment, or people who want something really unique and unusual for a conversation piece. Or maybe people who just have unusual taste.

*Can we focus on the Matt Hale idea?
Tell me about that.*

Shortly after the Benjamin Smith killings a few years ago, I went to Matt's house, introduced myself, and talked to him. As much as we hate what Matt stands for, you have to admit he has guts. He's also very articulate, and he's intelligent. He was able to graduate from law school, so he's got above-average intelligence. Unfortunately, he's using his abilities for evil instead of for good. When I spoke to Matt, I told him I wished he were fighting for the right side. I spoke to him about repentance, turning to God, and following Jesus. Not long after our conversation, I told Matt that if he ever decides to repent, he should show the sincerity of his repentance by publicly washing the feet of a black man and a Jew, just as Jesus showed His humility by washing the feet of His disciples. Then I got the idea to do a painting of Matt doing this very thing. The title of the painting will be *I Have a Dream: Matt Hale Doing Penance*. The black man in the painting will be Martin Luther King, and the Jew will be Abraham Joshua Heschel, a Jewish scholar who worked and marched with Martin Luther King during the Civil Rights Movement.

What do you think Matt's reaction will be to this painting?

I hope he'll want to buy it to hang in his office. Seriously, I don't know. I doubt that it will anger or even annoy him. That's not my purpose in painting it, anyway. One purpose in painting it is to create a visual expression of my hope for Matt Hale. Another purpose is to inspire people who believe in prayer to pray that Matt wakes up and sees the light. If Matt ever decides to change his ways, I hope that this painting will inspire him to do the very thing depicted in the painting, to publicly wash the feet of a black man and of a Jew. That would make quite a scene for CNN. □

THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

Daniel Botkin

The Hebrew word for unleavened bread, *matza* (מַצָּה), comes from the verb *matzatz* (מַצֵּץ), which means "to suck," in the sense of sucking something dry. Unleavened bread is not called matza just because it is dry (though it certainly *is* dry!) but because it is generally sweeter than leavened bread, which causes people to "suck dry" the supply of matza by greedily devouring it. ("Things sweet and pleasant are wont to be sucked out." Gesenius Lexicon) People who are not matza lovers may have difficulty relating to this etymology, but these are the facts as recorded in Hebrew lexicons.

The first mention of matza in the Bible is in Genesis 19:3, when Lot's feast for his two unexpected angelic guests included unleavened bread. In Biblical times it was not unusual for people to get unexpected visitors, and matza was a tasty food which could be easily and quickly prepared. There was no need for the bread to rise, and it was baked in a matter of minutes.

We are commanded to eat matza on Passover and for seven days thereafter during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Passover-matza connection is explained in the Exodus story. When the Hebrews left Egypt, they "took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders" (Ex. 12:34).

This is elaborated on further in the next chapter: "Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to Yahweh. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters. And thou shalt show thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which Yahweh did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt" (Ex. 13:6-8).

So Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread commemorate our

deliverance from Egyptian slavery. For those of us who believe in Yeshua of Nazareth, Passover and Unleavened Bread also commemorate our deliverance from slavery to sin by the sacrifice of the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

In the New Testament, leaven is used as a symbol of sin, pride, and hypocrisy. "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" (Mt. 16:6). Leaven grows and spreads when put into a lump of dough, until the whole lump is leavened. Sin will do the same thing to a person. This idea is expressed by the Apostle Paul: "For even Messiah our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. 5:6-8).

Preparing for Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins by searching our house for leaven and removing it from our home. This serves as an annual reminder to search our hearts and remove any sin, pride, and hypocrisy that we find. When Paul wrote (in 1 Cor. 11:28) to "let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup," he was referring to the bread and cup of Passover. Our annual

search for leaven in our home should be accompanied by the more important search for sin in our heart. The days between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur are a time for soul-searching and repentance in the fall. In view of Paul's admonition, it might be a good idea for us to use the days between Purim and Passover as a time for soul-searching and repentance in the spring.

Searching the home for leaven is a great teaching tool for both children and adults. The difficulty of finding and removing every last trace of leaven from the home serves as a visual aid to show us the difficulty of finding and removing every last trace of sin from our heart. The most obvious places are searched first. The pantry and food cupboards are checked and ingredient labels are read. Perhaps you think the job is finished, but you never know where a little leaven might be hiding. People sometimes forget to clean the crumbs out of places like the bread box or toaster. They don't think to change the vacuum cleaner bag, which no doubt contains bread crumbs.

This is how we deal with sin, too. We first repent of our most obvious sinful habits. We might think we have gotten all the sin out of our life, but sin has a way of hiding itself in the dark, neglected corners of our hearts. We unexpectedly find it rising up after we think we have overcome it.

On more than one occasion we have unexpectedly found leaven in our house in the middle of the week of Unleavened Bread.

"Dad! Here's some leaven we missed!"

"Are you kidding?! Where?!"

"In the pet food!"

So out goes the pet food and off I go to the pet store to find unleavened hamster food. The pets have to participate in the Feast, too!

If you have never observed the Feast of Unleavened Bread, you might

be asking yourself, "Why would I want to do this?" Here are 7 good reasons:

1. Unlike man-made non-Biblical holidays, this celebration was God's idea. It is not a Jewish invention or some idea that Moses dreamed up. It was God's idea and it is God's commandment. That in itself is reason enough to observe it, but there are more reasons.

2. The New Testament commands it. When Paul wrote that "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast," what feast do you suppose he was talking about? (Hint: It wasn't Easter.)

3. God's people have celebrated this Feast every year ever since that final night in Egypt some 3500 years ago when Moses led the people out of slavery. By participating in this Feast, we identify ourselves with one of God's greatest redemptive acts in history.

4. By prophetically pointing to Yeshua as the Passover Lamb of God, it commemorates the Greater Exodus from slavery to sin by the One who is Greater than Moses. Christians actually have even more of a reason to celebrate the Feast than the Jewish people do, because for the Christian it commemorates both of God's great redemptive acts in history -- first the Exodus from Egypt, second the death and Resurrection of Yeshua.

5. Yeshua and the Apostles celebrated the Feast. Why not follow their example?

6. It is a great teaching tool to reinforce Biblical truth, as discussed above. It's a way to get children involved in hands-on learning.

7. It's fun! When God's people celebrate God's appointed times in His way, He fills these times with joy.

So as the Apostle Paul said, let us celebrate the Feast!

FORSAKING EGYPT

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Messiah greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. Through faith he kept the Passover...."

-Hebrews 11:24-28

The above passage describes the pattern we must follow if we wish to be free from bondage. Like Moses, we must "come to years." We need to come to a point of spiritual maturity where we do not want to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, where we no longer want to be identified as a child of this present world system and its corruption.

Like Moses, we have to make a conscious choice to forsake the pleasures of sin and the treasures of this world, and embrace the affliction and reproach that must be borne by those who follow the Messiah.

The only thing that will equip us with the strength and determination needed to make the right choice is the same thing that enabled Moses to do it. He saw "Him who is invisible." Because Moses had met the invisible King of the Universe in the lonely places of the desert, he no longer feared the visible king of Egypt. As we spend time alone with God and gaze upon His face with our spiritual eyes, we will receive the faith we need to keep the Passover and forsake Egypt.

-DB

Daniel Botkin's Recipe For CHOCOLATE MINT MATZAS

If you like Girl Scout "Thin Mint" cookies, you'll love these!

Ingredients: matzas, chocolate chips, peppermint extract

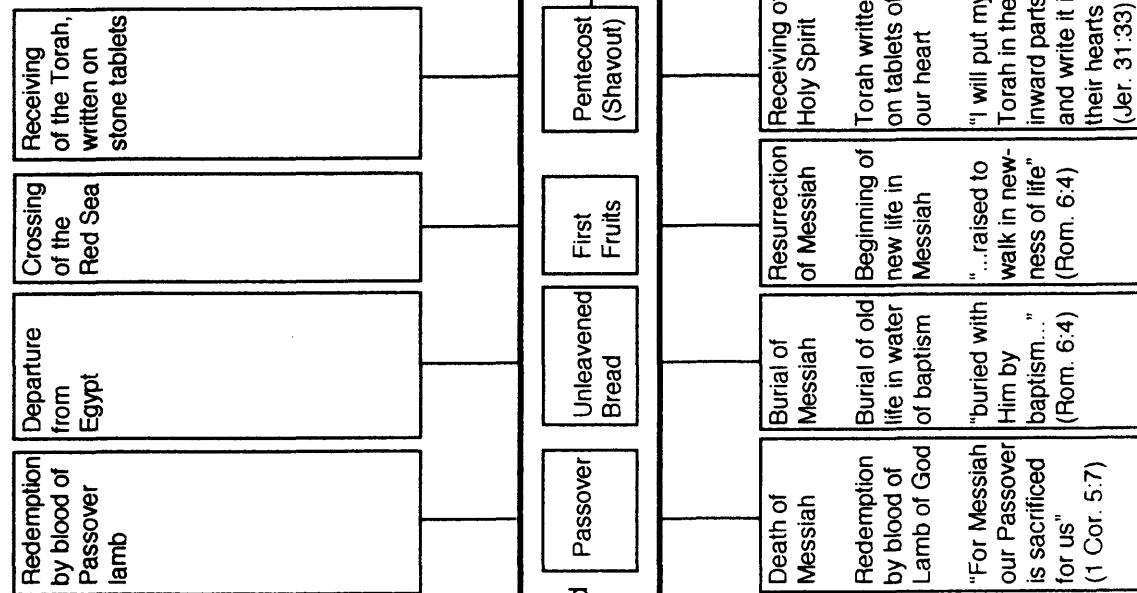
(The more health-conscious can try substituting organically-sweetened carob chips and whole-wheat matzas, but I can't promise it will taste as good.)

1. Melt chocolate chips in microwave about a cup at a time, stirring a few times before they are thoroughly melted. Be careful not to cook them!
2. As soon as chips are melted to a spreadable consistency, immediately stir in about 1/4 teaspoon (more or less to taste) of peppermint extract.
3. Spread liberally on matzas quickly, before chocolate starts to harden.
4. Press another dry matza on top of each chocolate-covered matza for a lid. This makes it possible to stack the sandwiches and put them back in the matza box from whence they came. Note: Be sure the lines of piercings run the same direction on top and bottom pieces of matzas. This minimizes crumbling and breaking when the sandwiches are eaten.
5. Stick in freezer til chocolate is frozen.
6. Enjoy with a cold glass of milk - just like the Hebrews in Biblical times did!

Messianic Mirror

*Reflections of the Messiah
in the Hebrew Scriptures
as filtered through
the Feasts of Yahweh*
- by Daniel Botkin -

DELIVERANCE FROM SLAVERY IN EGYPT
BY THE HAND OF MOSES

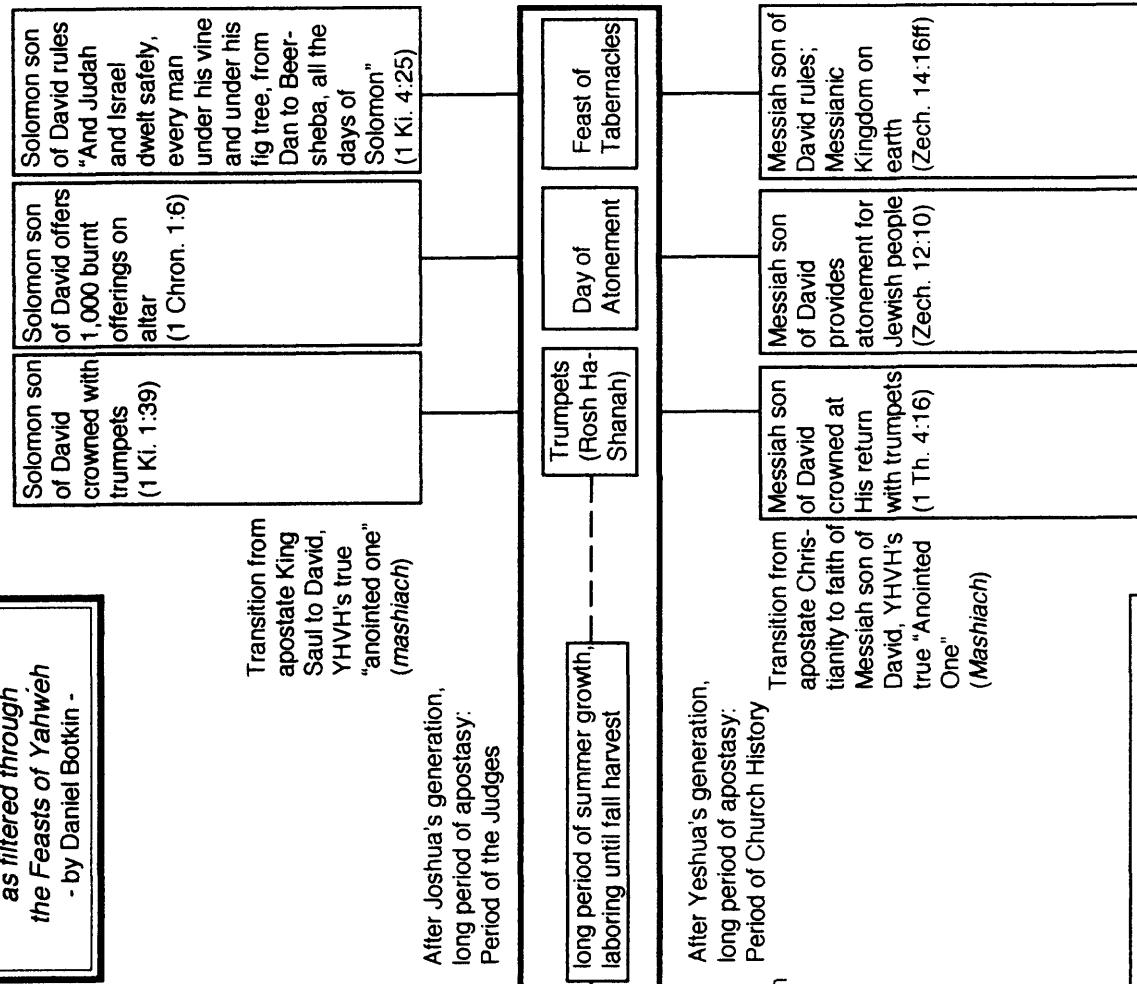


PRE-MESSIANIC HISTORY

The Appointed Times of YHVH

MESSIANIC HISTORY

CORONATION AND REIGN OF SOLOMON THE SON OF DAVID



**DELIVERANCE FROM SLAVERY TO SIN
BY THE HAND OF YESHUA,
THE "PROPHET LIKE UNTO MOSES" (Deut. 18:15-19)**

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CORONATION AND REIGN OF YESHUA THE SON OF DAVID

THE BOOK OF JUDGES

An Introduction to the Book of Judges

Dr. Daniel Botkin

The first in a series of articles on the Book of Judges

In the Book of Joshua the tribes of Israel were each given their boundaries. Every tribe was expected to go into their assigned territories, conquer and eliminate the Canaanites, and establish God's rule in the land of Canaan.

Our Joshua, Yeshua of Nazareth, has given each one of us a territory to spiritually conquer. Just as the first Joshua gave each tribe a specific area to conquer, so our Yeshua has a specific plan for the life of every single disciple who follows Him. He expects each one of us to discover that plan, then to go forward in spiritual warfare and conquer the enemies that oppose the fulfillment of His plan for our life.

When attempting to fulfill the destiny God has planned for us, we are bound to make some mistakes along the way. Looking at the Book of Judges can help us avoid making some of the same mistakes that the Israelites made when they went forward to conquer their Promised Land.

The Book of Judges begins immediately after the death of Joshua. The first chapter tells about the different tribes of Israel going against their enemies. Even though this chapter contains some accounts of victories, it is also marked by the disappointing record of Israel's failure to completely fulfill their generation's destiny:

"And Yahweh was with Judah; and he drove out the inhabitants of the mountain; but he could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron... And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites... Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean and her towns... Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer... Neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron... Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of

Acco... Neither did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh... And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain..."

Like these Israelites, many of God's people today accept defeat too easily. They tolerate sin in their lives, and their epitaph will be similar to this account in the first chapter of Judges. "And the disciple John Doe overcame his drinking problem, but he never could totally overcome his addiction to pornography. He had to give into that temptation every once in a while, and it prevented him from laying hold of the wonderful things God had planned for his life... And Sister Jane Doe overcame her bad temper, but she never did conquer her urge to gossip, so she likewise missed out on the great ministry she could have had."

Doing the will of God is serious business. God said to each tribe, "Here's the territory I'm giving you. Now *fight for it!*" He says to each of us, "Here are the opportunities I'm giving you. Now *fight for them!*"

We must realize that we will not fulfill our destiny without a fight. There are Canaanites, invisible demonic entities working behind the scenes. These spirits orchestrate events and circumstances which are designed to frustrate our efforts to "lay hold of that for which Messiah laid hold of us" (Ph'p. 3:12). These Canaanites fight against us with temptations and trials and disappointments and discouragement. Like the Canaanites of old, they will not leave without a fight. They will do their damnedest (pun intended) to get us to sin. If they cannot do that, they will try to bring enough disappointment and discouragement into our lives to make us settle for a lukewarm, sit-in-the-pew-on-Sunday-morning church life. We can settle for a partial, incomplete victory like the tribes of Israel did, or we can continue to fight against temptation, against sin, against any weight that prevents us from entering into the fulness of our

inheritance.

People often try to justify their incomplete victory over sin by comparing themselves to others. "I may flirt with other men at work, but at least I've never committed adultery like Sister X has." The tribes of Israel could have tried to justify their failures by looking at the failures of the other tribes. "We Ephraimites quit fighting at Gezer and let the Canaanites remain among us, but so what? The other tribes did the same thing." We become like those people who the Apostle Paul said were foolishly "measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves" (2 Cor. 10:12). Our standard becomes "the average Christian." Our definition of spiritual success becomes doing at least as well as the average Joe Christian. We think God grades on a curve, and we quit fighting for the fulness of our inheritance.

God's attitude toward quitters can be seen in the second chapter of Judges: "And an angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I sware unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this? ... And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice; I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died: that through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not" (Jdg. 2:1f, 20-22).

The reason for Yahweh's anger against His people can be summa-

rized in four words:

- Apathy
- Apostasy
- Anomianism
- Anarchy

The Apathy recorded in chapter 1 led to Apostasy in chapter 2: "And they forsook Yahweh, and served Baal and Ashtaroth" (2:13). This Apostasy led to Anomianism: "...they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of Yahweh; but they did not so" (2:17). Anomianism is lawlessness, and without law there is Anarchy. The Anarchy in the days of the Judges is eloquently expressed in the very last verse of the book, and summarizes the spiritual condition of God's people during that period of history: "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (21:25).

This progression from Apathy to Apostasy to Anomianism to Anarchy bears a striking resemblance to what happened in the Church. These four words would be perfect to use for the headings of a 4-part outline for a course in Church History 101. Furthermore, one cannot help noticing a remarkable parallel to Church History in the account of Joshua's departure from this world and the events that transpired in the very next generation: "And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel ... And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works that he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim" (Jdg. 2:7-11).

We could rephrase it thusly for the Church: "And the people served the Lord all the days of Yeshua, and all the days of the Apostles who lived after Yeshua's departure, who had seen all the great works of the Lord that he did for the Church," etc. The

generation immediately after Joshua became Apathetic and went into Apostasy, which led to Anomianism and Anarchy. The generation immediately after Yeshua and the Apostles did the same. Apathy in the ranks of Christians started even before the Apostles were dead. When Paul wrote in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 about the Apostasy (*apostasia*, translated "falling away" in KJV), he said that the mystery of lawlessness (*anomias*, "anomianism") was "already at work" (2 Thes. 2:7). From Apathy to Apostasy to Anomianism, it is only one more step to Anarchy. The Anomianism was "already at work" in Paul's lifetime, he said. After the Apostles and their generation all died, the Church became Anomian and abandoned the Torah, leaving Christians to decide for themselves what was right in their own eyes. And it has been that way ever since in much of the Church world.

"Nevertheless," Scripture says, "the Lord raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them" (Jdg. 2:16). This too finds its parallel in Church History. As Israel awaited the arrival and coronation of their righteous King David, God graciously raised up individuals to turn the people back to God and to bring some relief and deliverance. As the Church has waited for the return and coronation of King Messiah the Son of David, God has graciously raised up individuals throughout history to bring some repentance and revival to the Church. Let's pray that He will raise up judges in our generation to lead God's people out of sin and error and back to the old paths.

As we look at the various Judges of Israel in this series of articles, we will see that God often used ordinary, common things as weapons to defeat the enemy -- things like an ox goad in the hand of a shepherd, a hammer and tent peg in the hand of a woman, broken pitchers with torches and shofars, a millstone dropped by a woman, the jawbone of an ass.

We will also see that God used common, ordinary people. Some of these people were not the sort of

individuals that people in those days expected God to use. Some of them were socially stigmatized. Ehud was left-handed; Deborah and Yael were women; Jephthah was the bastard son of a harlot; Samson was a womanizer.

In spite of the flaws of the Judges and the foolishness of the weapons, God delivered His people when they repented at the urging of the Judges. This should encourage us to hope and trust in God to move on our behalf even when we see flaws and foolishness among God's people today.

The use of foolish instruments for spiritual weaponry is expressed in the New Testament in Paul's statement that "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God" (2 Cor. 5:4). Paul pointed out that God uses things that are foolish, weak, base, and despised so that "no flesh should glory in his presence" (1 Cor. 1:27-29).

Paul also pointed out that among the people God uses, there are "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble" (1 Cor. 1:26). That's us, all right! Therefore we should be filled with hope and expectation when we look at most people in the Body of Messiah today!

On next page: Othniel, Israel's first Judge

Othniel

Dr. Daniel Botkin

The second in a series of articles on the Book of Judges

The first Judge we will look at in this series is Othniel. Othniel's term as the first Judge of Israel is summed up in just three verses:

"And when the children of Israel cried unto Yahweh, Yahweh raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. And the Spirit of Yahweh came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war: and Yahweh delivered Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed against Chushan-rishathaim. And the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died" (Jdg. 3:9-11).

The mention of Othniel's connection to Caleb in this short passage suggests that Caleb had a positive influence on Othniel. Caleb's influence is certainly apparent in an earlier passage about Othniel:

"And Caleb said, 'He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife.' And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife" (Jdg. 1:12f).

Caleb no doubt served as a good role model for Othniel. Caleb, you will remember, was the only man of his generation allowed to go into the Promised Land with Joshua. Caleb and Joshua were the only two men of their generation who had the faith to enter into the promise of God. Who knows whether Othniel would have had the faith to take Kirjath-sepher and to later become the first Judge of Israel, without Caleb as a role model (and as a motivator, by the offering of his daughter!)?

If we want the Lord to raise up Judges in our generation, we need good role models and motivators. We have good role models in the Scrip-

tures and in post-Biblical biographies of great men and women of God. Reading biographies can inspire us and strengthen our faith, but we also need living, flesh-and-blood role models. And we need to be living, flesh-and-blood role models for our children and for one another.

Othniel's biography, brief though it is, can serve as an example for us. Like Caleb, Othniel had the faith and courage and eagerness to go forward at once without hesitation. Othniel saw the prize that Caleb offered - his daughter Achsah - and he was the first to go forward and win the prize! Caleb's daughter Achsah is mentioned here by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, not by mere chance. Love is blind, the saying goes. Othniel saw the beauty of the prize, and his love for her made him blind to the size and the power and the rage of the enemy. He was willing to risk his life to obtain the prize that was set before him.

If we see the beauty of the prize the Lord offers us, we will be inspired and filled with faith and courage to go for it. Like Othniel, we will not be intimidated by the size and power and rage of the enemy. "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Messiah Yeshua," Paul wrote (Ph'p. 3:14).

When Othniel became Israel's first Judge, "the Spirit of Yahweh came upon him." Here too is a lesson for us. Too often we trust in something other than the Spirit of God to bring about the will of God. We sing that verse from Zechariah 4:6 ("Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts"), yet we trust more in our human might and power than we do in the power of the Holy Spirit. (Perhaps this is because the power of the Holy Spirit has never come upon us per Acts 1:8, and we do not have the power of the Holy Spirit.) Or we trust in some clever, novel method as a substitute for the power of the Spirit coming upon men.

E.M. Bounds wrote the following in his book *Power Through Prayer*.

"We are constantly straining to devise new methods, new plans, new organizations to advance the Church and secure enlargement and efficiency for the gospel. The trend of the day has a tendency to lose sight of the man or sink the man in the plan or organization. God's plan is to make much of the man, far more of him than of anything else. Men are God's method.

"The Church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men. 'There was a man sent from God whose name was John.' The dispensation that heralded and prepared the way for Christ was bound up in that man John...

"What the Church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use -- men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Ghost does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men -- men of prayer."

In these times of Apathy, Apostasy, Anomianism, and Anarchy, this is our only real hope. The Spirit of Yahweh came upon Othniel and he became Israel's first Judge. The Holy Spirit coming upon Othniel set the pattern for all the subsequent Judges of Israel, and that must be the pattern for us if Judges are to be raised up in our generation. □

The Sabbath Abolished by Jack Meyer, Sr.

A Book Review by Daniel Botkin

It's not exactly a book. It's a 16-page booklet written by the now-deceased Jack Meyer, Sr., and published by Quality Publications in Abilene, Texas.

Why do I, a 7th-day Sabbath keeper, want to review such a book? Because reading this book greatly strengthens my belief in the 7th-day Sabbath more than ever. The pathetic attempt of this misguided minister to prove that the Sabbath was abolished shows that the anti-Sabbath people really don't have a Scriptural leg to stand on.

I'll give the guy credit for being up-front about what he believes, though. Even before you open the book, the cover illustration of a "Shure-Erase" eraser rubbing out the Sabbath Commandment lets you know where the author is coming from. And when you open the book, you quickly find out that the "Shure-Erase" eraser doesn't stop at the Sabbath Commandment; it erases the other nine Commandments as well. "The Ten Commandments were, therefore, abolished," Meyer writes. As a matter of fact, the entire Old Testament Law "was abolished by Christ," he claims - even though Christ said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law" (Mt. 5:17, NIV).

The proof-texts that Meyer uses in Part I are Jeremiah 31:31 ("a new covenant") and the verses in Hebrews that elaborate on Jeremiah's promise of a new covenant. Meyer fails to realize two things. First, the context of the verses in Hebrews shows that the "change of law" and the "taking away of the first [covenant]" in order to "establish the second [covenant]" is not talking about the Torah per se. It is talking specifically and only about the laws concerning sacrifice and burnt offerings offered by the Levitical priesthood in the Tabernacle. It was only these elements that were "taken away" and "changed" to "establish the second [covenant]," a covenant based on the sacrifice of the Lamb of God,

with our High Priest after the order of Melchizedek in the heavenly Tabernacle. A close look at Hebrews chapters 7-10 (along with Jer. 7:22-24) shows that these statements in Hebrews refer only to the law of sacrifice and burnt offerings offered by the Levitical priesthood in the Tabernacle -- laws that were "added [to the already-existing Torah] because of transgressions [against the Torah], until the seed should come" (Gal. 3:19). (See "Until the Seed Should Come" in *Gates of Eden* 7-6.)

The second thing Meyer fails to realize about the new covenant is that it does not abolish the Torah, it *internalizes* the Torah by writing it on the believer's heart. That's what is new about the new covenant! It is still God's Torah. ("I will write *My Torah* on their hearts," He says.) The same Ten Commandments that were written on tablets of stone are now written on the fleshly tablets of our heart.

In Part II of Meyer's book he argues for a Sunday "Lord's Day." Of course he (mis)uses the three standard verses that have always been (mis)used by Sunday Christians -- Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10. (All three of these have been dealt with in detail in *Gates of Eden*. Issue 7-2 for 1 Cor. 16:2; *The Sabbath On Trial* for the other two verses. Write for copies.)

Since the only way that a person can argue Scripturally for a Sunday Lord's Day is by yanking these three verses out of their context, Meyer has to resort to quoting the un-inspired writings of some of the post-Apostolic church leaders who kept Sunday. (Of course he is careful not to discuss any of those post-Apostolic writings that mention the 7th-day Sabbath-keeping Christians who were still in existence at that time in history.)

The writers Meyer quotes support a Sunday Lord's Day, of course. It should come as no surprise that the Sabbath was abandoned in favor of Sunday soon after the death of the Apostles, though. The Apostles saw the Apostasy starting even before they died. "For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work," Paul

wrote (2 Thes. 2:7, NIV). Jude wrote about "certain men crept in unawares" who were changing grace into a license to sin. John wrote that the domineering Diotrephes had "cast the brethren out of the church" (3 Jn 9f). If the people who were being "cast out of the church" near the end of John's life were "the brethren," who, then, were the people left IN the church after "the brethren" were cast out? Think about it.

The writings of the post-Apostolic church leaders are not inspired. Or if they are inspired, it's by a different spirit, the spirit of anomianism. These writings can provide historical information about the beliefs and practices of a church in apostasy, but they cannot be used like Scripture to establish doctrine. Yet approximately *one-third of the entire text of Meyer's book* consists of quotes from these un-inspired writings. In his effort to prove a Sunday Lord's Day, Meyer gives a lot of weight to the alleged authority of apostate church leaders, but provides only three Bible verses, and these verses are divorced from their context and twisted to mean something totally unrelated to the context. That should tell us something.

In Part III Meyer argues that the Sabbath was never meant to be kept by Christians because it was a sign "between God and the Israelites, or Jews, not Gentiles." Yet on the very next page, almost directly across from this statement, Meyer writes: "The Christian is the seed of Abraham. The church, then, is God's Israel." Amen! (At least the church is *part of* God's Israel!) How ironic that Meyer says the Sabbath is for Israel, then on the very next page says that the church is Israel. If the Sabbath is for Israel, and the church is Israel, then the Sabbath is for the church. Simple logic: If the pie is for Teresa's husband, and I am Teresa's husband, then the pie is for me! What could be clearer?

In addition to *The Sabbath Abolished*, Meyer has written *Miracles Abolished*. Also *Why We Do Not Use Instrumental Music in Worship*. No Sabbath, no miracles, no music. What a great church! □

SEVENTH-DAY PENTECOSTALS

Exuberant singing, animated worship, and energetic preaching, punctuated by frequent shouts of "Amen!" and "Hallelujah!" More lively than many other 7th-day Sabbath keepers, these zealous saints are 7th-day Pentecostals.

This spring I attended a gathering of 7th-day Pentecostals from the Midwest and the South. These gatherings are held five times a year in Tennessee, Arkansas, and Indiana. Each 7th-day Pentecostal church is independent, and each church takes its turn hosting these gatherings. The gathering I attended was held in Terre Haute, Indiana.

To learn a little about the history of the 7th-day Pentecostal church in Terre Haute, I spoke with Brother James Wilson, an 83-year-old retired pastor who still attends the 7th-day Pentecostal church and still preaches at these gatherings.

According to Brother Wilson, the 7th-day Pentecostal church in Terre Haute was started many years ago by Brother Beecham, a slave who had been freed by his owner. When Brother Beecham was still a very young slave, his master laid his hand on his head and told him, "You're free now." Another source in Terre Haute told me that Brother Beecham had some connection to the Azusa Street Revival of 1906, which would account for the Pentecostal element in the church. Brother James Wilson does not know the exact year that Brother Beecham came to Terre Haute and started the church, but Brother Wilson's parents, who had formerly been Baptists, joined Beecham's 7th-day Pentecostal church when Brother Wilson (now 83) was a very young boy. After Brother Beecham passed away, Brother Wilson's uncle, Leslie Wilson, led the Terre Haute church.

The 7th-day Pentecostal churches in other parts of the country were not offshoots of the Terre Haute church. Rather, the 7th-day Pentecostal churches seem to have sprung up independently of each other in various states across the nation. These different churches eventually learned of one another's existence, and several decades ago they started holding these gatherings.

At the gathering I attended in Terre Haute, I met people from Indiana, Illinois, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. Meetings were held Friday night, Saturday morning and Saturday night, with a Biblically-kosher meal served mid-day Saturday. The Saturday night meeting started at 6 p.m. and did not end until around midnight. Each meeting featured several singers and preachers of all ages. The oldest preacher there was 96-year-old Amos Bridwell, another retired 7th-day Pentecostal pastor. Brother Bridwell preached and sang for us and shared his testimony about being able to share the gospel that day with a young lady who works at the nursing home where he lives. It's encouraging to see that retirement, old age, and infirmity have not quenched the zeal in this elderly 7th-day Pentecostal saint. May the same be true for all 7th-day saints.

-Daniel Botkin

FINAL EXAM TIME

Daniel Botkin

It's that time of the year again. Time for final exams and, for some, graduation. The pressure to succeed often makes the week of final exams very stressful for students. So much depends on how well the student does on that final test.

I remember the stress and pressure of my final semester of college. I managed to graduate with decent grades, which pleased my mother, but the stress was tremendous. I had been attending school full-time every year since first grade, and it was a great relief to be done with college.

After graduation, the stress and pressure of final exam time continued to haunt me in my dreams. Every now and then I would have a recurring nightmare. In this dream I was still in college, and it was the day of the final exam. I came to the classroom and suddenly had the terrible realization that I had never once attended the class or even opened the textbook! The awful realization that I was totally unprepared for the final exam left me in a state of sheer panic. I felt fear, frustration, helplessness. I had had my opportunity and blown it, and it was too late to do anything about it. Now I had to face the consequences.

Years later I learned that this dream, or a similar version of it, is quite common, especially among people who have attended college. And it is not just a phenomenon of recent decades. The *Harvard Bulletin* wrote about it in 1932:

"The persistence and vividness of (this) dream (bears) witness to the solemn intensity of the experience we go through in the happy-go-lucky days of getting educated. Not war...not fire, not fears of damnation haunt our imagination in the night. But the fear that we cannot answer Question III B, the terror that some malign accident will at the last minute snatch a diploma from us."

The dream is mentioned in French psychiatric literature as early as 1860

or 1870. In 1900 Freud called it the "Examination Dream." Some psychologists believe that the dream is caused by some stressful situation which the person is presently going through - financial difficulties, marriage problems, or troubles on the job. The person is experiencing the same kind of pressure, uncertainty, and fear of the future that was experienced in college, and this triggers a nocturnal "flashback" to final exam time.

The psychologists may be correct, but I am more inclined to believe that this is God's way of getting people to realize that there is a *real* "Final Exam Day" coming, the Day of Judgment, when all people will have to give an account to their Creator for the things they have done during their earthly life. The Apostle John describes this day in the Bible:

"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. 20:12).

Many people will be totally unprepared for that day, the Bible tells us. They will be like the college students in the examination dream who never attended class and never opened the textbook. These will be the people who never attended church and never opened the Bible, even though they had the opportunity to do so. Like the students in the dream, they will be filled with fear, terror, and panic. The only difference is it will be much worse, and it will not be a dream, and

they will not be able to repeat the course to try again. They will simply have to pay the consequences of blowing the opportunity they had to inherit eternal life.

Even those who do have eternal life will give an account for how well they served the Lord. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men..." (2 Cor. 5:10f).

Years ago I heard a song called "Report Card Day in Heaven." The lyrics of the song asked what kind of grades we thought we would get for various things which God expects us to do. The song was a bit corny, I thought, but the song's message was quite serious.

Perhaps the Examination Dream is one of God's ways of awakening lost sinners to the fact that they need a Savior in order to pass the "Final Exam" they will face at the end of their life. And perhaps it is God's way of awakening believers to the fact that "every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12).

When I was a young disciple, I had been having the dream for about two years, and I wondered if God was trying to tell me something. As I thought about the dream, it helped me to realize how very important it is to be ready for the Final Exam Day when we will all give an account of ourselves to God.

I resolved then to take my faith more seriously, to apply myself to in-depth study of the Scriptures, to maintain a regular, consistent prayer life, and to faithfully serve the Lord in whatever ways He might direct me. I got the message and started preparing for Report Card Day in Heaven. That was about 28 years ago. After I made this resolution, the recurring Examination Dream stopped. □

EHUD

Dr. Daniel Botkin

The third in a series of articles on the Book of Judges

In the last installment of this series, we looked at the story of Othniel, Israel's first Judge. The transition from the end of Othniel's story to the beginning's of Ehud's is in Judges 3:11 & 12:

"And the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died. And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of Yahweh: and Yahweh strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of Yahweh."

After the death of Joshua and his generation, the next generation had fallen into sin, and the Lord "sold them into the hand of Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia." After eight years God delivered them and restored them through Othniel's leadership. After the death of Othniel, the Israelites repeated the same cycle of Apathy, Apostasy, Anomianism, and Anarchy. Then after eighteen years of oppression under the hand of Eglon king of Moab, the Lord again answered the cry of the children of Israel and raised up Ehud to be a Judge.

Ehud was not the sort of man that people would naturally expect to be a leader. He was apparently no one special, just a man from the tribe of Benjamin, which in human eyes was the smallest and least significant of the twelve tribes. Furthermore, he was left-handed. Then as now, left-handedness was viewed by some people as a stigma. According to the Stone Edition translation, Ehud's left-handedness was due to the fact that he had "a withered right hand." (The Hebrew text actually reads *iter yad-y'mino*, אִתֶּר יָד־יָדֵינוּ, "his right hand [was] closed up.") This made him an even more unlikely candidate for the role of Israel's second Judge.

In spite of Ehud's handicap, he was the man God chose to lead His people during this period of Apathy,

Apostasy, Anomianism, and Anarchy. The Lord's choice of Ehud (like His later choice of David) should remind us that when choosing someone to anoint as a leader, "the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7).

God's people today are looking for spiritual leaders. As they look, many of them have a mental picture of their version of The Ideal Pastor. "His preaching and teaching will be done in the style that I like best. All his doctrines and beliefs will line up 100% with mine. He will be active in the church functions that are important to me. He will be on 24-hour call 7 days a week and will work long hours for a small salary. He will be tall and handsome, and will dress in a way that pleases me. He will be an intelligent, dynamic man with great authority. But of course he won't ever use his authority to interfere with *my* life!"

People get frustrated when they cannot find their version of The Ideal Pastor. The fact of the matter is that the perfect pastor, like the perfect church, is nonexistent. I don't tell people to be content with imperfection in the church or in leaders, but I do tell people to learn to live with the imperfections that they see in others, and

patiently wait on the Lord to perfect His people. And wake up and realize that God probably will not use your nonexistent Ideal Pastor to deliver His people. He will probably use people who don't fit the image that most of us have of "God's anointed." Ehud did not fit the image that people had of God's anointed; nonetheless, he was God's choice.

The Lord knew what He was doing when He chose Ehud. Ehud was sent to deliver the tribute that Eglon demanded from the children of Israel. This tribute was basically extortion money that Israel paid to guarantee peace with the Moabites. The oppression and bondage that the Israelites suffered under Eglon and the Moabites is a picture of how our enemy the Devil spiritually oppresses and ensnares God's people. Let's look at some characteristics of Eglon and the Moabites.

The Moabites were the descendants of Moab, the son (and grandson) of Lot. Lot had sexual relations with his own daughter, and Moab was born from this unholy, incestuous union. Fornication always carries with it the possibility of conception. Every time a woman gives herself to a man, there is a possibility that a new life might be conceived and born. In the same way, every time a child of God gives himself to sin, that unholy union carries with it the possibility that something new might be conceived and born: a "Moab," i.e., a besetting sin that puts the child of God in bondage to that sin. In other words, that sin might become an addiction.

In the story of Ehud, the Moabites can be viewed as those sinful habits that become so deeply ingrained in us that they seem to possess a life of their own. Like Eglon demanding his dues at fixed intervals of time, these besetting sins seem to roll around on a regular basis.

"It's that time again," they say. "Time to pay your dues. Sure, you

want to serve God with all your heart, but you have to give a little bit of your heart to me once in a while. I won't leave you alone until you do it, so you may as well give in to the temptation, get it over with, and then I'll leave you alone for a while."

For some people their Moab is drunkenness or drug abuse. For others it's lying or stealing. For others it's pornography or some other form of sexual immorality. Like a school yard bully who extorts "insurance money" from weaker children, these besetting sins seem to roll around on a regular, revolving basis. The revolving nature of these sins can even be seen in the name *Eglon*. The name *Eglon* (עֲגָלוֹן) can be traced back to the Hebrew verb 'agol' (עֲגָלוֹ), which means "to revolve."

A besetting sin is not just a one-time stumble that takes us by surprise during a time of weakness. It is a sin that rolls around again and again. It is a stronghold in the mind, a fortress that the Enemy has built with the materials that we provide. Each time we give in to that sin, we provide the Enemy with more materials to strengthen and fortify his position of authority over those areas of our lives. The Scripture says that Eglon was "a very fat man." Just as Eglon and the Moabites grew fat on the tribute money that they extorted from Israel, so the Moabites in our lives grow fat on our surrender to temptation. The more often we give in to these sins, the bigger and more powerful they become. They feed on our surrender to them, and the longer we remain in a state of surrender, the harder it becomes for us to break free.

Ehud decided to break free from the hold of Eglon and the Moabites. Ehud made himself a two-edged sword a cubit long and strapped it onto his right thigh under his clothes. After delivering the tribute, he told Eglon that he had a private message to give him. After they were alone Ehud said, "I have a message from God unto thee."

Eglon stood up and Ehud drew his sword with his left hand and thrust it deep into the fat belly of Eglon, killing

him. "And the haft also went in after the blade," the Bible says, "and the fat closed upon the blade, so that he could not draw the dagger out of his belly; and the dirt came out."

The action of Ehud shows us how to deal with the Eglons and the Moabites that keep us enslaved to our besetting sins. Ehud faced his evil taskmaster. We must likewise confront the besetting sins that enslave us. We have to quit ignoring these sins and quit pretending that they do not really have a grip on us. We have to quit telling ourselves that it's not really all that bad to occasionally feed our besetting sin. We have to quit thinking that it's normal for God's children to regularly pay tribute to a besetting sin every time that temptation rolls around.

Like Ehud, we must take hold of our two-edged sword, the Word of God, and plunge it deep into the bowels of those vile sins that regularly demand tribute. This is how our Master resisted temptation, by using the Word of God as a sword. "It is written," He said, and then He proclaimed the truth of God's Word. When we are tempted, we must follow His example and use the Scriptures like a two-edged sword, and tell the Tempter, "It is written...!"

We must go on the offensive against the Enemy and attack him with the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. We have to continue pressing the Word deeper and deeper into the belly of our besetting sin until the sword cannot be removed and that evil thing inside us dies, and "the dirt comes out."

After Eglon was dead, Ehud ran away, blew a shofar at Mount Ephraim, and cried, "Follow after me, for the Lord hath delivered the Moabites into your hand!" Then he led the Israelites to victory, and Moab was made subject to Israel. Now the tables were turned, and the former oppressors were subject to God's people.

This part of the story shows us what the Lord wants the Ehuds of our generation to do after they have conquered the besetting sins in their

own lives - to blow the shofar at Mount Ephraim and proclaim to others that we no longer need to be in bondage to our besetting sins. The Moabites and the Eglons that oppress us can be defeated, because their power has been broken. The tables can be turned, and the demons that formerly oppressed us will now be made subject to us, as they were subject to our Master and His Apostles.

If we want to be among the Ehuds of our generation, we have to press the Word long enough and deep enough into Eglon until "the dirt comes out." The word "dirt" as used in the KJV is a euphemism for dung. The Stone Edition Tanach is a bit more graphic. It translates it "the excrement came out." Just as excrement is a stench in man's nostrils, so sin is a stench in the nostrils of God. To the degree that we allow the Lord to remove the dung from our lives, to that extent He will use us as deliverers in our generation.

Is the Eglon in your life growing fatter all the time? Hear the blowing of the shofar from Mount Ephraim, and believe that the Lord hath delivered the Moabites into your hand! Then take up the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, and thrust it deep into the bowels of Eglon's fat belly until Eglon dies and the dirt comes out. □

TWO-HOUSE TEACHING: Where Should Our Emphasis Be?

Dr. Daniel Botkin

In recent years, more and more Messianic believers have come to believe and teach some form of Two-House teaching (or Two-House theology). I wrote one article about this subject two years ago (*Gates of Eden* 6-3). In this second article I would like to address the question of where our emphasis should be when presenting this teaching. In other words, which aspect of the teaching is really the most important, and what is the best way to communicate that aspect? Before answering that question, let me present some of the major points of the teaching for the benefit of readers who may not be familiar with it. (The following three paragraphs are excerpted from my article that appeared two years ago.)

To understand Two-House teaching, a person has to be familiar with three significant events in the Old Testament: 1) Israel's division into two kingdoms (or "houses") after the death of King Solomon; 2) the exile of the ten tribes of the northern kingdom and their subsequent scattering and assimilation among the Gentiles; and 3) the Prophets' declaration that these two houses would someday be re-united and restored as one kingdom.

Because the ten northern tribes (known in Scripture collectively as "Ephraim" or "Israel") were scattered and assimilated among the Gentiles through intermarriage, a large percentage of the world's population today has to have some Israelite ancestry. There is no way to prove or disprove who has Israelite ancestry and who does not, but that is not the point. The point is that there are, of necessity, a great number of Gentiles who *do* have some Israelite ancestry somewhere in their family tree. Tens of thousands of Israelites intermarrying with Gentiles thousands of years ago would result in millions of offspring over the centuries. Theoretically, all of the world's population could eventually be genealogically linked to the tribes of Israel, and, theoretically, all the world's population could already be so linked, except among ethnic groups that have been geographically isolated and have not intermarried with outsiders.

The Prophets said that the House of Ephraim - the ten tribes who intermarried and lost their tribal identities - would eventually be re-united with the House of Judah. The Jewish people are obviously "the House of Judah," and because the Church is composed primarily of Gentiles, some of whom have Israelite ancestry somewhere in their genealogy, the Church is presented as the obvious candidate for "the House of Ephraim" of end-time prophecy. Two-House theology asserts that the Prophets' declaration of the two houses being re-united will come about through Christians and Jews who will be joined together as "one new man."

The Two-House view asserts that this began happening in the days of the Apostles, and is finally coming to its full fruition in this generation as more and more Jews are embracing Yeshua (Jesus) as Messiah, and more and more Christians are embracing Torah.

Now let us look at some of the Scriptures that are germane to this subject.

GENESIS: A PROPHETIC PREVIEW

A Bible teacher once wrote that "the roots of all subsequent revelation are planted deep in Genesis, and whoever

would truly comprehend that revelation must begin here."¹ So we will begin by looking at the roots of the Two-House teaching in Genesis, and proceed to the trunk and the branches that are revealed in later books of the Bible.

Of the fifty chapters that make up Genesis, all except the first eleven chapters are about the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The rabbis teach that the events in the lives of the Patriarchs can be seen as previews of significant events that would take place in the later history of the nation that descended from them.

A preview of the division of Israel into two separate houses can be seen in Genesis 32. Jacob was on his way home after twenty long years of exile (Gen. 31:41). "And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, 'This is God's host [מַחְנֵה, *machaneh*].' And he called the name of that place Machanaim [מַחְנָיִם, 'two hosts']."

The "two hosts" here apparently refers to the visible human host, consisting of Jacob's camp, and the invisible angelic host, whose presence was made known to Jacob. This concept of two hosts (or groups) is then carried a step further in the division of Jacob's family into two separate groups: "Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands." Here is a prophetic picture of the two-fold division of Jacob's descendants that would take place centuries later when the ten northern tribes separated from the tribe of Judah.

The next day, after Jacob's all-night wrestling match with the Angel of the Lord, the two groups were re-united, and together they all faced Esau. Here is a picture of the re-uniting of the two groups of Jacob's descendants that will take place in "the last days," a period of history that began at Pentecost (Acts 2:17) and extends to the end of the age.

Rachel and Joseph were the last of the family of Jacob (now known as Israel) to face Esau. There may be prophetic significance to Joseph's being

the last of Israel's sons to face Esau, depending on who the descendants of Joseph are today and what actions they will take in the final confrontation with Arab Muslims, who are descendants of Esau. See Obadiah, especially verse 18.²

After these events, the rest of Genesis focuses mostly on the story of Joseph, Jacob's favorite son. Joseph is sold into slavery by his brothers and carried away to Egypt. In Egypt, through a series of circumstances, Joseph is exalted and made ruler second only to Pharaoh. He marries and has two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. During a time of severe famine, Joseph's brothers come to Egypt to buy grain, and there they meet Joseph. Joseph forgives them, they reconcile, and all seventy members of Israel's (Jacob's) extended family settle in Egypt.

A PROPHECY CONCERNING EPHRAIM

When Jacob was on his deathbed, Joseph brought his two sons to be blessed by Jacob. Because the right hand was regarded as a place of higher honor than the left hand, Joseph set his firstborn, Manasseh, in front of Jacob's right hand, and Ephraim, his younger son, in front of Jacob's left hand. But Jacob crossed his arms and placed his right hand on Ephraim's head and his left hand on Manasseh's. When Joseph objected, Jacob explained that the firstborn Manasseh would indeed become a great people, "but truly his younger brother [Ephraim] shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations" (Gen. 48:19).

The part of this prophecy that is crucial to Two-House teaching is the statement that Ephraim would become "a multitude of nations [מְלֹא־הַנּוּמִים, *melo ha-goyim*]." The meaning of *melo ha-goyim* is important, because Two-House proponents contend that this prophecy means that Ephraim's descendants, as one of the two houses, would eventually lose their Israelite identity through exile, intermarriage, and assimilation, and become, for all practical intents and purposes, Gentile nations (*goyim*).

I consulted ten English translations (seven Christian, three Jewish) to see

how *melo ha-goyim* has been translated. Six of those ten translations state that Ephraim will become "a multitude of nations."³ The other four translations say that Ephraim will "fill the nations"; "become great nations"; "become a group of nations"; "grow into many nations."⁴

Regardless of which translation a reader prefers, one cannot get away from the undeniable fact that Ephraim's descendants would become *not just one nation* (nor just one tribe of the twelve-tribe Hebrew nation), but *many nations*, plural. The plurality of *goyim*, "nations," is inescapable to anyone who knows just a little elementary Hebrew.

MELO HA-GOYIM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Ephraim's transformation into *melo ha-goyim* takes on even more significance in the New Testament. In Romans 11:25f, Paul says that "blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved..."

Does Paul's reference to "the fulness of the Gentiles" have anything to do with Jacob's prophecy about Ephraim's descendants becoming "a multitude of nations," *melo ha-goyim*? It would seem so. I consulted two different Hebrew translations of the New Testament.⁵ Both of them render "fulness of the Gentiles" as *melo ha-goyim*, the exact same Hebrew phrase that Jacob used when prophesying about the destiny of Ephraim's descendants. Apparently Paul understood that there were descendants of Ephraim among the Gentiles who were coming to faith in Israel's Messiah, and through this faith they were being re-connected to the olive tree of Israel from which their fathers had been broken off centuries before. (See the previous verses in Romans 11 for Paul's analogy of the olive tree.)

THE DIVISION INTO TWO HOUSES: HOW IT HAPPENED

The details of how the division came about are written in 1 Kings 11 & 12. King Solomon's pagan wives turned his heart away from the Lord, and he fell into idolatry. Because of Solomon's sins, the Lord sent the prophet Ahijah to

Jeroboam, one of Solomon's servants. Ahijah tore a garment into twelve pieces and handed ten pieces to Jeroboam, saying, "Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith Yahweh, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee."

After the death of Solomon, the ten northern tribes broke away from Judah and, as Ahijah had prophesied, Jeroboam reigned as king over these ten tribes. These ten tribes became collectively known as the house of Israel (as distinct from the house of Judah). Sometimes these ten tribes were called "Ephraim," because King Jeroboam was from the tribe of Ephraim and because Ephraim was the most dominant of the ten tribes. Sometimes the ten tribes are referred to as "Joseph," because Ephraim was the son of Joseph.

From 1 Kings chapter 12 to the end of the Old Testament Scriptures, there are continual references to "the house of Judah" and "the house of Israel" (or "Ephraim" or "Joseph") as two houses distinct from one another. If a reader is not familiar with the division of the original monarchy of King David into two houses, some passages can be confusing.

The rest of the Old Testament Scriptures records the reigns and the sins of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah, and the Prophets' warnings, which usually went unheeded. The ten northern tribes, the house of Israel, were conquered by Assyria, and the Assyrians "carried Israel away into Assyria" (2 Ki. 17:6). When kings conquered nations in those days, it was customary to shift the conquered populations around. Transplanting conquered peoples onto foreign soil lessened the possibility of uprisings and revolts. "And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria [the capital of the northern house of Israel] instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof" (2 Ki. 17:24). These transplanted pagans were the ancestors of the Samaritans that we read about in the New Testament. They were also among the people who opposed the Jews in Nehemiah's day (Neh. 4:2).

About 135 years later, the house of Judah was conquered and carried away to Babylon (2 Ki. 25 & 2 Chron. 36). After seventy years in Babylon, the Jews were able to return to their homeland and rebuild Jerusalem. This is recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah. The house of Judah, the Jewish people, were able to retain their tribal identity. As for the ten northern tribes, they never returned to their tribal territories, though some still knew their tribal identity even as late as New Testament times. (Anna was of the tribe of Asher, and James made reference to "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad." Notice, they are still scattered abroad, outside the land.) Nonetheless, many lost their tribal identity, and at some point in history the descendants of the ten tribes became so thoroughly assimilated that they totally lost their Israelite identity.

EZEKIEL'S TWO STICKS

Ezekiel was among the Jewish exiles of the house of Judah carried away to Babylon before the final fall of Jerusalem. Ezekiel is a very lengthy book, 48 chapters long. The first 36 chapters are addressed almost exclusively to the house of Judah and its capital, Jerusalem. The northern ten tribes of the house of Israel had already been carried into exile over a century before this, so any reference to the northern ten tribes was to point to their sad fate as a warning to the southern house of Judah (chapters 16 & 23, e.g.) - or, to speak about the future destiny of the ten tribes. Ezekiel begins to speak a little bit about the future of the house of Israel (as distinct from the house of Judah) about the middle of chapter 36. Then in chapter 37 he has the famous vision of the Valley of Dry Bones. The bones come together and are covered with flesh and skin, and God breathes life into this "exceeding great army."

Many people are familiar with Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones. Fewer people are familiar with the explanation God gave to Ezekiel about the meaning of the vision. "These bones are the whole house of Israel," God said. Not just the house of Judah, but both houses. And to make sure that Ezekiel understood that the vision concerned both houses, God told him to take two sticks. On one stick Ezekiel was to write

"For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions." On the other stick he was to write "For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions." Then Ezekiel was to join the two sticks together and they would be one in his hand and serve as a sign that God would someday re-unite the house of Ephraim/Joseph/Israel with the house of Judah, so that "they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all."

So even though the ten northern tribes were destined to lose their Israelite identity and become *melo ha-goyim*, a multitude of nations, they would someday, somehow, be re-united with the house of Judah, the Jewish people. The Book of Hosea gives us more information to help us understand how this reunion would come to pass.

HOSEA'S PROPHETIC ACTIONS AND WORDS

Some of Hosea's prophecies concern the house of Judah, but his message primarily concerns the northern ten tribes, the house of Israel or "Ephraim." This is evident by the appearance of the word "Ephraim" 37 times in Hosea.

The Lord told Hosea to marry a prostitute. Hosea's relationship with his wife was to serve as a prophetic picture of God's relationship with His whorish, unfaithful people. "And Yahweh said to Hosea, 'Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from Yahweh."

Hosea's wife bore him three children. These three children were named by God Himself, therefore all three names carry tremendous prophetic significance. The firstborn was a son, Jezreel. The second was a daughter, Lo-ruhamah. The third was a son, Lo-ammi.

Jezreel (יזרעאל, *Yizr'el*) means "God will scatter" or "scattered by God." The -el (אל-) at the end of the name is "God." The yi (-) at the beginning of the name is the third-person, masculine singular, future tense prefix (making the verb mean "he will"). The -zr' (-ער-), the central part of the name, means "scatter" when used as a verb and "seed" when used as a noun. The prophetic significance of this name is that God was warning the ten tribes that

He was going to send them into exile for their sins and scatter them like seed among the nations. The similarity of *Yizr'el* to *Yisra'el* (Israel) is also significant. God was telling the ten tribes that they were going to lose their identity as *Yisra'el* and become instead *Yizr'el*, scattered by God among the nations.

When Hosea's second child was born, God said, "Call her name Lo-ruhamah ['no mercy; not pitied']: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away." This is in reference to the fact that these ten tribes, unlike the tribe of Judah, would not return to their tribal territory. In the very next verse, God makes it clear that unlike Israel's fate, Judah's destiny will be to survive and retain their tribal identity: "But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them..."

When the third child was born, God said, "Call his name Lo-ammi ['not my people']: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God." Here is the prophecy that the northern ten tribes would lose their identity as the people of God.

So these three children of Hosea, by means of their names, served as a living testimony that the ten tribes would be: 1) scattered like seed among the nations, 2) unpitied, and 3) disowned by God. "Yet," Hosea says...

"Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered..." (1:10).

Israel was scattered like seed among the nations, but scattered seed does not all die. Much of it reproduces, and that new seed reproduces more, and so it goes on, generation after generation, until the physical descendants of Israel are "a multitude of nations," innumerable, as described above.

The next thing Hosea says about this innumerable host of Israelite descendants is very, very significant. Carefully read the entire verse, noting the pronouns "them" and "ye":

"Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, 'Ye are not my people [*lo-ammi*],' there it shall be said unto them, 'Ye are the sons of the

living God."

Note who it is that is being spoken about in the above verse: the children of Israel, as distinct from the children of Judah. (This distinction is made again in the very next verse, where the two houses are mentioned as two separate groups.) The antecedent of the pronouns "them" and "ye" is "the children of Israel." The children of Israel, the ten northern tribes, are to be scattered among the nations, unpitied, and disowned by God. Yet here is a promise that God is going to have pity on a great number of their descendants and reclaim them as His people someday, and they will then be called sons of God. According to the Apostle Paul, the fulfillment of that promise started taking place when Gentiles began coming to faith in Israel's Messiah. Look at Paul's statement, keeping in mind the Jew-Gentile distinction Paul makes, and note the fact that he applies Hosea's prophecy to Gentiles:

"...Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles. As he saith also in Hosea, 'I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God'" (Rom. 9:24-26).

Paul speaks here of Jews and Gentiles as two separate groups before he quotes Hosea's prophecy. This prophecy in Hosea concerned only the children of Israel, the ten northern tribes. The Jews were never disowned by God and never declared to be *lo-ammi*, not my people, as were the ten tribes. Therefore Paul understood the calling of the Gentiles into the Messianic faith to be the fulfillment of Hosea's prophecy. The descendants of the ten tribes would be reclaimed by God as the Gentiles started coming to the faith, because that's where the descendants of the house of Israel were, scattered among the Gentile nations and living as Gentiles, because their Israelite identity had been lost.

Peter also quotes Hosea's prophecy and, like Paul, he too connects the calling of the Gentiles to Hosea's

prophecy:

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people ... which in time past were not a people [*lo-ammi*], but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy [*lo-ruhamah*], but now have obtained mercy" (1 Pet. 2:9f).

Once again, Peter applies Hosea's prophecy to Gentiles, not Jews, because it could not be said of Jews that they were "not a people" before the coming of Christ. Furthermore, Peter addresses his letter to "strangers" ("aliens," NASB) (1:1) and "Christians" (4:16). If Peter is writing to "Christians" (which he is) and telling them that Hosea's prophecy is fulfilled in them, then we must conclude that Peter knew that there were descendants of the ten tribes among these Gentile Christians, and that was how Hosea's prophecy was being fulfilled.

So both Peter and Paul understood that Hosea's prophecy was being fulfilled by Gentiles coming to the faith. That being the case, what does this have to do with the re-uniting of the two houses? The answer to that question is in the rest of Hosea's prophecy. Immediately after the children of Israel are pitied and reclaimed as God's people and called sons of the living God, Hosea says, "Then..."

"Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel" (1:11).

Here the re-uniting of the two houses is directly linked to Hosea's prophecy about the house of Israel being scattered, unpitied, and disowned, and later pitied and reclaimed as God's people and gathered together again with the house of Judah. The New Testament explanations of the fulfillment of Hosea's prophecy (Rom. 9:25f & 1 Pet. 2:9f) show that both Peter and Paul understood that the fulfillment of this prophecy was taking place as a result of Gentiles coming to the Messianic faith. Therefore the inescapable conclusion is that: 1) there were Israelite descendants among the Gentile Christians, and 2) the re-uniting of the two houses was beginning

to take place as a direct result of Gentiles coming to faith in Israel's Messiah and being joined together with Messianic Jews into one corporate body which the New Testament calls the Body of Messiah. This reunion of the house of Israel and the house of Judah in the Body of Messiah is no small, insignificant event. It is an event that inspired Hosea to proclaim, "Great shall be the day of Jezreel." The Day of Jezreel began when Gentiles started coming to the Messiah, and it will continue "until the fulness of the Gentiles [*melo ha-goyim*] be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved..." (Rom. 11:25f).

ACTS 15 & THE PROPHECY OF AMOS

Another New Testament passage that is related to this subject is Acts 15. The Apostles gathered together in Jerusalem for the express purpose of trying to determine where the Gentiles fit into God's plan. Some said that the Gentiles needed to "be circumcised after the manner of Moses" in order to be saved. This meant going through a formal, full-fledged conversion process which would turn the Gentiles into Jews. Was this what God wanted? If not, what was the significance of all these Gentiles being drawn to the Messianic Community? After "much disputing," James reminded the others about a prophecy of Amos. This prophecy explained what the Gentile phenomenon was all about. Here are the words of James:

"Men and brethren, hearken unto me. Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written [here James quotes Amos 9:11 & 12], 'After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.'" (Acts 15:13-17).

Keep in mind that this prophecy of Amos was the Scripture which helped the Apostles understand where the Gentile Christians fit into the plan of God. I have asked Gentile Christians to read James' statement and tell me what

they think James is talking about when he quotes Amos. How do Gentile Christians fulfill the prophecy of Amos? When I ask this question to Gentile Christians, I usually get a blank stare. This was the Scripture that gave the Apostles an understanding about where the Gentiles fit into God's plan, yet most Gentile Christians admit that they don't have a clue what it means.

Amos wrote some very short prophecies against some of the pagan nations that surrounded Israel and Judah, but the bulk of God's message through Amos is against "the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt" (3:1), i.e., the house of Israel and the house of Judah. Amos speaks more against the house of Israel than he does against Judah. This can be seen by all the references to Samaria (the capital of the northern kingdom) and Beth-el (the place where Jeroboam set up one of the golden calves).

In virtually every chapter about the house of Israel, Amos prophesies the coming captivity of the house of Israel (3:14f; 4:2; 5:5; 6:7; 7:17; 8:2; 9:4). Near the end of his book, Amos writes this:

"Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith Yahweh. For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth" (Amos 9:8f).

It is right after this that Amos prophesies the restoration of "the tabernacle of David that is fallen down," an event which the Apostles linked to the Gentiles coming to faith in Israel's Messiah. It should be obvious that "the tabernacle [sukkah] of David" does not refer to a literal *sukkah*. A *sukkah* is a temporary booth covered with leafy branches, a shelter used to celebrate *Sukkot*, the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles prophetically speaks of the Messianic Kingdom (Zech. 14). Therefore the "sukkah of David" refers to a place of spiritual rest and shelter into which the Gentiles (including those who are descendants of the house of Israel) can enter and join the Messianic Jews as we all await the return of King

Messiah. The *Sukkah* of David was standing when David ruled over all twelve tribes, and Israel was one united kingdom with one king. The *Sukkah* of David fell when the kingdom was divided into two separate houses after the death of Solomon. The *Sukkah* of David was to be restored when all twelve tribes were once again united as one kingdom with one king. The Apostles understood that this was beginning to take place as a result of the Gentiles coming into the Messianic Jewish Community. David Stern's *Jewish New Testament Commentary* supports this view of the Apostles' understanding of Amos. Stern writes: "The complete fulfillment of Amos's prophecy will take place when the undivided realm of King David's time is restored. Meanwhile, this is a beginning."⁶

It is unclear how much the Apostles understood about exactly how and when all the details would come to pass ("It is not for you to know the times or the seasons...", Acts 1:7), but it is very clear that they understood that the restoration of David's united monarchy would somehow be fulfilled by the Gentiles coming into the Messianic Community. James did not specifically mention the two houses by name when he quoted the prophecy of Amos, but he did not need to. He and all the other Apostles knew the Scriptures well enough to know that Amos wrote primarily about the ten northern tribes. And the Apostles all knew, as Orthodox Jews today know, that part of the Messiah's mission would include the regathering of the descendants of the ten lost tribes.⁷ The very last question the Apostles asked their Messiah before He left this earth was a question about this part of His job as the Messiah: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6).

Notice, they did not ask, "Lord, wilt thou at this time drive out the Romans and restore the tribal territory of Judah to the Jews?" Their expectations *included* the house of Judah, but their expectations were not *limited* to the Jews. They were looking for a re-united kingdom that included all the tribes of Israel. Their expectations were based on the writings of the Prophets, writings with which they were very familiar. If our vision and expectations are likewise based on the writings of the Prophets,

then we too will have a vision that includes all twelve tribes of Israel - and even more, for the writing on Ezekiel's two sticks also included the words "and companions." These "companions" of Judah and Ephraim are those Gentiles who do not have any physical Israelite ancestry. They too are full-fledged Israelites. Their status as Israelites is by adoption, which does not make them a whit inferior to blood-line physical descendants. Their identity as Israelites carries with it all the privileges, blessings, and duties that belong to every Israelite.

WHERE SHOULD OUR EMPHASIS BE?

Having laid the groundwork by showing the Scriptural foundation of the Two-House teaching, let us now turn to our original question. Where should our emphasis be when presenting this teaching? What aspect is really important, and what is the best way to communicate that aspect?

I believe the answer to that question depends on the spiritual maturity, spiritual receptivity, and Biblical literacy of the people to whom we are speaking. Are we speaking to Jews or to non-Jews? To Messianic Jews or to Orthodox Jews or to Conservative, Reform, or secular Jews? To Gentile Christians or to non-Christians?

Some people need to first hear the basics of repentance, faith, baptism, etc. before we try to present an in-depth teaching about the Two Houses. We first need to get people into God's House, the Body of Messiah, and then get them into the Scriptures. There are some basics of discipleship that need to be incorporated into a disciple's life, and these basics are far more important than having a clear understanding of Two-House teaching. Once a disciple has gotten grounded in the basics of discipleship and once he is stable in his walk, then the vision of the Two Houses can be presented.

So how should the Two-House teaching be presented to various groups, and what should be emphasized? First let's look at ways that the teaching might be presented to Jews, and discuss the possible effects it might have on Jewish people.

JEWISH PEOPLE AND THE TWO-HOUSE TEACHING

I do not have as much contact with Jewish people now as I did in the past when I lived in Israel and New York, so I am not sure about the best way, if any, to approach the subject when speaking to Jews. We should be aware of the fact that Orthodox Jews do expect *Mashiach* (Messiah) to regather the twelve tribes. Perhaps it could be pointed out to them that the descendants of the tribes are indeed being regathered from among the Gentile nations as they come to Yeshua and into the Messianic Community. Centuries ago, when virtually all Gentile Christians just lived a typical Catholic or Protestant lifestyle, the suggestion would not have been so feasible. But now that so many Gentile Christians are embracing the Torah, honoring the true Sabbath, and celebrating the Biblical Feasts, the idea may not seem too far-fetched for Orthodox Jews to consider it. (Some already *do* believe it, by the way.) And if they are persuaded that many of these "Messianic Gentiles" are really descendants of the ten northern tribes and are awakening to their Israelite identity because of their faith in Yeshua of Nazareth, then they might also be persuaded to consider His Messianic claims more seriously than they did in the past, when they viewed Christianity as just another pagan religion.

Two reasons that Orthodox Jews give to explain their refusal to consider the Messianic claims of Yeshua are: 1) He did not regather the tribes; and 2) He [allegedly] taught His followers to abandon the Torah. Both of these reasons are based on mistaken assumptions. The Two-House teaching presents a vision of Yeshua currently in the process of regathering the tribes and awakening them to their identity as Israelites. And as these "Messianic Gentiles" awaken, they also see that Yeshua did not teach against the Torah. On the contrary, He honored it, upheld it, and taught His disciples to obey it. As the Messianic Israel movement continues to grow, I believe that Jewish people will be more open to examining the Messianic claims of Yeshua.

PHYSICAL DESCENT AND TRIBAL IDENTITY

What about the subject of tribal identity, genealogy, and physical descent from Israel? How important are these things? Some Two-House people put a very heavy emphasis on physical descent, and insist that they could not possibly be of 100% pagan (Gentile) stock. Because there are undoubtedly many physical descendants *among* the Gentiles, they assume (and state categorically) that they are undoubtedly one of those physical descendants. Some even go so far as to claim that they know which tribe they are descended from. They know this either by Divine revelation or by looking at the character traits and prophecies about the tribes in Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 33, and comparing these things to their own personality and character traits.

I do not wish to deprive anyone of a genuine Divine revelation. God can certainly reveal specific tribal ancestry if He wants to, and perhaps He does. But if someone tells me that God revealed to them which tribe they were descended from, I have no way of knowing if it really was Divine revelation or if it was just their own wishful thinking and overactive imagination. There's no way to prove or disprove the claim. It's not for me to say if it's true or not, so I don't say. I will say this, though. Physical descent and tribal identity are not the major points we need to be focusing on right now. We have no way of knowing what percentage of Gentile Christians have physical Israelite ancestry. It could be over 90%, it could be less than 10%. Who knows? The important point is that *among* the Gentile Christians there are *some* who are physically descended from Israel, and this number is large enough to fulfill the prophecies, because the prophecies must be fulfilled. The Scripture cannot be broken.

The tribes *will* be identified, but there is nothing in Scripture that tells us to try to figure out our tribal identity. There is not even any Scripture that tells us to try to find out whether we are an Israelite by physical descent or by adoption. Some people are so insecure in their identity that they feel they just *must* know. This desperation for non-essential knowledge can lead to imaginary "Divine revelation"

and, for some, feelings of pride.

Speculating about our possible tribal identity can be harmless fun, providing we understand that a true Gentile (one without any Israelite ancestry whatsoever) is just as much an Israelite in God's eyes as those with physical ancestry. Paul told the "Gentiles" in Ephesus that they were no longer "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel" (Eph. 2:11-13). They were now a part of Israel as a result of their faith in Israel's Messiah, regardless of any physical Israelite ancestry or lack thereof. So on an individual level, we do not really need to know whether or not we, personally, have any physical Israelite ancestry. Therefore I would not recommend seeking Divine revelation about physical descent or tribal identity.

According to Jewish tradition, the tribal identity of each individual will be determined by the Messiah. From an Orthodox Jewish source:

"In the era of the Messianic King, when his kingdom will be established and all of Israel will gather around him, all of them will have their pedigree determined by him, by means of the Holy Spirit that will rest upon him ... As for the Israelites, he will only determine their tribal lineage, that is, he will inform that 'this one is of such-and-such a tribe and that one is of such-and-such a tribe.'⁸

The same book states: "The determination of tribal pedigree and affiliation is important for the proper resettlement of all the tribes in their Divinely assigned territories in the Holy Land..."⁹

This resettlement to which the writer refers is described in the last two chapters of Ezekiel.

"But what about those true Gentiles who are of 100% pagan ancestry, and do not have a drop of Israelite blood in them? Which tribe will they identify with?" That question is answered in Ezekiel:

"So shall ye divide the land unto you according to the tribes of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that ye shall divide it by lot for an inheritance unto you, and to the strangers that sojourn among you, which shall beget children among you: and they shall be unto you as born in the country among the children of Israel; they shall have inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that in what tribe the

stranger sojourneth, there shall ye give him his inheritance, saith the Lord God" (Ezk. 47:21ff).

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE NEW COVENANT

If physical ancestry is not important on a personal level, and if tribal identity will be established by the Messiah, then what should be emphasized when presenting the Two-House teaching to Christians? I believe it is important to emphasize Israelite identity. Christians need to be awakened to see themselves as Israelites, and no longer as "Gentile Christians." The Two-House teaching can definitely strengthen and confirm Israelite identity for a Christian, but the Two-House teaching does not need to be the starting point. Let me explain.

When we tell Christians about the Sabbath (or other parts of the Torah which the Church ignores), what is their usual response? It is most often something like this: "But that was just for the Jews. I'm a Gentile Christian. I live under a different covenant, the new covenant."

"A Gentile?" I ask. "Under the new covenant?"

Let's see what the Bible says about the new covenant. Yes, Jesus made a new covenant at the Last Supper (Matt. 26:28). Hebrews chapter 8 tells us that this new covenant was the one prophesied by Jeremiah. Hebrews even quotes Jeremiah's prophecy word for word. Let's see who this covenant was made with:

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah" (Heb. 8:8/Jer. 31:31).

With whom did the Lord make the new covenant? With two parties: with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. That excludes everybody else. Gentiles are not even mentioned, so how can a Gentile claim to be a partaker of the new covenant? What right does a Gentile have to try to muscle his way into the new covenant that God made with the two houses of Israel and Judah?

I use this analogy. A covenant is a legal agreement, a contract between two or more parties. If I make an agreement with the family of Smith and with the family of Jones, that excludes everybody

who is not a part of either the family of Smith or the family of Jones. If someone else comes along and wants to lay claim to the promises I made in this contract, what do I say? I say, "Are you a part of the family of Smith or of the family of Jones? No? Sorry, my contract is only with these two families. You have no legal right to be a part of it. Unless... unless you can find a legal way to get yourself into the family of Smith or the family of Jones, either through marriage or adoption. Then you'll be a legal, full-fledged member of the family of Smith or the family of Jones."

Christians need to be made to understand that they cannot be a partaker of the new covenant unless they are part of the house of Israel or the house of Judah. They may be of 100% Gentile ancestry, but they have to join themselves to one of the two houses in order to lay claim to any new covenant privilege or status. Even the true Gentile "companions" had to be in one of Ezekiel's two sticks. There was no third stick called "the stick for the Gentiles." The twelve gates of the New Jerusalem have the names of the twelve tribes written on them. There is no gate labeled "Gentiles." If Gentiles wish to enter the New Jerusalem, they will have to identify with one of the twelve tribes and pass through that tribe's gate.

Once a Christian has been awakened to his *spiritual* identity as a full-fledged member of the house of Israel, it will be easier for him to relate to his Israelite heritage - Israel's Torah, Israel's Sabbath, Israel's history. Because the Christian is joined to Israel's Messiah, he is also joined to Israel. Israel's Torah, Israel's Sabbath, and Israel's history also become *his* Torah, *his* Sabbath, *his* history. He has not stolen these things from the Jews. He has inherited them as a joint-heir by means of his adoption into the house of Israel through Israel's Messiah. Whether or not he has physical Israelite ancestry is unimportant on a personal level. The important thing is that God is re-uniting the two houses, and he is a part of it, regardless of whether or not he understands (or even believes) the Two-House teaching.

So, in a nutshell, the answer to my original question is this. We should first emphasize the Christian's *spiritual* identity as an Israelite. Once that is

firmly established in the heart and mind, it is only another short step to a proper, balanced understanding of the Two-House teaching. And when the Christian's spiritual Israelite identity is firmly established *before* he studies the Two-House teaching, it will lessen the possibility of an unhealthy obsession about physical ancestry and tribal identity, for the Christian will realize that these things are not real important on a personal, individual level. God will take care of those things in His way and in His time. We can wait for the Messiah to establish tribal identity. Until He comes and does that, let's focus on our identity in Him. □

NOTES

¹C.I. Scofield Reference Bible, 1917 edition, Introduction to Genesis.

²Some interesting information from a Jewish source: "Interestingly enough, according to *Pirkei deR. Eliezer*, ch. 28 (in non-censored versions), the Ishmaelites (Arabs) will be the final kingdom to be defeated by Mashiach. Other sources state 'Edom and Ishmael' (see *Torah Shelema* on Genesis 15:12, note 130). Note, however, *Pirkei deR. Eliezer*, ch. 44 (and cf. *Midrash Tehilim* 2:6 and 83:3) that Edom and Ishmael have become intermingled." Jacob Schochet, *Mashiach* (New York: S.I.E., 1992), p. 95, fn. 6.

³KJV, NASB, New Living Translation, Hertz Pentateuch, 1917 Jewish Publication Society, Zondervan's English translation of LXX.

⁴Stone Tanach, TEV, NIV, CJB.

⁵Delitzsch translation and 1976 United Bible Society translation.

⁶*Jewish New Testament Commentary*, p. 277.

⁷From an Orthodox Jewish source: "The Ten Tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, exiled by the Assyrians before the destruction of the first *Bet Hamikdash* [Temple] (II Kings, ch. 17), and dispersed beyond the river Sambation and the 'Mountains of Darkness,' will also return. This Divine promise of the return and restoration of Israel is unconditional. It will occur even if the people should not want to return." (Schochet, p. 21f)

⁸Schochet, p. 83f.

⁹Ibid., p. 83.

SHAMGAR

The Man With the Ox Goad

Dr. Daniel Botkin

The fourth in a series of articles on the Book of Judges

In the last installment of this series, we looked at the defeat of King Eglon and the Moabites by Ehud, Israel's lefthanded Judge. The next Judge mentioned is Shamgar, whose term as Judge is described in just one brief verse:

"And after him [Ehud] was Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad: and he also delivered Israel" (Jdg. 3:31).

This is all the Bible says about Shamgar, except for a brief reference in the song of Deborah and Barak ("In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through byways"). Because the Bible says so little about Shamgar, there is not enough information to do a character study of his life. Nonetheless, the few small bits of information found in Shamgar's one-verse biography can provide us with some inspiration and wisdom to help us "also deliver Israel" as Shamgar did.

THE PHILISTINES

In our study in the last installment, it was pointed out that certain temptations and sins seem to roll around on a regular, rotating basis, and that King Eglon is a picture of this by his regular extortion of tribute from the Israelites, and by the fact that his name, *Eglon*, comes from a verb which means "to revolve." King Eglon and the Moabites typify besetting sins that roll around on a revolving basis - sinful habits, if you will. The Philistines typify the same thing. The Hebrew word for Philistine, *p'lishti* (פְּלִשְׁתִּי), comes from another verb that likewise expresses the ideas of rolling and revolving, and of migrating or "roving about without a certain dwelling" (Gesenius Lexicon).

We can see these characteristics when we look at the history of the

ancient Philistines (or today's Philistines, the Palestinians). The Philistines rolled around at various times in Israel's history. Abraham had trouble with them at Beer-sheba when they violently took away one of his wells. Isaac had trouble with them when they stopped his wells by filling them with earth. The Judges Shamgar and Samson had to fight them. In Samuel's time they captured the ark of the covenant. King Saul, King David, and King Hezekiah had to fight them.

These events span a period of approximately 1200 years. The ancient Philistines were persistent. They just didn't give up. Nor do the modern Philistines, the Palestinians. Nor do our spiritual enemies, the demonic powers that harrass us and tempt us to commit sin. Like the roving, migratory bands of ancient Philistines who persistently oppressed Israel, and like the modern Palestinians who persistently oppress Israel today, our spiritual Enemy persistently oppresses us with temptation. We get victory over a temptation, and the Enemy leaves us alone for a while. Then after a season, like migratory wicked birds of prey, the temptations return in the hopes of feeding themselves on the bread crumbs of our sins.

If we surrender to the temptation, the Philistine in our life most certainly *will* feed itself on our surrender. Just as King Eglon grew fat on Israel's willingness to pay tribute, so these sins will take advantage of our weakness, and they will grow fatter and fatter as they demand the surrender of our will more and more frequently. Their goal is to do what the Philistines did to Isaac when they stopped his wells by filling them with earth. They hope to stop the flow of the living waters of God's Spirit by filling our

hearts and minds with "earth" - earthly ideas, earthly concerns, "the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches" (Mk. 4:19). When this happens, it takes a Shamgar with an ox goad to deliver God's people.

SHAMGAR

We know very little about the man Shamgar, but can we learn anything helpful by considering the meaning of his name? What does the name *Shamgar* mean? Two major Hebrew lexicons draw a blank. Strong's says the name is "of uncertain derivation." Gesenius says "the etymology is unknown."

I do not claim to be smarter than Strong or Gesenius, but when I look at the Hebrew name *Shamgar* (שָׁמָגָר), I see a two-word statement, *sham ger*, (שם גָּר), which being interpreted is, "there [he is/was] a stranger." *Shamgar* can be seen as a combination of the same two Hebrew words that Moses put together to name his firstborn son: "...and he called his name Gershom [גֵּרֶשׁ]: for he said, 'I have been a stranger [ger, גָּר] in a strange land'" (Ex. 2:22). *Gershom* is G-R + SH-M (ם גָּר); *Shamgar* is SH-M + G-R (גָּר שָׁמָגָר). The reversal of word order does not change the meaning of the statement in Hebrew, and the difference in vowels is due to vocalization. Therefore *Shamgar* can mean the same as *Gershom*, viz., "a stranger there [in a strange land]."

To defeat the Philistines, we need the attitude that is expressed in the statement *sham ger*, a stranger there. We have to be constantly aware of the fact that we are sojourners, strangers in a strange land. We will be so for the entire length of our lives. We may be American citizens on paper, but that citizenship is temporary. Our permanent citizenship is in the Kingdom of our Messiah. In this life we are pilgrims, aliens, sojourners.

A story is told of a young man who packed a few items into his backpack

and traveled to a distant town to speak with a famous rabbi. When he arrived at the town, he asked where the rabbi was, and he was directed to a small, simple cottage. He knocked at the door and a bearded man let him in.

"Are you the rabbi?" the young man asked.

"Yes, I'm the rabbi," the man replied.

Looking around the cottage, the young man noticed how simply and sparsely the house was furnished. There was little more than a table and chairs, a lamp, a few dishes on a shelf, a bedroll on the floor, and the rabbi's books. The young man had expected the great rabbi to live in a great house with lavish furnishings.

"Is this where you live?" the young man asked.

"Yes," the rabbi said, "this is where I live."

"But... where's all your stuff?"

"Where's all your stuff?" the rabbi retorted.

"What do you mean?" asked the young man. "I don't need a lot of stuff. This town isn't my home. I'm just a stranger here; I'm just passing through."

"So am I," said the rabbi.

If we get too tied down to this world, too entangled in the affairs of this world, we will start to feel too much at home here. When this happens, we will not have the faith and strength to resist the temptations that the Enemy sends our way. The migratory Philistine birds of prey will feed themselves on our bread-crumb sins, and we will be unable to deliver ourselves or our fellow Israelites from the Philistines.

This is why our Master gave such strong warnings about the deceitfulness of riches and the powerful grip that material possessions can have on a person. Those who would be His disciples cannot be held down or held back by their possessions. "So likewise," He said, "whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple" (Lk. 14:33). The three words in this statement that demand our attention

are "whosoever" and "all" and "cannot." Meditate on this, and it might just transform you into another Shamgar, a stranger in a strange land, and equip you with an ox goad to deliver yourself and your fellow Israelites.

OX GOADS

An ox goad is just a stick with a sharp point at one end. A non-electric cattle prod. What sort of foolish weapon is that? From the natural, worldly point of view, it's a foolish weapon to use against the well-armed and armored Philistines, but when placed in the hands of a Shamgar by the Holy Spirit, a foolish weapon can bring defeat to the Enemy and glory to God. "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence" (1 Cor. 1:27-29).

What are the ox goads that today's Shamgars can use to drive off the spiritual Philistines that oppress God's people? Our goads are words of wisdom: "The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd. And further, by these, my son, be admonished..." (Eccl. 12:11f).

If God's sons and daughters will heed Solomon's plea to "be admonished" by "the words of the wise," they will see the Philistines retreat from the battle, because God's words in the mouth of the wise are as ox goads in the hands of Shamgars. Unfortunately, the words of the wise are usually not heeded, and God's people find themselves in the same sort of predicament described in 1 Samuel:

"Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel; for the Philistines said: 'Lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears.' But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his plowshare, and his coulter, and his

mattock. And the price of the filing was two-thirds of a shekel for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks with three teeth, and for the axes; and to sharpen the goads. So it came to pass in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people..." (1 Sam. 13:19-22a).

Shamgar slew 600 Philistines with his ox goad. Now, just a few generations later, the Israelites had to depend on the Philistines to keep their ox goads sharp! This pathetic situation arose because "there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel." The pathetic situation in today's American church world is likewise due to the fact that there are very few "smiths," very few words of the wise, given by one shepherd.

Because of the lack of smiths in Christendom, Christians go down to the Philistines to obtain what church leaders cannot give them. They look to the corrupted, pagan world system to sharpen their techniques and skills and methods. Their fund-raising letters are modeled after secular fund-raising letters, complete with the fake color highlighting that makes it look like they used a marker to underline portions of *your* letter just for *you personally*. The gospel is packaged and promoted in a manner that resembles an advertisement for a product. Christian seminars and conferences use worldly Philistine psychology to try to sharpen people's spiritual skills. Christian bands pattern their music, their appearance, and their concert tours after secular rock bands. Mega-churches pattern their Sunday morning meetings after the entertainment world. Instead of the Church affecting the world, the world affects the Church, and the Christians ape the worldlings.

Instead of continuing to go down to the Philistines to sharpen our skills, let's ask God to raise up more smiths in the Body of Messiah, more men who can sharpen our ox goads, more "words of the wise, given by one shepherd." Then let's use our ox goads to defeat the Philistines and "also deliver Israel." □

"I know whom I have believed."
(2 Tim. 1:12)

In recent years, some people in the Messianic movement have decided that Yeshua was not really the promised Messiah, after all. Most of these apostates change their minds because of Jewish "anti-missionaries" who argue that the Old Testament prophecies about Jesus could not possibly be prophecies about Jesus. The anti-missionaries also try to discredit the New Testament by subjecting it to much higher criticism and scrutiny than they would ever subject the Old Testament to. People who are unsure and unstable in their knowledge of the Lord can lose their so-called faith, but people who really know the Lord Himself will never be at the mercy of smooth-talking deceivers, because (as I recently read) "a man with an experience is never at the mercy of a man with an argument." About three years ago I wrote a short article for another Messianic publication. Here it is:

There is one very important factor which seems to be overlooked by people who argue against the Messianic claims of Yeshua. That factor is Divine revelation by the Holy Spirit. Simon Peter first confessed his belief in Yeshua with the words "Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Yeshua's reply to this confession is very significant: "Blessed art thou Simon Bar Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you, but My Father in heaven" (Mt. 16:16f).

Many people, myself included, have come to believe in Yeshua without any knowledge of the Messianic prophecies. Our faith is the result of a personal and very real encounter with the Living God. Through this encounter, we receive an intuitive inward witness in our spirit, and this convinces us beyond any doubt that Yeshua is the Son of God. We do not need the Messianic prophecies to convince us; we are already convinced by the inward revelation from the Father. For us, the Messianic prophecies function primarily as further confirmation of that which we already know to be abso-

lutely true and not even open to debate.

A few years ago I was listening to a Messianic Jewish friend talking to a well-known anti-missionary. "How do you know Jesus was raised from the dead?" the anti-missionary asked sarcastically. "Where's the Polaroid snapshot of the Resurrection?"

"Where's the Polaroid snapshot of Moses receiving the Torah on Mount Sinai?" my Messianic Jewish friend replied.

There are some things that we simply know to be true. We do not need the mountains of physical evidence which would be necessary to prove our case in a court of law. The inward revelation is so powerful that it is all we need. We simply know that Yeshua was the Son of God, just as Orthodox Jews know that the Torah was really given to Moses on Sinai.

I realize that an appeal to Divine revelation proves nothing to those who have not yet received the same revelation. I do not offer the testimony of Divine revelation as evidence to persuade the other side. I am simply pointing out the fact that Divine revelation is a very important factor - perhaps the most important - in knowing who Yeshua of Nazareth is. I base this statement on the words of Simon Bar Jonah and on Yeshua's reply. Those who would ignore and/or exclude Divine revelation as a valid means of knowing the Messiah's identity are limiting the Holy One of Israel - a very dangerous thing to do. [End of article]

Let me close with something from the life of Billy Graham. (I have been disappointed with some things Billy Graham has done and said in recent years, but I will give him the benefit of the doubt. Perhaps the few indiscretions in his old age are due to senility brought on by his Parkinson's disease.) Early in his ministry Billy attended a conference in California. Some of the theologians there challenged the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures. This made Billy question whether or not the Bible was really reliable. After much study and mental wrestling, Billy finally reached a decision. He describes the moment

that forever changed his life and his ministry:

"That night, I walked out in the moonlight, my heart heavy and burdened. I dropped to my knees and opened my Bible on a tree stump. If the issue were not settled soon, I knew I could not go on. 'Oh God,' I prayed, 'there are many things in this Book I do not understand. But God, I am going to accept this Book as Your Word by faith. I'm going to allow my faith to go beyond my intellect and believe that this is Your inspired Word.' From that moment on I have never doubted God's Word. When I quote the Bible, I believe I am quoting the very Word of God and there's an extra power in it."

A month later Billy began preaching at meetings in Los Angeles and caught the attention of the nation. -DB
Source: *Billy Graham* (Time-Life Books, 1999)

TISHA B'AV

Daniel Botkin



Artwork by Theanna Sparrow

TISHA B'AV, the 9th day of Av on the Jewish calendar, falls on July 18 this year. The 9th of Av is the anniversary of the destruction of the first Temple by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. The destruction of the second Temple in A.D. 70 also coincidentally (?) took place on the 9th of Av.

History and Jewish tradition tell of other tragic events which befell Israel on this date. The evil report of the ten spies is said to have taken place on Tisha B'Av. After hearing the evil report, "all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night" (Num. 14:1). The mention of weeping in the night in Lamentations 1:2 is believed to be a reference not only to the weeping in Jeremiah's generation, but also to the weeping of unbelief in Numbers 14:1 that took place on this same date in Moses' generation. The rabbis believe that because the people wept without cause in the wilderness on that date, that God appointed that date to be a time of weeping and mourning in future generations.

Tisha B'Av is observed as a day of mourning in the Jewish community. Mourning practices include fasting and abstaining from various comforts and pleasures (sexual relations, bathing, shaving, wearing cosmetics, and wearing leather shoes). Synagogues are decorated (or, to be more precise, un-decorated) to match the somber mood of the day. Decorative tapestries, covers, and curtains are removed. The ark that holds the Torah scroll is sometimes draped with black cloth. The lighting in the synagogue is kept dim. Some communities use candles for light.

Torah study is shunned by Jews on Tisha B'Av, because studying Torah is a pleasure. ("Thy Torah is my delight," Psalm 119:174) Instead of studying Torah on this day, Orthodox Jews read the Book of Lamentations in a mournful chant while sitting on the synagogue floor or on low stools.

Since Israel became a nation again in 1948, and since Jerusalem came under Jewish rule again in 1967, some people have questioned whether Tisha B'Av should still be observed by Jews as a day of mourning. The fact that the Temple Mount itself is still in Moslem hands and is still defiled with the gold-domed Islamic abomination is apparently reason enough for Jews to continue to observe Tisha B'Av as a day of mourning. □

THE LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH

Daniel Botkin

According to Jewish tradition, the Book of Lamentations was written by the Prophet Jeremiah after the destruction of Jerusalem. The Hebrew Bible does not specifically state that Jeremiah was the writer of Lamentations, but the Septuagint version does. The Septuagint (the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures) includes an introductory statement before the first verse: "And it came to pass, after Israel was taken captive, and Jerusalem made desolate, that Jeremiah sat weeping, and lamented with this lamentation over Jerusalem, and said..."

Tradition says that the place where Jeremiah sat to write Lamentations was in a cave that is now called the Grotto of Jeremiah. This cave is located on the skull-like hill which is believed by many to be Golgotha, "the place of the skull" where Yeshua was crucified - a very appropriate place for a mourning prophet to compose a book like Lamentations.

Jeremiah is sometimes called "the weeping prophet" because he wept over the sins of his people and over the destruction he knew they were going to face. "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears," he wrote, "that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" (Jer. 9:1). After Jerusalem fell, Jeremiah continued to weep. Looking over the destruction of Jerusalem, he wrote: "For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water ... Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people. Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission" (Lam. 1:16; 3:48).

When Jeremiah's words came to pass, he did not boast to his fellow Jews about the accuracy of his prophecies of doom. According to Jewish history, Jeremiah "sought his suffering brothers. He found their bloody footprints and weeping knelt to kiss the bloodstained ground."

(See Stone Edition Tanach.)

Jeremiah's message had not been a popular one. In a nutshell, his message could be paraphrased this way: "Yahweh has decreed the destruction of Jerusalem because of the sins of our nation. God is going to let the Babylonians win to punish us for our wickedness. We need to simply surrender to the Babylonians, let them take us captive to Babylon, and after seventy years God will bring us back."

This would be similar to a prophet today saying that because of America's sins, God has decreed the defeat of America by Muslim terrorists, and that we should simply surrender to the Arabs and accept defeat as the punishment we deserve. Let the Arabs establish Muslim rule over our land, and hope that they will do what they did to conquered Jews and Christians in past centuries, when they let them live under Islamic rule as *dhimmi* - still Jews and Christians, but forced to pay *jizya*, an extremely high religious tax, and forced to endure severe restrictions on religious freedom.

Needless to say, such a message would not be very popular in America today, especially if America were in the

midst of a great religious revival, as Jerusalem was when Jeremiah first presented his message of impending doom and destruction. In the opening verses of Jeremiah, it mentions that the word of Yahweh first came to Jeremiah "in the days of Josiah, the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign" (Jer. 1:2).

The reign of Josiah is recorded in 2 Kings 22 & 23 and in 2 Chronicles 34 & 35. Josiah was the king who was responsible for the rediscovery of the Torah that had been lying neglected and forgotten in the Temple. He called the nation to repentance, and they responded. All physical traces of paganism and idolatry in Judah were destroyed. The Passover and priestly worship music were restored. The Bible says this of King Josiah: "And like unto him there was no king before him, that turned to Yahweh with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him" (2 Ki. 23:25).

According to 2 Chronicles 34:3, revival began in the 12th year of his reign. It was a year later, "in the thirteenth year of his reign" (Jer. 1:2), that Jeremiah started to bring forth his message of doom. Josiah's exciting revival and Jeremiah's pessimistic preaching ran parallel to one another. While King Josiah was leading the people back to the Lord and ridding the nation of sin, the Prophet Jeremiah was telling the people that the nation was going to be severely punished for its sin. When a nation is repenting like Judah did under Josiah's reign, it would seem like a foolish time to prophesy doom and wrath and certain judgment like Jeremiah prophesied. But that's what he did. No wonder Jeremiah was such an unpopular prophet!

Why didn't Josiah's revival hold back the judgment of God? To understand this, we have to understand that when a person or a nation sins, God gives "space to repent" (Rev. 2:21). God gives people and nations a certain

amount of time and a certain number of opportunities to repent before He decrees judgment. But at some point, God decrees judgment. This was the case in Jeremiah's and Josiah's time. Before Josiah was even born, God had decreed judgment on the nation. The sins of King Manasseh, the grandfather of King Josiah, had been the final straw. The Scripture heaps lavish praises upon Josiah for his whole-hearted repentance (2 Kings 23:25, quoted above), but immediately after this the statement continues with this: "Notwithstanding Yahweh turned not from the fierceness of His great wrath, wherewith His anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal. And Yahweh said, I will remove Judah also out of My sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there" (2 Ki. 23:26f).

Repentance may forestall the judgment til a future generation, but it will eventually come. This is apparently what happened with Manasseh. He did some serious repentance for the serious wickedness he had done, and God heard his prayer. (See 2 Chronicles 33:10ff. His prayer is in the Apocrypha, which was included in the original KJV. See sidebar on right.) This is also what happened with Josiah. When the Torah was rediscovered, he sent men to inquire of the Prophetess Huldah. She said, "Thus saith Yahweh, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof..." But then she went on to say that the evil would be forestalled til after the death of Josiah, "because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before Yahweh, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before Me; I also have heard thee, saith Yahweh. Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I shall

From the Apocrypha: The Prayer of Manasseh King of Juda When He Was Holden Captive in Babylon

O LORD, Almighty God of our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and of their righteous seed; who hast made heaven and earth, with all the ornament thereof; who hast bound the sea by the word of Thy commandment; who hast shut up the deep, and sealed it by Thy terrible and glorious name; whom all men fear, and tremble before Thy power; for the majesty of Thy glory cannot be borne, and Thine angry threatening toward sinners is importable: but Thy merciful promise is unmeasureable and unsearchable; for Thou art the most high Lord, of great compassion, longsuffering, very merciful, and repenteſt of the evils of men. Thou, O Lord, according to Thy great goodness hast promised repentance and forgiveness to them that have sinned against Thee: and of Thine infinite mercies hast appointed repentance unto sinners, that they may be saved. Thou therefore, O Lord, that art the God of the just, hast not appointed repentance to the just, as to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, which have not sinned against Thee; but Thou hast appointed repentance unto me that am a sinner: for I have sinned above the number of the sands of the sea. My transgressions, O Lord, are

multiplied: my transgressions are multiplied, and I am not worthy to behold and see the height of heaven for the multitude of mine iniquities. I am bowed down with many iron bands, that I cannot lift up mine head, neither have any release: for I have provoked Thy wrath, and done evil before Thee: I did not Thy will, neither kept I Thy commandments: I have set up abominations, and have multiplied offences. Now therefore I bow the knee of mine heart, beseeching Thee of grace. I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned, and I acknowledge mine iniquities: wherefore, I humbly beseech Thee, forgive me, O Lord, forgive me, and destroy me not with mine iniquities. Be not angry with me forever, by reserving evil for me; neither condemn me into the lower parts of the earth. For Thou art the God, even the God of them that repent; and in me thou wilt shew all Thy goodness: for Thou wilt save me, that am unworthy, according to Thy great mercy. Therefore I will praise Thee for ever all the days of my life: for all the powers of the heavens do praise Thee, and Thine is the glory for ever and ever.

Amen.

bring upon this place" (2 Ki. 22:19f).

Back in the early 1970s there were groups of young prophets traveling across this nation proclaiming God's judgment on America for her sins. I read about them in the paper and in major news magazines. I saw them on TV news programs and I saw them in person. I spent some time with them right after I started following Jesus. (See *Gates of Eden* 3-4.) These prophets relied very heavily on the writings of Jeremiah. Sometimes they stood in prominent public places in silent protest, covered with sackcloth and with ashes smeared on their faces. They held hand-written scrolls with verses of doom from Jeremiah and other Prophets. (See photo on previous page.) As far as they were concerned, God had already decreed certain judgment on the nation, and it was too late for national repentance. The only hope was for people to repent individually and to pray that they might find mercy in the midst of the impend-

ing judgments.

Whether these young prophets of thirty years ago were true or false prophets remains to be seen. Either way, our nation needs to do some deep, serious, radical repentance. The sins of thirty years ago pale in comparison to the abominations that are publicly flaunted today.

Jeremiah's message to the nation of Judah is fearful, especially when Jeremiah's description of his nation's sins sounds exactly like a description of our nation's sins. Over and over again God says, "Shall not My soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" (Jer. 5:9, 29; 9:9).

It would do this nation good if every American could read Jeremiah and take his words to heart. Maybe that would lead to nation-wide repentance, and forestall judgment. Without deep, serious, radical repentance, our nation will probably suffer judgments similar to those suffered by Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Jeremiah. □

THE TIDE

by Daniel Botkin

The modern Messianic movement began 30-some years ago when many Jewish people started getting the Divine revelation that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. These young Jewish believers began to follow Yeshua in a way that honored the Torah, and upon seeing this, many non-Jewish Christians started to get the Divine revelation that the Torah should still be honored by all disciples of Yeshua, whether they are Jews or Gentiles.

The response of the Messianic Jewish community to "Messianic Gentiles" has been disappointing. Messianic Gentiles are politely tolerated in Messianic Jewish congregations as long as they "know their place" as Gentile engrafts and do not think that the Torah is as much for them as it is for Jewish believers. And heaven help the Gentile who admits belief in any form of Two-House teaching which suggests that lots of these Messianic Gentiles might have some Israelite ancestry, and that maybe this is how God is fulfilling the prophecies about Israel and Judah being reunited. The Gentile who believes this will be falsely accused of replacement theology, British Israelism, anti-Semitism, and racism.

Prominent Messianic Jewish leaders discourage Gentiles from embracing a Messianic lifestyle. These leaders publicly state that Gentile Christians are just as well off in their Sunday-morning Gentile Christian churches. Gentile Christians are told that a Sunday "Lord's Day," church hog roasts, and Christmas trees are valid expressions of faith for Gentile Christians, but the 7th-day Sabbath, dietary laws, and Feasts of the Lord are exclusively "Jewish expressions of faith," and that God does not expect Gentile Christians to do these things. Well, the Messianic Gentiles aren't buying it. This movement is steadily growing and it will not be stopped, because it is a movement born of the Holy Spirit.

The ocean and the history of past revivals can teach us some things. Different movements and revivals come in waves, like the tide of the ocean. People even use the phrase "waves of revival" when discussing moves of the Holy Spirit. Go watch the waves of the ocean roll in, and you will notice an interesting phenomenon. As the incoming wave rolls in, the previous, outgoing wave resists it and tries to push it back. This is what normally happens when God sends a new wave of revival. Those who curse and damn the new movement the loudest are those who were a part of the previous wave. No amount of resistance can hold back the new wave, though. The tide is sure to win. □

DEBORAH, BARAK, & YAEL

Dr. Daniel Botkin

The fifth in a series of articles on the Book of Judges

According to Jewish tradition, the Judges Ehud and Shamgar served Israel concurrently. After Ehud's death, the cycle of Apathy, Apostasy, Anomianism, and Anarchy once again repeated itself.

"And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of Yahweh, when Ehud was dead. And Yahweh sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host was Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles. And the children of Israel cried unto Yahweh: for he had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel" (Jdg. 4:1-3).

The Apostle Paul said that the events recorded in the Tenach (Old Testament) were written for our learning and admonition (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:6, 11). As we look at the events described in the Book of Judges, we can see details which can help us understand how the original Messianic faith of the Apostles evolved into the various forms of apostate Christianity which exist today. Of special interest to us in the above passage is Harosheth of the Gentiles, the home of Sisera. It was from this place that the villain of the story emerged to oppress Israel. When we look at the meaning of the phrase *Harosheth of the Gentiles*, we can also see the source of the villain that has oppressed "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

Harosheth of the Gentiles (*charoshet ha-goyim*) means "the carving of the Gentiles." This phrase gives a chillingly accurate description of how certain elements of modern-day Christianity came into existence. Much of what passes for Christianity is nothing more than a carving made by Gentiles. We know from the Book of

Acts that the original Messianic Community was 100% Jewish. We know from history that after Gentiles were admitted into the Messianic Community, they eventually outnumbered the Jews. This would not have been a problem if the Gentiles would have continued to uphold the Torah, but as the percentage of Gentiles increased and the percentage of Jews decreased, the original Messianic faith gradually became altered -- "carved," if you will -- by the elimination of some major and minor Scriptural customs that had been practiced by the Messianic Jews. The Gentiles slowly carved away things such as the Sabbath, the dietary laws, and the Biblical calendar, and replaced these Scriptural customs with Gentile customs which were derived from pagan idol worship. This carving away of the Torah can be summed up in the phrase *charoshet ha-goyim*, the carving of the Gentiles.

The connection between this phrase and these events in the history of Gentile Christianity is even more apparent when we look at some related meanings of **שָׁרֵשׁ** (CH-R-SH, the Hebrew root of *charoshet*) in the Gesenius Hebrew Lexicon. According to Gesenius, the verb can also mean "to fabricate." This brings to mind certain teachings in Christianity which

are mere fabrications rather than truth. (The idea that Christ abolished the Torah, for example.) The noun form of **שָׁרֵשׁ**, *cheresh*, can mean "an artificial work." This brings to mind certain Christian customs which resemble Biblical customs but are in fact artificial, i.e., mere counterfeits of the real thing. (The Sunday Sabbath, for example.) Gesenius states that *cheresh* can also refer in a bad sense to "magic arts." This brings to mind certain occult-like superstitions which found their way into Christianity. (Roman Catholic customs such as the veneration of relics, transubstantiation, the sacrifice of the Mass, etc.)

The Book of Judges says that Israel was mightily oppressed for twenty years by a man who came from *charoshet ha-goyim*, the carving of the Gentiles. The Messianic faith that was once delivered unto the saints has likewise been mightily oppressed by a man, "another Jesus." This imaginary Jesus is a Torah-abolishing, artificial Jesus whose image has been carved by the Gentiles. Sisera's oppression of Israel lasted only twenty years. The Gentiles' oppression of the Messianic faith has lasted nearly twenty centuries. The good news is that the times of the Gentiles are drawing to a close.

After twenty years of oppression by the man from Harosheth of the Gentiles, God raised up the Prophetess Deborah, the Judge Barak, and the wild warrior woman Yael to defeat Sisera and restore Israel. Now after nearly twenty centuries of Gentile oppression of the Messianic faith, God is raising up judges, prophets and prophetesses, and wild warriors to defeat the enemy and restore Israel.

The story of Deborah, Barak, and Yael reminds us that the alteration of the original Messianic faith of the Apostles was due to the carving of the Gentiles. The story can also help us see some things we can do to help rectify the problem. Let us now look at these three people and see what their

character and their actions can teach us.

When the children of Israel cried out to Yahweh, the Spirit moved upon Deborah the Prophetess, and she sent for Barak. She told Barak to take ten thousand men and go against Sisera. Barak said he would do it only if Deborah went with him.

Deborah agreed to go. "I will go with thee," she said, "notwithstanding, the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for Yahweh shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman."

When they arrived at the scene of the battle, Deborah encouraged Barak to attack. "Up," she said, "for this is the day in which Yahweh hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not Yahweh gone out before thee?"

Barak's army defeated the enemy army, and Sisera jumped off his chariot and fled to the Kenites, a people who were at peace with Sisera's nation. When Sisera came near the tent of Yael, she offered to hide him. "Turn in, my lord, turn in to me; fear not," she said.

Yael gave Sisera some milk to drink and hid him under a mantle. After Sisera was fast asleep, Yael took a tent peg and a hammer, quietly crept up on him, and drove the tent peg all the way through his temples, pinning his head to the ground. Thus ended the career of the man from Harosheth Ha-Goyim, the carving of the Gentiles.

This story often raises questions about the role of women. Some feminists think that the actions of women such as Deborah and Yael provide them with Scriptural justification to ignore New Testament instructions about women's roles, especially those instructions which say that a woman should not lead men or have spiritual authority over men (1 Cor. 11:3; 1 Cor. 14:34f; 1 Tim. 2:11ff). There are two problems with the feminist interpretation of Deborah and Yael. First, we cannot simply declare the general rule to be null and void by pointing to an obvious exception to the rule. Deborah and Yael were clearly exceptions to the rule. Deborah was the only female Judge there was; all the other Judges were men. Yael was

an exception to the rule, too. There weren't many women who had the ministry of driving big nails through the heads of Israel's enemies. Such actions were generally carried out by men, which is why Deborah made it a point to tell Barak that God would sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.

Second, the feminist interpretation overlooks the fact that Deborah did not lead the men into battle. Barak did. Deborah's role was vital and necessary. In her role as a prophetess, she initiated the events which led to victory and deliverance. She sent for Barak and gave him prophetic words of encouragement to lead the army into battle, and she accompanied the army when they went to the battle. After the battle, she (along with Barak) sang a song to celebrate the victory. There would have been no victory and no deliverance without the actions of Deborah and Yael, but neither Deborah nor Yael led the men into battle. Barak did.

This should teach us some things about the roles of women. Deborah was a prophetess, and we need prophetesses today in the Body of Messiah. The role of a prophetess is not to lead men, but to speak prophetic words which will challenge and inspire men of God to rise up and go forward into spiritual battle, just as Deborah challenged and inspired Barak.

A prophetess does not need to be formally installed in an official leadership position in order to fulfill her calling. Her calling is to function as a spiritual "lightning rod." A lightning rod attracts and draws down the lightning during storms. A prophetess will attract the power of God and draw it down into the midst of God's people during stormy times. It is no coincidence that the name *Barak* is also the Hebrew word for "lightning." The Prophetess Deborah was the catalyst that drew Barak ("lightning") to Mount Ephraim. In the same way, modern-day Deborahs can prophesy in a way that will stir modern-day Baraks and inspire them to rise up and lead God's people to victory. The name *Deborah* means "a bee." Bees make honey,

and the Torah is likened to honey (Ps. 19:10). Therefore we should expect our modern-day Deborahs to prophesy concerning the sweetness of the Torah. (And we should not be surprised if their prophetic words occasionally *sting* like a bee, too!)

The actions of Yael also show us what women can do in the Body of Messiah. The hammer of Yael can be likened to God's Word. Jeremiah 23:29 says that Yahweh's Word is "like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces." Yael's nail can be likened to words of wisdom. Ecclesiastes 12:11 says that the words of the wise are "as nails fastened" (NASB, "well-driven nails"). Modern-day Yaels can speak words of wisdom by the Holy Spirit. When these words of wisdom are driven home with the authoritative hammer of God's Word, they become well-driven nails that pin the Enemy's head to the ground.

To sum up: The example of Deborah shows us that God may use a woman to initiate the events which will lead to the deliverance and restoration of Israel. Therefore women should "desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy" (1 Cor. 14:1, NASB). The example of Barak shows us that God wants to use men to lead His people to victory. Therefore, men should rise up and lead, drawing inspiration and encouragement from the sisters' prophetic words. The example of Yael shows us that even though God wants to use men to lead His people to victory, He may use a woman to finalize the victory. A woman's word of wisdom can be the final well-driven nail in the Enemy's coffin.

As our modern-day Deborahs, Baraks, and Yaels learn their respective roles and learn to work together, the man from Harosheth HaGoyim will be defeated. The imaginary, Torah-abolishing Jesus that was carved by the Gentiles will be exposed as a myth, and then God's people can take hold of the true, Torah-honoring Messiah, Yeshua of Nazareth. When both Jews and Christians do this, Israel will be restored. □

Dancing Lips

by Betsy Botkin



Right: Betsy holding her little sister, Autumn Sunshine



"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him?" -Matt. 7:11

I am going to share with you my personal story of a good gift I recently received from the Father. This is somewhat difficult for me to write about, but for such a topic I can write more readily than I can talk, because I don't get nervous and emotional when I write.

For a few years Dad has been periodically teaching on the topic of the Holy Spirit, always offering to pray with anyone who had a desire to be filled with the Spirit. A few months ago, probably in the early spring, I began to realize that I desired this gift. However, I lacked the boldness to ask anyone to pray for me. Looking back now, I can see why I didn't ask. I've always been rather shy, I thought I'd start to cry before I could make a request, and most of all I was afraid that nothing would happen and I'd end up feeling like I was a failure, those praying for me were failures, and maybe even that God Himself had failed.

So in order to draw closer to God I began to spend more time praying and reading the Word, and I continued to

dance. Dancing is one of the most wonderful ways to honor God that you can find. I love 2 Samuel 6, when David dances with all his strength before the LORD. His reply to Michal when she mocks him for his worship is incredible; he tells her that he will be "even more undignified than this." Our expressions of worship and adoration to the God of Israel are not always meant to be dignified!

Then one Wednesday evening in July we had a group gathered at the table for our regular weekly Bible study. Much to my surprise, once we all sat down Dad said that rather than starting Deuteronomy, we would study about the Holy Spirit. So as we studied about the Spirit, especially the topic of speaking in tongues, I became undeniably nervous. I knew that if there was an opportunity, this was my time to be filled with the Spirit of the Living God.

As I was quite sure would happen, we went to pray in the living room after our study. I distinctly remember that there were twelve of us, six who had already been filled and six of us who longed to be filled. We all got down on our knees and began to pray, and I soon started to cry. I was prayed over, yet I still did not have the living waters spoken of by Yeshua flowing out of my inmost being. As we

continued to pray, it seemed that the living waters of the Spirit were there inside me, trying to come out, but they were trapped. I felt dry, like I would soon run out of prayers and tears.

Then Shoshanna came over to me. I can't remember her exact words, but she told me that Mom said that I needed to just let my lips dance. Those words broke through to me like nothing else had that evening. My tears began to flow again, but now they were tears of joy, for I knew that the living waters now had a way to get out! Very, very soon my mouth began to dance a dance given by Yahweh through His Spirit. Words came pouring forth through my dancing mouth, giving glory and praise to the One who had given them. My feet had fallen asleep as I knelt, but my mouth was dancing more freely than my feet ever had!

Now that my lips and tongue can dance, I've found that the rest of my body can dance much more freely to the Father. While at the Messianic Israel Alliance conference, I was able to participate in some incredible times of worship. There were occasions when I found that my whole being was dancing to Him, my feet, hands, and mouth in unison. At these times I was overwhelmed with awe by the fact that the Holy One of Israel, the One who formed all that there is out of nothing, who is perfect and beautiful beyond our comprehension, that Yahweh had chosen to honor me by coming to dance in me and with me. The pureness of His holiness makes me fall on my knees, ashamed of myself. He made me out of dirt, and yet He has come and caused me to dance with His Spirit!

What can I now do to thank Him? I must try, with His help, to live a holy life, and strive to be worthy of His many gifts. Above all, I know that I must live my life as a dance to my Redeemer! □

PANTS ON WOMEN

Modest Or Immodest?

Daniel Botkin

When Paul wrote to Timothy and told him that the women of the assembly should "adorn themselves in modest apparel" (1 Tim. 2:9), Paul did not give Timothy a definition of modesty. He did not have to, because Timothy, like Paul, knew what types of clothing were regarded as modest apparel in the First Century Jewish community. Paul's reason for not elaborating or writing any guidelines for modest apparel was not because no such guidelines existed, but because Timothy, who had a godly Jewish mother and grandmother, already knew what those guidelines were.

If we want to understand what Paul meant by "modest apparel," then we must remember that Paul was a Jew. One thing that the Orthodox Jewish community has preserved over the centuries is the concept of modest dress for women. In the strict Orthodox Jewish community, pants are out of the question for women. Orthodox Jews base their view on Deuteronomy 22:5. "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto Yahweh thy God."

The Big Question is this: Is Jewish tradition right about this? Are pants something "which pertaineth unto a man"? In other words, are pants a garment meant specifically for men? This is The Big Question that generates controversy and leads to charges of either "Legalism and bondage!" or "Liberalism and compromise!" It is not a trivial question, though, because if pants are a man's garment, then a woman wearing pants is an abomination in the sight of Yahweh.

To determine if pants are a man's garment, we might first look in the Bible and see if it says anything at all about pants. The Hebrew word for pants is *miknasaiim*, translated in the KJV as "breeches" (the archaic word for the slightly less archaic *britches*,



which means "pants" or "trousers"). This word appears five times in the Bible (Ex. 28:42; 39:28; Lev. 6:10; 16:4; Ezk. 44:18). In all of these verses, the *miknasaiim* were worn by priests, who were all men. This by itself is not conclusive proof that pants are a man's garment, but it is all the Bible says about pants per se. Since there are no other verses that use the actual word *miknasaiim*, we have to see if there is other evidence that will show whether or not pants are a man's garment.

Many people say that the "pants for men, dresses for women" idea is an old-fashioned, out-dated cultural idea, and that it is not an international, universally-recognized means of distinguishing males and females. I would differ with that opinion. Go to any international airport in the world and look at the signs on the restrooms. Pants on men and dresses on women is an international, universally-recognized means of distinguishing males and females.

Some time ago a brother in the Lord told me about an article in Grolier's Encyclopedia. Under "Clothing" it shows traditional garments from about a dozen different countries and cultures. This brother told me that according to Grolier's Encyclopedia, the one thing that the traditional garments of all these various cultures have in common is some form of pants on the men and some form of dresses on the women. I went to the library and looked in Grolier's Encyclopedia and saw it for myself. I also looked at the World Book Encyclopedia. It has four pages of pictures of traditional garments from over 50 various nations and cultures. The universal norm in

civilized cultures is obvious to anyone who has eyes to see. Even in the less-civilized, somewhat primitive cultures (American Indian, Eskimo, and Third World cultures), the norm is there. Even in the cultures where women have some form of leggings or slacks, these are always worn *under* a long skirt or dress. Only men are shown wearing uncovered pants.

"But clothing styles have changed," some people say. *"Pants are no longer considered a man's garment."* It's true that clothing styles have changed, but the important question is whether or not our changeless God approves of these changes. According to articles in encyclopedias, changes in clothing styles is a relatively recent phenomenon that developed in the Western world. Grolier's states: "In the West the tradition developed that change and experimentation in clothing styles were to be admired. Only in the history of Western dress, therefore, has there been great variety and change."

The New Grolier Student Encyclopedia says: "Until a few decades ago, women never wore shorts or pants. Now women can wear pants or stylish suits to work, just as men do." By using this phrase "just as men do," this secular encyclopedia affirms that when women wear pants, they are dressing "just as men do." In other words, they are wearing that which pertaineth unto a man.

"But the Torah does not specifically prohibit a woman from wearing pants," some people say. This is true only if we assume that pants are not a man's garment. If pants are a man's garment, then Deuteronomy 22:5 does prohibit women from wearing them. There are a lot of things that the Torah does not specifically forbid by name, but that does not mean that we cannot infer that certain unspecified, unnamed practices are wrong. Years ago a woman wrote me a letter telling me why she disagreed with my view of

the woman's head covering. She said that she was free to go to church bare-headed because the Torah does not give a specific commandment telling women to cover their heads. I wrote back and told her that the Torah does not give a specific commandment telling women to cover their breasts, either.

There are some things the Torah teaches us by specific commandments, and there are some things the Torah teaches us by inference. There are other things that human reason and nature teach us. For example, the Torah does not forbid long hair on men (it actually requires it of Nazarites), yet Paul wrote: "Doth not nature itself teach you, that if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?" (1 Cor. 11:14). How does "nature itself" teach us this? It is not by any example in the animal kingdom. Male lions with their long manes would teach us the exact opposite. It is not because men cannot grow their hair as long as women do, because they can. If you do not believe this, go to The Men's Long Hair Site (<http://the-light.com/mens/samson1.html>) and check out their "Samson of the Month," a guy named Mart with hair that hangs well below his buttocks.

So how does "nature itself" teach us that it is shameful for a man to have long hair? Nature teaches us this by the fact that in civilized cultures, and even in some uncivilized cultures, the men generally have shorter hair than the women of their culture -- not because nature makes men's hair stop growing, but because there is a natural, God-given, intuitive knowledge that long hair is for women, and therefore the man's hair should be shorter than the woman's. There may be some variation in the definition of "long" and "short" among different cultures, but the universal norm is for the man's hair to be shorter than the woman's.

Therefore using Paul's line of reasoning, we could ask: "Doth not nature itself teach you that pants are for men and dresses are for women?" Nature teaches us this, not because nature makes it impossible for women

Hebrew Word Study

מִכְנָסִים

MIKNASAIIM, the Hebrew word for pants, is formed from the verb root K-N-S (כָּנַס). The *mi-* (מִ) prefix turns the verb into a noun, and the *-aiim* (אַיִם) suffix is the dual plural ending. (The normal plural ending is *-im* [אִים], but things that come in pairs [shoes, socks, hands, etc.] or things that consist of two parts [scissors, eyeglasses, etc.] take the dual plural ending *-aiim*.)

The K-N-S root of miKNaSaiim means "to collect, to assemble." Israel's Parliament is called the *Knesset*; a synagogue is a *beit-knesset*, "house of assembly." This K-N-S verb seems unrelated to pants, but there is another related verb which contains the K-N-S root. That verb is *niKNaS*, "to enter." At supermarkets in Israel, the "IN" doors bear the word *כְּנִיסָה* (K'NiSah, "entrance"). When we consider how a person puts on a pair of pants -- by entering them -- we can see how the word *miknasaiim* is related to the K-N-S root.

to put on pants, but because there is a natural, God-given, intuitive knowledge built into the human race that tells us this. The evidence of this natural, intuitive knowledge can be seen in things as simple as restroom signs and in things as detailed as the encyclopedias' 50+ pictures of clothing of different cultures. "Pants for men, dresses for women" is, along with hair length, the international, universally-recognized means of distinguishing males and females.

During the past few decades, Satan has attempted to blur the God-ordained distinctions of male and female, and he has had great success, especially in America and other Western nations. If we really want to undo Satan's victories in these areas, we should go out of our way to make sure that we uphold the traditional, universally-recognized differences between males and females. A man should show that he is a man by the roles he fulfills, by his appearance, and by his clothing. A woman should show that she is a woman by the roles she fulfills, by her appearance, and by her clothing. The best way for a woman to do this is by wearing a dress instead of pants.

Therefore the word *miknasaiim* -- with its noun-creating *mi-* prefix, its K-N-S root, and its dual plural *-aiim* ending -- could be thought of as "a thing into which a person makes a dual entry," the dual entry being achieved by the insertion of two legs.

This can also help us understand one possible reason why pants are intended for men. "Entering in" is a male thing. Human life (and even animal and plant life) continues because the male enters into the female in order to reproduce, thus ensuring the survival of the species. The connection between males and entering in can even be seen in the vocabulary of plumbers. Water pipes have "male" and "female" ends. The end of the pipe which enters into another pipe is called the male end. Because entering in is a male thing, a man affirms his masculinity, even if unconsciously, every time he enters (*niKNaS*) a pair of miKNaSaiim.

Paul said, "When I became a man, I put away childish things" (1 Cor. 13:11). Pants on baby girls and little children is one thing. Uncovered pants on shapely young ladies and grown women is something else. It is time for women in the Messianic community to grow up and grow out of their pants and start wearing dresses.

Maybe some women reading this are still not persuaded. Let me end by respectfully asking women to consider one final thing. If "pants for men, dresses for women" is a universal means of distinguishing the sexes, then pants are a man's garment, and a woman in a man's garment is an abomination in the sight of Yahweh. When it comes to expressing God's displeasure, there is no stronger word than *abomination*. Therefore I would respectfully ask this: Even if you think I might be mistaken, are you willing to risk it? Is wearing pants so important to you that you are willing to take that risk? God winks at sins committed in ignorance, but He holds us accountable for what we know and for what we *should* know. If we have good reason to think that something might be an abomination to God, we are better off not doing it. □

THE BALANCE OF SPIRIT AND TRUTH

Dr. Daniel Botkin

One thing that we should try to maintain in our worship is an equal balance of spirit and truth. Yeshua said that "the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." Then He went on to add that "the Father seeketh such to worship Him" (Jn. 4:23). The fact that the Father seeks such people implies that such people are rare and hard to find. Otherwise why would the Father be seeking such people? If we want to be the kind of worshippers that the Father is looking for, we need to pay attention to both spirit and truth in our worship.

The importance of both spirit and truth can also be seen in Yeshua's statement to the Sadducees: "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God" (Mt. 22:29). "The Scriptures" corresponds to truth ("Thy word is truth," Jn. 17:17). "The power of God" corresponds to spirit ("Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you," Ac. 1:8).

The truth of the Scriptures must not be neglected in our worship. We should develop the life-long habit of reading, studying, and meditating on the Scriptures. At the same time, we must remember that the Lord left us with much more than a Book. He also left us with "the promise of the Father" (Ac. 1:4f), i.e., the power of God that we receive when the Holy Spirit comes upon us. It is the Holy Spirit that makes the Bible a Book of living words and not just a dead letter. The Holy Spirit makes the truth of the Word come alive, and puts excitement and zeal into our lives.

Many worshippers are spiritually imbalanced because they neglect one or the other of these two necessary aspects of true worship. Either they neglect the Holy Spirit and experience the Word in a cold, sterile, academic fashion, or they neglect truth and do not know the Scriptures well enough to "test the spirits," thus opening themselves up to counterfeit spiritual experiences. If we want a balanced

walk, we need to give equal weight to the truth of the Scriptures and to the moving of the Spirit in our worship.

The need for a balance of spirit and truth is also reflected in God's design of the human body. The body is symmetrical, so that all the external body parts are in pairs. Each part of the body is a mirror image of its corresponding part on the opposite side. The body is designed in such a way that we need two hands to work effectively and two legs to keep us balanced when we walk. Perhaps this is one of God's ways of reminding us that if we want to work effectively for the Lord and walk a balanced walk in the spiritual realm, we need both elements of true worship, spirit and truth. It is true that a one-armed man can do some work, and a one-legged man can hop on one foot, but such handicaps limit what a man can do. In the same way, disciples who neglect either spirit or truth are handicapping themselves and limiting what they can do for the Lord.

Years ago I read an article in *Reader's Digest* about beautiful faces. A study was conducted to try to determine what it is that makes people regard certain faces as beautiful and other faces as plain or unattractive. After showing photographs of faces to hundreds of subjects and asking them to rank the faces according to beauty, the researchers made an interesting discovery. One thing that causes people to regard a face as either beautiful or unattractive is the relative symmetry of the facial features. Those faces with the most perfect symmetry were generally regarded as the most beautiful. I believe that this is a reflection of the fact that the most beautiful saints are those with the most perfect symmetry of spirit and truth.

The human brain is also symmetrical, and its two sides reflect spirit and truth in a most remarkable way. The left side of the brain is used for

reasoning, logic, science, and linguistics. This would correspond to the Word, the "truth" element of worship. The right side of the brain is used for music, the arts, imagination, and intuition. This would correspond to the "spirit" element of worship.

Even though each side of the brain has its specific function, the two sides (sometimes called "the two brains") work together in harmony as one. The left brain (the linguistic side) controls the right side of the body, and the right brain (the intuitive side) controls the left side of the body. This is a picture of how the Scriptures (the linguistic) should oversee and test any supernatural manifestations, and how the Holy Spirit (the intuitive) should impart revelation so we can rightly understand the Scriptures.

The two sides of the brain are able to work together because they are connected by a mass of nerve tissue called the corpus callosum. This is a wonderful picture of how spirit and truth -- the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God -- work together to produce harmony and balance in our lives and in our worship.

If the corpus callosum is cut and the two brain halves severed from one another, a person's mind becomes imbalanced and he is unable to function normally. In the same way, if we do not let spirit and truth work together to bring harmony to our lives, we will be spiritually imbalanced.

Another interesting fact: If the corpus callosum is cut, the two sides of the brain can no longer help one another. If a person with a severed corpus callosum covers his left eye (which is controlled by the right brain) and is introduced to a new acquaintance, then covers his right eye (which is controlled by the left brain) and looks at the new acquaintance, he will not recognize her. This is a marvelous illustration of some believers who seem to have cut their spiritual corpus callosum. If they don't believe in the

moving of the Holy Spirit, all the power of the Spirit cannot convince them that they are wrong. They can personally witness a genuine miracle wrought by the power of the Holy Spirit, and their only response is to say, "But the Bible teaches that the day of miracles passed away with the Apostles. Miracles aren't for today." On the other extreme are some charismatic Christians. If they think the Spirit has revealed something to them, but their "revelation" contradicts the Scriptures, they say, "I don't care what the Bible says! I know what the Holy Spirit showed me!"

Let's make sure we don't let the Devil cut our spiritual corpus callosum and make us lose our balance. Let's allow the Spirit to flow freely and let's allow the truth of the Scriptures to be the touchstone that determines the validity of our spiritual experience. □

"THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH"

Dr. Daniel Botkin

"The just shall live by his faith" (Hab. 2:4). "The just shall live by faith" (Gal. 3:11). "The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:17). "Now the just shall live by faith" (Heb. 10:38).

IF GOD says something in the Scriptures just one time, we should heed it. If He says the same thing two or three times, it's probably pretty important. If He says it four times, that might be an indication that it's something He really wants us to understand.

This statement, "the just shall live by faith," first appears in Habakkuk and consists of just three Hebrew words: *tsadik be'eminato yich'yeh*. The first word, *tsadik*, means a righteous person. If a rabbi is especially pious and well-respected, the Jewish community will refer to such a man as a *tsadik*. The second word, *be'eminato*, is the word for faith (*emunah*) plus the prefix *be-* ("in" or "by") and the suffix *-to* (which makes it possessive, "his"). The third word, *yich'yeh*, means "he will live." So, literally translated, the statement says "a righteous person will live by his faith."

What does it mean? Ask most Christians what "the just shall live by faith" means, and they will probably say it means that we are justified by faith, and that our salvation is the result of our faith and not of works. The reason most Christians of the Protestant tradition understand the verse this way is because of its impact on Martin Luther and what he wrote about it. Luther was a devout Roman Catholic monk who slavishly followed all the vain rituals of the Catholic Church. One day as Luther was reading Romans, he read "the just shall live by faith." It was through these words that Luther received a revelation that a sinner is saved by faith, and not by works. Luther understood that an unjust man becomes justified by faith, not by acts of penance prescribed by a priest. Of his revelation, Luther wrote: "Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors

into Paradise."

Because of the well-known story of Luther's experience with Romans 1:17, many Christians understand "the just shall live by faith" to mean that an unjust person becomes justified by his faith, and not by his works. Even if Christians do not know the story of Luther's experience, their pastors and preachers know it, and their preaching and teaching on faith and justification and works reflects this idea. But is this all that the verse meant to Luther and the other Reformers, that an unjust person is justified by faith? I am not familiar enough with all the writings of the Reformers to presume to answer for them. However, the important thing is not how Luther and the Reformers understood it. The important thing is how God means for it to be understood. Does it mean that an unjust person is justified by faith, or does it mean something else?

Let us look at the statement again: *tsadik be'eminato yich'yeh*, "a righteous [or, 'just'] person will live by his faith." What does this statement say about the unjust or the unrighteous? Nothing. It does not even mention the unrighteous. It simply says that a *tsadik* will live by his faith. It is a statement about a person who is *already* a *tsadik*. It is not a set of instructions telling sinners how to be saved.

Let me be quick to affirm that an unjust person is indeed justified by his faith. Paul inferred that truth when he quoted Habakkuk in Galatians 3:11. However, that truth is incidental to the statement in every other place where it appears. In Habakkuk, in Romans, and in Hebrews, the context is not about "how to get justified." It is about how a *tsadik* is to live his life *after* he has been justified. This will become evident as we look at each place where Habakkuk's statement appears in the New Testament.

GALATIANS 3:11

The Galatians were non-Jewish believers who had been justified by their faith in Israel's Messiah. From the content of Paul's letter we can see that the Galatians were being told by false teachers that they needed to be

"circumcised" (a word which meant not just the physical removal of the foreskin, but a full-fledged, formal conversion to Judaism) *in order to be justified*.

The fact that the means of justification was the main issue in Paul's letter to the Galatians is apparent by the frequent number of times we see words such as *just*, *justify*, *justified*, *justification*, *righteous*, *righteousness*, etc. (Take a cheap spare Bible and circle these words every time they appear in the text, and you will see what I mean.) The issue was not about whether or not the Torah should be obeyed by disciples of the Messiah. Yeshua had already made that clear in Matthew 5:17-19. The issue was about whether justification is obtained by faith or by a formal religious circumcision ceremony that turned Gentiles into Jews. To say that Gentiles need to become Jews in order to be justified is to say that God is the God of the Jews only, and not of the Gentiles. Paul corrected this misconception in Romans 3:29f when he wrote, "Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith."

Paul's letter to the Galatians is often misused and misquoted to falsely accuse Sabbath-keeping Christians of legalism. We may get so weary of hearing the tired old charges of legalism that we forget that there is such a thing as genuine legalism. To say that Gentiles need to formally convert to Judaism in order to be justified is one form of legalism. To say that a justified man can become "more justified" or "less justified" on the basis of how strictly he keeps the rules of the Torah is another form of legalism. A man is either fully justified or he isn't justified at all. He cannot be "more justified" or "less justified." Being justified is like being pregnant. A man is either pregnant or he isn't. (And in the case of a man, I guarantee he isn't!)

The Galatians were falling into both of these forms of legalism, which is why Paul used Habakkuk's statement to show them that "no man is justified by the law in the sight of God" (Gal. 3:11). A *tsadik* lives by his faith, Paul

said, not by a set of rules. He does obey God's Law (See Rom. 3:31), but he knows that it is not his upholding of the Torah that justifies him. Rather, it is his faith-generated justification which causes him to obey the Torah. The same faith which justifies the *tsadik* also produces an inward desire to obey the Torah, because the Torah is written on the fleshly tablets of his heart. This is how a *tsadik* lives by his faith.

ROMANS 1:17

When Paul quotes Habakkuk's statement in Romans, the context is not about how an unjust person becomes justified. Paul is not dealing with the *means* of justification here, but rather with the *results* of justification, i.e., that the righteousness of God is revealed to both Jew and non-Jew, even as the wrath of God is revealed against the unrighteous. The verses immediately before and after Romans 1:17 make this clear. Therefore Paul's reason for quoting "the just shall live by faith" in Romans is to tell us that when we live by our faith, we reveal the righteousness of God.

This should make us ask ourselves: What do people see when they look at how we live? What impression do we give to people who see our way of life? Do they see the righteousness of God? When a *tsadik* lives by his faith, it should cause both Jew and non-Jew to see a manifestation of the righteousness of God, and make them want to possess this righteousness.

There are some people who profess to be among the just who live by faith, but their lives do not manifest the righteousness of God. When unbelievers look at some of these people, they do not see a righteous person manifesting the righteousness of God. On the contrary, they see what appears to be an unrighteous person who makes excuses for his sins by saying, "We're all sinners; we all have to sin once in a while." Or, on the other end of the spectrum, they see a smug, self-righteous hypocrite who strains at gnats and neglects the weightier matters of the Torah, viz., justice, mercy, and faith.

Years ago I knew a young Christian who was very strict and austere and

never cut anyone any slack. He gave people the impression that being a disciple of Jesus meant submitting oneself to a cruel, harsh taskmaster who demanded that his servants be involved in either prayer, fasting, study, worship, or evangelism every waking minute of the day. This Christian had been trying for quite some time to convince his brother to get saved. Finally his brother said to him, "Why should I want to get 'saved' and be like you? Look at yourself. You're never happy, you never smile, you can't even laugh. You're miserable. Why should I want to be like you?"

If we are justified by faith, what are we living by? By our faith or by a set of rules? The rules of the Torah are meant to be obeyed, but what are we tapping into as the source of our spiritual life? A *tsadik* will live by his faith, not by the law. He will obey the Torah, but his obedience will be the spontaneous outcome of the faith by which he lives.

HEBREWS 10:38

"Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (Heb. 10:38f).

In Hebrews, Habakkuk's statement is put in the context of a warning to not draw back. From what are we to not draw back? We are not to draw back from living by faith. This is a warning, then, to make it a life-long habit to live by our faith. Faith is not just a one-time event that we experience when we initially put our faith in the sacrifice of the Son of God and trust God to forgive our sins. That is where faith begins, but living by faith does not end there.

Some Christians think of their faith only in the past tense. "I put my faith in Jesus twenty years ago." That's wonderful, but are you still living by your faith? If your faith is alive, it will not just be an event that transpired twenty years ago. It will be the means by which you daily live and thereby show the righteousness of God.

Some people draw back from living by faith when they give up and quit trying to resist sin. They quit living by

faith and yield to temptation. Others draw back from living by faith when they start trusting in their own good works. They start thinking that their obedience to the Torah has something to do with the reason God accepts them. Or they think that their Torah obedience is the means by which they maintain their status as a child of God. In short, they quit living by faith and try to live by the law. A *tsadik* will obey the Torah, but the Torah is not a substitute for faith. Faith, not Torah, is the source of spiritual life for a *tsadik*.

Immediately after these verses at the end of Hebrews chapter 10, the writer goes on to write the famous "faith chapter" of Hebrews 11. We are told that the *tsadikim* of Hebrews 11 accomplished their exploits by their faith. "By faith Abel... By faith Enoch... By faith Noah..." and on and on it continues. Finally, the writer sums it all up by referring to all these *tsadikim* as "so great a cloud of witnesses." He then likens them to an audience watching athletes running in a race, and urges us to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

How do we do this? By our faith. Faith must have an object, and the object of our faith is stated in the next verse: "Looking unto Yeshua, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:1f).

A *tsadik* lives by his faith. He obeys the Torah, but he does not draw his spiritual life and strength from the written code. He draws his spiritual life and strength from his faith in the Living Torah, Yeshua of Nazareth. Just as the children of Israel fixed their gaze on the brass serpent in the wilderness and received their healing, so the *tsadik* fixes his gaze on the crucified Messiah and receives spiritual life.

When a *tsadik* lives by his faith, he manifests the righteousness of God. That is the hope of the world, and we who are disciples of the Messiah are the ones called to manifest the righteousness of God to both Jew and non-Jew. □

GIDEON

Dr. Daniel Botkin

The sixth in a series of articles on the Book of Judges

After Deborah, Barak, and Yael delivered Israel from the Canaanites, "the land had rest forty years" (Jdg. 5:31). Then the cycle of Apathy, Apostasy, Anomianism, and Anarchy began again. Once more the children of Israel did evil in the sight of Yahweh. This time He delivered them into the hand of the Midianites. For seven consecutive years the Midianites invaded the land of Israel and plundered all the produce and livestock, leaving the Israelites starved and impoverished. The Bible says the Midianites came "as grasshoppers for multitude" and "left no sustenance for Israel." The Israelites were forced to flee to the mountains, where they hid in fear in dens and caves.

The Church of today has likewise been invaded by enemies that are as grasshoppers for multitude and leave no sustenance for Israel. Corruption, compromise, sin and worldliness have spread like a plague throughout the Body of Messiah, robbing God's people of spiritual sustenance and nourishment. God's people are in need of the milk and meat of the Word, but what they get from the pulpits is spiritual junk food. The sugar-coated teachings they hear provide some immediate, short-term gratification, but it is not spiritually healthy. And like junk food, it can be addictive. When the soul is fed nothing but spiritual junk food, it weakens the faith and courage of God's people. In their weakened state, they retreat from the enemy like the Israelites who fled to the mountains to hide out. Like the Israelites of old, they are concerned with being survivors instead of victors.

There was one man in the days of the Midianite invasion who was not satisfied with seeing the Israelites as mere survivors. This man's name was Gideon. One day he was threshing

some wheat to hide from the Midianites. The angel of Yahweh appeared and said to him, "Yahweh is with thee, thou mighty man of valour!"

Not knowing it was the angel of Yahweh, Gideon responded by saying, "Oh my lord, if Yahweh be with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where be all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, 'Did not Yahweh bring us up from Egypt?' But now Yahweh hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."

Gideon knew that the present situation was not meant to be the norm for God's people. He knew that the norm should be victory, prosperity, and blessings, not defeat, poverty, and curses.

"Go in this thy might," Yahweh said to him, "and thou shalt save Israel from the Midianites: have not I sent thee?"

Yahweh will not send us to be deliverers until we understand that God wants His people to do more than merely survive. God wants His people to be victorious over sin. He wants us to be fruitful trees whose branches are heavy with the fruit of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (Gal. 5:22f). The words "Go in this thy might" were spoken to a man who knew that defeat was not supposed to be the norm.

It is also significant that Gideon was threshing wheat when he received his call. He was doing what little he could do to help alleviate the problem and relieve some of the suffering of God's people. The Israelites who were doing nothing probably thought: *"The enemy is too strong; it's no use even trying to grow any crops at all."* Gideon knew that even a small harvest is better than no harvest at all. The words "Go in this thy might" are spoken only to people who, like Gideon, are using whatever small measure of strength the Lord

has already given them. If we focus on our inabilities and weaknesses and human limitations and sit around waiting for God to magically transform us into spiritual supermen before we do anything, we will never hear the words "Go in this thy might."

Before Gideon could lead God's people to victory, there was some preparatory work that had to be done in Gideon's own backyard. Gideon was told by Yahweh to take his father's bullock and throw down the altar of Baal that belonged to his father, then cut down the grove and use the wood to burn the bullock on an altar to Yahweh.

Like Gideon, we need to clean up our own backyard before we can lead others to victory. It was a difficult thing for Gideon to do, because the altar of Baal belonged to his own father. Sometimes our obedience to the will of God offends our own families. Sometimes we have to get rid of idolatrous items or occultic objects that were gifts from well-meaning family members who were unaware of the spiritual implications of these things. In order to please his heavenly Father, Gideon had to risk offending his earthly father, and we sometimes have to do the same.

Gideon is probably best known for putting out the fleece and asking God for confirmation of his calling. The first time Gideon asked that the fleece be wet and the ground around it dry; the second time he asked that the ground be wet and the fleece dry. God graciously accommodated Gideon's request, and this gave him more confidence and courage. The story of Gideon's fleece often raises questions about the legitimacy of "putting out a fleece" (figuratively speaking) and asking God to perform some unusual sign to let us know His will for us. Is this a legitimate way for us to discern God's will?

There are several things that need to be considered. First of all, this was

not the normal way of discerning or confirming God's will. We should not look at a one-time incident which was an obvious exception to the norm, and use that rare event as an example to follow.

The second point that needs to be considered is that the fleece was not put out to *determine* or *discover* God's will. It was put out only to *confirm* the calling which Gideon had already received. If we put out fleeces at all, we should do it only to confirm that which we already believe to be (or at least suspect to be) God's will.

A third important point is that the instructions given to Gideon did not come from the written Scriptures, they came from an angel. If we receive a message from an angel, we need to "believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God" (1 John 4:1). Paul said that "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14). Paul also alluded to the possibility of a false gospel being preached by "an angel from heaven" (Gal. 1:8). So we should not criticize Gideon's uncertainty too much. Perhaps he was wise to ask for further confirmation of the message he had heard from the angel.

If we receive instructions from an angel or from the Spirit by Divine revelation, we should ask God to confirm it. However, the instructions we receive straight from the written Word do not need to be confirmed. We do not need to put out a fleece to find out if we should marry an unbeliever, or find a new spouse because we are bored with our present spouse. The plain instructions in the written Word do not need to be confirmed by putting out a fleece.

Gideon is also famous for having his army whittled down from 32,000 to 300. This was by God's command, so that the Israelites would know that it was Yahweh who delivered them, and not their own power. Sometimes God whittles away our numbers or our finances or our natural resources and abilities so that we cannot get proud and take any glory to ourselves. When this whittling away happens, we might have to face problems that are

so insurmountable that they can only be solved by Divine intervention. However, we still have to do our part before God fully intervenes. Gideon and his army still had to go out against the enemy.

At times like this, God will sometimes give us further confirmation to let us know that we are still walking in His plan, even though the situation looks hopeless, humanly speaking. The Lord did this for Gideon. He told Gideon that he would defeat the Midianites with the 300 men. "But if thou fear to go down," God said, "go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host, and thou shalt hear what they say, and afterward shall thy hands be strengthened to go down unto the host" (Jdg. 7:10f).

Gideon and his servant secretly infiltrated the enemy's camp and overheard a man telling his friend about a dream he'd had about a barley loaf rolling into camp and overturning a tent. The dreamer's friend immediately understood the prophetic significance of the dream. "This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel" he said, "for into his hand hath God delivered Midian and all the host." When Gideon heard this, it gave him more assurance. This was even better than the fleece, because this confirmation was completely God's doing, and not something Gideon had initiated.

Gideon assembled his army of 300 and passed out the weapons: a shofar, an empty clay pitcher, and a burning torch for each man. Where were the swords and shields and spears? "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal" (2 Cor. 10:4). If we want to get victory God's way, we have to understand that God often uses the foolish, weak, base things of the world to deliver His people and bring glory to Himself (1 Cor. 1:26ff).

That night Gideon's army divided into three groups and surrounded the enemy camp. They kept their burning torches concealed inside the jars of clay. At a given signal, they all broke their earthen vessels to reveal the fire, blew on the shofars, and shouted in unison, "The sword of Yahweh and of

Gideon!"

Upon seeing their camp encircled by 300 burning torches and hearing 300 shofars blowing, the Midianites were thrown into a state of hysteria and confusion. Thinking they were surrounded by a vast army, some fled and some unwittingly turned their swords against their own countrymen in the darkness of night. The Israelites pursued the fleeing Midianites and defeated them.

God used empty jars of clay with fire inside them to defeat the enemy. He still uses empty jars of clay with fire inside them to defeat the enemy. We are the jars of clay. The fire is the burning zeal of the Holy Spirit that the Lord ignites in our hearts. "For God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Yeshua the Messiah. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels [NIV, 'jars of clay']..." (2 Cor. 4:6f).

Fire won't burn in a jar filled with rubbish, though. If we want the fire to burn in our hearts, we have to empty ourselves of the rubbish in our lives. We have to get rid of pride, selfishness, carnality, worldliness, and any other rubbish that quenches the fire of the Holy Spirit. We empty ourselves of the rubbish by pouring it out of our mouths in prayer and confession and genuine repentance. Just as Gideon's jars of clay had to be broken, so we have to be of a broken and contrite spirit and humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. If the jars are not broken, the light of the fire will not shine forth. If we want the fire to shine its brightest, we have to get all the rubbish out of our lives. The more rubbish that remains in the jar, the smaller the flame will be. The more rubbish we remove, the brighter the flame will be.

With broken vessels and burning fire, Gideon's band of 300 delivered Israel. What we need today is small bands of on-fire disciples who have poured themselves out in prayer and have been broken before the Lord. With God's help, may we be among such people. □

A Brief Treatise Concerning THE WOMAN'S ROLE From a Biblical Perspective

Dr. Daniel Botkin

Anyone who has read the Bible knows that the great majority of the main characters in the Bible stories are men. This is not because men are superior to women. It is because men held the positions of leadership. This has been the man's God-appointed role since the time of Adam and Eve. Women had their role in Biblical times (as they still do), but their role was not (and is not) the same as the man's role.

There are a few -- very few -- examples of women who held positions of authority in the Bible. However, these were either wicked women who usurped the authority of men (women such as Jezebel and Athaliah) or they were righteous women but exceptions to the general rule (women such as Deborah). Moreover, it was considered a reproach when women were in positions of leadership, because it meant that the men were not taking up the responsibility of leadership as they should. "As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them," Isaiah wrote. "O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err" (Isa. 3:12).

From a Biblical perspective, women are restricted from roles that would place them in positions of authority over men in the congregation of the Lord. However, this one restriction did not and does not prevent women from being full participants in the work of the Lord in non-leadership roles. Women were involved in the providing and the preparation of materials for the building of the Tabernacle in the wilderness (Ex. 35:22, 25f; 38:8). A woman could take a Nazarite vow (Num. 6:2). Women were expected to assemble with the men to hear the reading of the Torah (Deut. 31:12; Neh. 8:2f). Women helped rebuild the walls of Jerusalem after the Babylonian Captivity (Neh. 3:12).

In addition to being involved in the work of the Lord, women were some-

times God's chosen vessels to bring about the purposes of God in history. This is apparent from the actions of women such as Sarah, the Egyptian midwives, Jochebed the mother of Moses, Pharaoh's daughter, Rahab the harlot, Deborah, Yael, Ruth, Hannah, Esther, and the Prophetess Huldah.

The "virtuous woman" of Proverbs 31 is described as a woman who is very busy doing good works. It is important to note that practically all of these good works are directly or indirectly related to her role as a wife and mother in the home. This is why the Jewish Encyclopedia states: "The home is the real temple of woman, the education of her children is her divine service, and her family is her congregation." This statement is very similar to Paul's description of the role of women: "...to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Tit. 2:4f). Modern-day feminists hate these verses, especially the parts about being "keepers at home" and "obedient to their own husbands." To the chagrin of feminists, many Bible-believing Jewish and Christian women have found satisfaction and fulfillment by occupying the sphere of activity that Scripture assigns them in the home.

Women are not always totally confined to their homes, however. Luke mentions several women disciples who traveled with Yeshua and the Twelve - Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and "many others" (Lk. 8:1-3). The Twelve Apostles were all men, because they were being trained to lead the Messianic Community. There was no such thing as a "woman Apostle."¹ Nevertheless, many women were disciples of Yeshua, which was a radical practice at the time. Even the Twelve "marveled that He talked with the woman" when they spotted Him having a theological discussion with a woman at the well of Samaria.

To see how radical Yeshua's view of the worth of women was, one has

only to contrast His respectful treatment of women with some of the views expressed in the Talmud:

"Four qualities are ascribed to women: they are gluttonous, eavesdroppers, lazy, and jealous." (Gen. R. xviii.2)

"Women are addicted to witchcraft." (Yoma 83b)

"The more women, the more witchcraft." (Aboth II.8)

"The majority of women are inclined to witchcraft." (Sanh. 67a)

"A woman's thought is only for her beauty." (Keth. 65a)

"Women are light-minded." (Shab. 33b)

"Ten measures of speech descended to the world; women took nine and men one." (Kid. 49b)

Unlike the Jews who thanked God three times a day that "He has not made me a woman" (Men. 43b), Yeshua recognized women as people of equal worth. He said that "whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt. 12:50).

Yeshua's teaching on divorce corrected the error of the school of Hillel, which taught that a wife could be divorced "for any cause," "even if she spoil his cooking." The historian Josephus affirms that many Jewish men took advantage of this interpretation (Antiq. iv.viii.23). Yeshua's teaching on divorce made it clear that a woman was not just a hunk of meat to be put away for any cause.

Yeshua also demonstrated by His interaction with various women that it is worthwhile to teach deep spiritual truths to women. This can be seen in His discussions with the Samaritan woman at the well, the Syrophoenician woman with the sick daughter, the woman who washed His feet with her tears, and the sisters Mary and Martha. This was quite a contrast to

the view held by Jews such as Rabbi Eliezer, who said he "would rather burn the Scriptures than teach their truth to a woman."²

In the Book of Acts women are described as being active participants in the fledgling Messianic Community from the very beginning. "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Yeshua, and with His brethren" (Acts 1:14). As one writer points out, "These women were there not to cook for the men, but to pray with them and to seek divine guidance over who should be Judas' successor."³ The women prayed with the men, but it was the male leadership that actually made the final decision, as the following verses indicate.

The prophecy of Joel which Peter quoted on the Day of Pentecost shows that women are expected to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit and be recipients of supernatural revelation through things like dreams, visions, and prophesying: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. And on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit; and they shall prophesy" (Acts 2:17f).

Throughout the remainder of the Book of Acts and in various places in the Epistles, the participation of women can be seen in examples such as Tabitha, Lydia, "the chief women" of Thessalonica, Damaris, Priscilla, Phebe, "Mary who bestowed much labour on us," Tryphena and Tryphosa (twins perhaps?) "who labour in the Lord," Persis "who laboured much in the Lord," those unnamed "women which laboured with [Paul] in the gospel," and Lois and Eunice, the grandmother and mother of Timothy. (Acts 9:36; 16:14f; 17:4, 34; 18:2; Rom. 16:1f, 6, 12; Ph'p. 4:3; 2 Tim. 1:5)

That women are expected to publicly pray and prophesy in the congregation is beyond dispute, or

The following is excerpted from "Something that needs to be said," an editorial by Albert James Dager in Media Spotlight. Used with writer's permission.

Women are increasingly being given leadership roles in the churches, even to the point of assuming the role of pastor and teacher.

I haven't taken a formal poll, but judging by the response many Christian women give to the idea that women are not to teach or take authority over men (1 Timothy 2:12), it seems that Deborah is their example. Deborah would be appalled to learn how she has become the standard-bearer for feminism in the churches. She was a faithful prophetess who gained the credit for Israel's victory over Sisera because Barak would not go to battle without her presence. This has been to the eternal shame of Barak, but that was not God's design. Barak would have honored God had he gone to battle without Deborah's presence. In short, Deborah is the exception that proves the rule: men are God's choice for all authority in the Body of Christ.

Just as important, men are God's choice for all authority within the marriage.

Deborah may be the favorite woman of the Bible for many Christian women, but outside of the historical rendering in the Book of Judges she is never again mentioned. She is never given as an example for other women to follow.

Yet Deborah is the role model for many Christian women.

Paul would not have given instructions for women to cover their heads when they pray and prophesy (1 Cor. 11:1-16). Paul wrote that "ye may all prophesy one by one" (1 Cor. 14:31), and there is no reason to think that the word "all" does not include women. If it meant "men only," then there was no reason for Paul to write instructions for women to cover their heads when they prophesy.

The Scriptures teach that the woman's primary role is in the home. The above Scriptures show that the woman can also have an active and very vital role in the community life of the congregation, so long as she does not neglect her duties in the home,

But who did God present as the role model for Christian women - particularly wives? Only one woman: Abraham's wife Sarah:

For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. (1 Peter 3:5-6)

When this Scripture is read in the churches, what is the general reaction? From my observations it has been met with snickers and even laughter, not only by the congregation, but by the pastor as well. What? Call your husband "lord"? Many women respond, "Jesus is my Lord."

But is He?

If a woman's husband is not her lord, then Jesus is not her Lord. Those who laugh at this Scripture are laughing at God Himself, for He placed it in His Word for our instruction.

So while women envision themselves doing exploits for God a la Deborah, they laugh at the idea that they should follow Sarah's example - the only example God has given for women as a model wife.

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and as long as her husband approves. Her role as a wife and mother must always take priority over any ministry outside the home and the immediate family.

If a woman is fulfilling her responsibilities as a wife, a mother, and a keeper of the home, and still has extra time to devote to ministry outside the home, there are many things she can do. However, there is one thing the woman cannot do if she wishes to abide by the Scriptural guidelines. The one thing the Bible says a woman is not allowed to do is to occupy a position which makes her a leader or teacher over men in the Body of Messiah (1 Cor. 11:3; 1 Cor. 14:34f; 1

Tim. 2:11ff).

This does not necessarily exclude all forms of public speaking. Women can publicly pray, prophesy, and testify in the Body. They can exercise the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit which are listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10: a word of wisdom, a word of knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues. Several of these gifts obviously require utterance. Therefore, when the Bible says that women cannot teach or lead men, this does not mean that women can never speak to the Body in any capacity whatsoever. Nor does it mean that a man can never learn anything by listening to a woman. It just means that any woman that a man learns from will not be in a position of authority over him, nor will she be functioning in the office of a teacher like the teachers who are mentioned in Ephesians 4:11ff. If a man learns some spiritual truth from listening to a woman, it will either be in casual conversation, or it will be the result of hearing her prayer or her word of prophecy or the word of her testimony. It will fall in the realm of "edification, exhortation, and comfort" (1 Cor. 14:3) rather than in the realm of teaching. If a man learns from a woman, it will not be the result of listening to her give a theological discourse in the role of a teacher from the pulpit. That is a job

which God has assigned to men and forbidden to women.

This does not mean that women are spiritually or intellectually inferior to men. Some women are spiritually and intellectually superior to the average man! It simply means that God, by His Sovereign will and His wisdom, has decreed different roles for men and women in the Body.

Satan's goal is to blur the God-ordained male-female distinctions in every area of life where those distinctions exist. Satan uses a variety of tactics to accomplish this. He uses homosexual propaganda, feminist propaganda, and the unisex look in clothing and hair styles. The Tempter uses the same approach on women today that he used on the first woman in Eden. He tries to seduce the woman away from her God-assigned role. He tries to get her to function independently from her husband, to make important spiritual decisions without first consulting the man whom God has assigned to be her authority. Eve fell for the lie, and many gullible women in the Body of Messiah fall for the same lie. The woman who rejects the lie and accepts her God-given place will find satisfaction and fulfillment, because God's assigned place is the only place where a person, male or female, will find true and lasting satisfaction and fulfillment. □

NOTES

¹Some feminists claim that Paul sent greetings to a "woman apostle" named Junia in Romans 16:7. This claim is severely flawed for three reasons. 1. The name Junia (*lounian* in the Greek text) could be a name for either a male or female (much like our names *Chris*, *Kim*, *Sandy*, etc.) There is no way from the Greek text to prove whether Junia was a man or a woman. 2. Even if we assume that Junia was a woman, Paul's statement does not necessarily state that Junia was an apostle. Paul wrote only that Junia and Andronicus were "of note among the apostles." This may mean only that Junia and Andronicus were noted by the Apostles (the Greek preposition can mean "by" as well as "among"), but that they themselves were not apostles. Various English translations render the phrase "well-known among the apostles," "respected among the apostles," etc. This could just mean that among the Apostles, it was a well-known fact that Junia and Andronicus were two disciples worthy of respect. 3. Even if we assume that Junia was a woman and that she was an apostle (two unprovable assumptions), this still does not prove that Junia filled any leadership role, because the word *apostle* in its broadest sense simply means "a sent one," i.e., a messenger or a delegate, with or without authority to lead. To believe that Junia exercised Apostolic authority as a leader requires a third assumption, the assumption that Junia was more than "a sent one" in some general, non-leadership sense. Therefore the feminist view is based on three unprovable assumptions. Furthermore, the feminist interpretation contradicts what the rest of the Bible teaches, including Paul's instructions about the male and female roles in the Body.

²Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Women in the Church* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1987), 49.

³Ibid., 53.



So after I pulled my husband's hair and scratched him, he got real mad at me! I don't know why, though -- he's always saying that he wishes he had "a Proverbs 31 vicious woman!"

To Incorporate Or Not To Incorporate? A Matter of Stewardship

•Daniel Botkin•

My phone rang one evening last month. It was an old friend, a church-hating Christian I knew from about 20 years ago, calling to chat. His niece had recently gotten saved, and she had been urging him to start going to church again.

"But I hate the churches," he said to me. "I hate them all. I even hate your church, and I've never even been there."

I said nothing.

"Hello? Are you still there?"

"Yeah, I'm still here," I said.

We went on to talk about what the word *church* means. To some people it means a building; to some it means the people who make up the congregation; to others it means the church as an organization. It was this last definition my friend had in mind when he expressed his hatred for all churches.

"I don't believe in organization," he said.

I pointed out that a real congregation, even a small one, cannot function without some amount of organization. If meetings are going to be held on a regular basis, then meeting times must be scheduled and a meeting place must be arranged, even if it's in a home.

My friend agreed. His main objection to organization seemed to be the making of a church into a legal non-profit corporation. "God doesn't need to take any money from Caesar," my friend stated.

"I agree," I said. "And our congregation doesn't take any money from the government."

"But you function as a non-profit corporation, don't you? If you do, then you're taking money from Caesar," he insisted.

I have met other church-hating Christians who hold this same view of what non-profit status means for a church. They think if a church reduces its expenses by making use of any legal

exemptions that the government offers, then that means the church is "taking money from the government" and not rendering unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's.

What these church-hating Christians do not realize is that in America, Caesar has said that money collected for the work of the Lord is God's money, and Caesar does not wish to tax God. This means that if a church, as a legal non-profit corporation, buys retail merchandise for the work of the ministry (office supplies and equipment, building materials, furniture, etc.), then the church does not have to pay sales tax on that merchandise. Or if a church purchases a piece of property for the ministry, the church does not have to pay property taxes on it. Caesar does not wish to tax God's property.

In America Caesar acknowledges that money collected for the work of the Lord is God's money. If a church which has legal non-profit status decides to use God's money to pay Caesar taxes which Caesar does not want, then we are rendering unto Caesar the things that are God's. Why should we use God's money to pay Caesar taxes that Caesar does not even want? That's not very good stewardship.

This is not to imply that every congregation must become a legal non-profit corporation. For one thing, the law does not require it. People are free to meet together regularly for worship without the state's knowledge if they want to. If they choose to do it this way, then they will need to pay sales tax on merchandise they buy for the ministry. And if they acquire property for a meeting place or Christian school or campground, they will have to pay the property taxes every year.

If a congregation is very small and has minimal expenses and no congregational property, incorporating may not be worthwhile. If it's only going to save a small amount of sales tax on retail merchandise, it may not be worth the time and money that needs to be spent to acquire legal non-profit status. A congregation should look at both its present expenses and its plans for the future, and weigh the expenses and benefits of incorporating before deciding whether or not to incorporate.

There is another common miscon-

ception among some church-hating Christians. They think that if a church becomes a legal non-profit corporation, the people thereby surrender their religious freedoms. They think the state will restrict what the church can do and teach.

To my knowledge, the only restrictions are those which regulate the legal tax exemptions. For example, if a church wishes to purchase merchandise without paying the sales tax, then the merchandise must truly be for ministry use, and not for personal use. The same goes for real estate which is exempt from property taxes. The property must truly be used for the ministry, and not just for personal use. These restrictions are nothing more than Caesar's reasonable request that the church be honest and use the tax exemptions only for things that are truly purchased for the ministry.

The only other restriction I know of is the law that says funds belonging to a non-profit corporation cannot be used to promote a specific political candidate or political party. This does not mean that a pastor cannot use his own personal funds and time to publicly promote the candidate or political party that he favors. He just can't use the church's money to do it and he can't do it from the church's pulpit. He can, however, use the church pulpit to address issues of morality and justice which may be relevant to an election (issues such as abortion, euthanasia, sex education in schools, etc.) as long as he does not specifically endorse a particular candidate or political party. This too is a reasonable request from Caesar.

We should be thankful for the religious freedoms we have in America, and take advantage of them while we still can. The future of our freedoms is uncertain. If Caesar ever decides to restrict and limit what doctrines can be taught by a non-profit corporation, there is a very simple solution to the problem. Simply dissolve the corporation and forfeit the benefits. Then continue to meet and worship and work for the Lord as before, but without the former benefits. Until Caesar makes that necessary, I see no reason to not make use of the benefits of non-profit status if it is worthwhile for a congregation to do so. □

BEHOLDING THE BRASS SERPENT

Daniel Botkin

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:14f)

Yeshua spoke these words to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The incident to which Yeshua referred is recorded in Numbers 21. The Israelites were discouraged because of the difficulties God was bringing them through, so "the people spake against God and against Moses." They complained about their circumstances, and this brought the judgment of God on them. "And Yahweh sent fiery serpents among the people; and much people of Israel died."

The people repented and confessed their sin and begged Moses to pray for them. The Lord told Moses, "Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it shall live."

Moses made a brass serpent and did as God had told him, and "it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived."

Just as the lifting up of the brass serpent brought salvation from physical death to all who looked at it, so the lifting up of the Son of man brings salvation from eternal death to all who believe in Him. Notice the connection here between looking and believing: "...when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived"; "...that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish." This tells us that believing with the heart is similar to looking with the eyes. In other words, looking is to the physical eyes what believing is to the heart. The Israelites looked at the brass serpent with their outer, physical eyes and were physically healed. We look at the crucified Messiah with our inner, spiritual eyes, and are spiritually healed. This healing which begins internally in our spirit can then work its

way out and bring healing to our minds and emotions and our physical bodies.

The connection between believing and looking is also expressed in Hebrews 12:2. "Looking unto Yeshua the author and finisher of our faith..." Looking unto Yeshua is believing in Yeshua; believing in Yeshua is looking unto Yeshua. If we truly believe in Him, we will look to Him. He will be the object of our attention, the focus of our lives. We run into problems when we make something else the object of our attention and the focus of our lives. The Israelites in the wilderness lost their focus. They were discouraged because of the way, and they began to focus on the disappointments and difficulties they were experiencing. When they did this, they began to murmur against God and against Moses.

We all experience disappointment when our expectations are not met. We go through difficulties and get discouraged as we walk on the path that leads to the Promised Land. But if we do like the Israelites did, and complain against the Lord and against the leaders He has placed over us in the Body, this should tell us that we have lost our focus. We are no longer looking unto Yeshua; we are focusing our attention on our own desires, on our own disappointments, on the sins and shortcomings of others, or on our own sins and shortcomings.

Looking at our sins and shortcomings is not the solution for discouragement and disappointment. Focusing on our failures only makes the situation worse. Would it have helped the Israelites to sit around contemplating how many snake bites they had and discussing how serious their wounds were? Of course not! And it does not help us to sit around thinking about how many sins we have committed and how serious they are. The solution is to look to the One that God sent to take care of the sin problem.

We do not ignore sin and pretend it

does not exist. We acknowledge the existence of sin, but then we repent and confess it and forsake it. Then we continue on our journey, looking unto Yeshua. When we focus on the solution instead of the problem, the Lord takes care of the problem in His own way and in His own time.

I once read about a young man who was deeply depressed and went to talk to a pastor. The young man had so many problems that he did not know how he was going to make it. His problems were serious and seemed unsolvable. After telling the pastor about all of his problems, the young man asked what he should do.

"Find an empty chapel somewhere and spend two full hours on your knees," the pastor said.

"That's it?" the young man responded. "Do you think that's going to make all my problems go away?"

"No," the pastor answered, "but it will help you to see your problems in their proper perspective."

The young man took the pastor's advice. When he got up off his knees, he was greatly encouraged. He was filled with new hope and peace. He had enough faith to face his problems and to trust God to solve them one by one.

When we focus our gaze on the glory of our Messiah, it will not only save us, it will transform us. As we continue looking unto Yeshua, we will be transformed more and more into His image and likeness. We will decrease and He will increase. Less and less of our old selfish nature will be manifested, and more and more of His Divine nature will be manifested to us and through us. This is what Paul was talking about when he wrote these words:

"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). □

IS SATURDAY REALLY THE 7TH DAY?

As the end of the secular year approaches, calendars for the new year start appearing. Even secular calendars bear witness to Yahweh as the Creator. The names of the days of the week may sound like the names of ancient pagan gods, but the 7-day weekly cycle is a silent testimony that Yahweh, the God of the Bible, is the true God, for He was the One who instituted the 7-day week at Creation.

Furthermore, secular calendars also proclaim that the 7th day of the week is Saturday, and therefore the Sabbath. Only in recent years have some calendars been printed for business purposes with Monday as the first day of the week, since most people's work week begins on Monday. But most calendars still show Sunday as the first day of the week and Saturday as the 7th day, which is as it has always been.

About the only people who want to argue against this are Christians who do not want to keep the Sabbath. When Christians realize they cannot prove from the Scriptures that the 7th-day Sabbath was abolished, they use another tactic. They say, "The calendar was changed at different times in history. How do we know that the 7th day of the week is still Saturday?"

Let's look at this question. Was the 7-day weekly cycle ever forgotten or changed? Some people speculate that the Hebrews might have lost track of the 7-day weekly cycle during their years of slavery in Egypt. Even if this unprovable theory is true, God gave them a way to know for certain which day was the Sabbath when they were in the wilderness. All they had to do was look outside their tents and see if there was manna or not. For 40 long years, God used over 2,000 consecutive Sabbaths without manna to forever fix in their minds which day He wanted kept as the Sabbath.

Centuries later they went into the Babylonian Captivity for (among other sins) breaking the Sabbath. But they still knew which day of the week it was. Jeremiah rebuked them for Sabbath-breaking before the Babylonian Captivity, and Nehemiah rebuked them for it after they returned, so there was never any question of which day it was.

In the New Testament, we see Yeshua keeping the Sabbath on the same day as the rest of the Jews. The Jews never disagreed about which day it was. And since New Testament times, there have always been great numbers of Jews all over the world who have continued to preserve the 7-day week and the 7th-day Sabbath.

Even Rome's choice of Sunday as a replacement for the 7th-day Sabbath is further evidence that Saturday is the 7th day, for Sunday still follows Saturday, just as it did in the time of Constantine. Even the Catholic Encyclopedia affirms that the few calendar changes in history have affected only the numbers given to dates and years, and have not affected the 7-day week or the order of the days: "It is to be noted that in the Christian period, the order of days in the week has never been interrupted" (Vol.3, p.740).

We can rest assured that Saturday is the 7th day. Those who want to question this are grasping at straws.

-Daniel Botkin

XMAS

Years ago one of the couples in our congregation informed their two little children that they would not be celebrating Christmas any more. The parents explained why, and the children accepted it. Soon after this, during the peak of the Christmas season, the dad was driving with their 4-year-old son, Matthew, in the car with him. They stopped for a red light, and little Matthew looked over at the car stopped in the lane next to them.

"Hey, Dad!" Matthew said excitedly, "that man over there is smoking a cigarette!"

"Yeah," the dad replied.

"Yeah," Matthew said thoughtfully. "And I'll bet he celebrates *Christmas*, too!"

"What's wrong with celebrating Christmas?" some Christians say. *"Sure it has ancient pagan origins and has been characterized by commercialism and greed in modern times. But it also commemorates a holy, miraculous event, the birth of Jesus. Doesn't the holy aspect of the holiday sanctify the celebration?"*

I do not want to be too harsh on Christians who make a sincere effort to celebrate the Savior's birth on December 25th in a way that pleases God. They may have the best of intentions. But good intentions are not the sole factor that determines what God will accept as worship. God made it clear that He does not want worship which is patterned after the worship of pagan gods. (See Deut. 12:30ff & 18:9.) And as any good encyclopedia will tell you, virtually all the Christmas customs and traditions which have come down to us through the centuries have their origin in the worship of ancient pagan gods. (Many articles have been written on this subject, so I do not need to go into detail here.)

Even though Christmas is used to commemorate a holy event, the holiday is saturated with both ancient and modern paganism. It is for this very reason that the celebration of Christmas is not an acceptable act of worship to Yahweh. He hates the mingling together of the holy and the profane, and Christmas is exactly that.

God's hatred for the mingling together of the holy and the profane can be seen in many passages of Scripture. Several times God expressed His displeasure when His people, the holy seed, mingled themselves with the profane nations around them (Ezra 9:2; Hos. 7:8; Ps.

106:35). God poured out His wrath on the priests who profaned His holy things and who put no difference between the holy and the profane (Ezk. 22:26). Some of the Torah commands which involve the seemingly meaningless separation of things (wool from linen in clothing; ox from ass in yokes; seed from seed in vineyards) are most likely for the purpose of reminding us to separate the holy from the profane. Christmas does anything *but* separate the holy from the profane. On the contrary, itmingles the holy and the profane more than any other holiday does. It takes the holy event of the Savior's birth and mixes it with an ancient pagan holiday and with modern pagan debauchery and drunken revelry.

Adding something holy to something unclean does not sanctify the whole mix. It defiles the whole mix. This truth is seen in God's word to the priests in Haggai 2:12f. Yahweh asked the priests two questions. If a piece of holy flesh touches some common object (bread, wine, oil, etc.) does that make the common object become holy? The priests correctly answered "No." If an unclean person touches one of these common objects, does that make the common objects unclean? The priests correctly answered "Yes."

The holy birth of the Son of God cannot sanctify a pagan holiday any more than holy flesh could sanctify a common object in the days of Haggai. But unclean pagan customs will defile our celebration of the Savior's birth if we mix them in; just as an unclean person's touch rendered common objects unclean in the Temple.

Some well-meaning Christians try to celebrate Jesus' birth without mixing in any of the pagan customs and traditions. To be honest, though, if you truly eliminate every single custom and tradition that has its origin in pagan idolatry, you won't be left with much of anything. Even the December 25th date will have to be abandoned, so why bother?

The coming of Immanuel into the world is certainly an event worthy of celebration, and it can be celebrated every day. If someone wants to commemorate His birth each year, the Feast of Tabernacles is probably the most likely time to do it. Many Bible teachers have presented strong evidence that indicates Yeshua was most likely born in the fall. Since the Feast of Tabernacles is in the fall, it may very well be that it was during this 8-day Feast when "the Word was made flesh and dwelt [tabernacled] among us" (John 1:14).

If He was born in the fall, say in September, this would mean His conception took place 9 months earlier, in December. Hannukah, the Feast of Lights, falls in December. This would be a very appropriate time of year for the conception of the Light of the World in the womb of the Virgin. This was the real miracle, that a virgin should conceive. There was nothing miraculous about His birth. He was born the same way that all babies are born. The conception was the real miracle.

If we are going to celebrate the coming of Immanuel into the world in December, let's celebrate not His birth but His conception. And let's do it with Hanukkah, not with Christmas.

-Daniel Botkin