

# THE ADOPTION

## A Short Story by Daniel Botkin

*As we begin our 11th year of publishing, we present a reprint of this story, which was the cover story for the very first issue of Gates of Eden in 1995.*

"Monica! Wait!"

Monica, a well-dressed woman in her late thirties, was just getting ready to go out the church door when she heard her friend, Clare, calling to her. She turned around and waited for Clare, who was doing her best to walk at a hurried pace in her wobbly, high-heeled shoes. Clare had been away for quite some time, and Monica had forgotten how awkward and uncomfortable Clare looked when she wore those shoes.

"Monica! It's been so long!" Clare panted. "I heard the adoption finally went through. Congratulations!"

Monica raised her eyebrows. "What did you hear about the adoption? The details, I mean."

"Well, nothing about the details," Clare replied hesitantly. "Why? Is something wrong? Didn't it go through?"

"Oh, it went through, all right. But it wasn't quite what we were expecting."

"What do you mean? You were hoping to adopt a boy, weren't you? Did you end up adopting a girl instead?"

"No, no. Look, Clare, let's sit down. This will take a few minutes to explain."

The two ladies went to the other side of the plushly-carpeted church lobby and sat on a soft couch in a quiet, secluded corner. Clare, always eager to hear the latest news about anyone or anything in town, leaned forward with hungry eyes to listen to Monica's story.

"Well," Monica began, "as you know, for years Peter and I had been hoping to adopt a nice boy, since we haven't been able to have any children of our own. We had contacted agency after agency with no success. Finally someone suggested an agency that places refugees from foreign countries in American homes."

"Oh!" Clare smiled. "So you got a boy from a foreign country! Does he speak English?"

"Yes, he speaks English - with an accent, of course. But Clare, he's not a boy. We didn't realize it, but that agency places *adults* in American homes - adults who need American sponsors."

Clare's smile suddenly disappeared as her jaw dropped in disbelief. "You and Peter adopted an *adult*?"

"If you want to word it that way, yes. We're letting him live in our home, anyway."



"Well, what's he like? How's it working out?"

"It's a mixed blessing, I guess. You see, he's Jewish."

"Jewish?! Life is strange, Monica."

"Talk about strange, Clare. We were expecting the agency to bring us a nice Christian boy, and instead, this 30-year-old Orthodox Jewish man arrives at our door, a homeless refugee. We answered the doorbell, and there he stood, long beard, long dark coat, and those funny-looking strings hanging out of his pants. At first I thought his underwear must be unraveling, then I remembered the Jews have a custom of wearing some kind of ritual fringes."

"What did you do?"

"Well, what could we do? We invited him in after he introduced himself and told us who had sent him. Of course we tried to contact the agency that had sent him, but it took us three days to finally get the right person on the phone. The agency apologized for the mix-up, then asked if we might possibly consider letting the man stay with us anyway. It seems there aren't many American families willing to share their homes with his kind. Peter and I talked it over, and it seemed to be the Christian thing to do, so we agreed to let him stay."

"Wow!" Clare exclaimed. "This is some story! I'll bet you and Peter have had to make some adjustments. What's it like having this guy in your home?"

"As I said, it's a mixed blessing. Even though he's not a Christian, he's really a good man, Clare. But he's so... strange. To us, I mean. He wouldn't seem strange to his own people, I'm sure."

"What's strange about him? Besides his appearance."

"Well," Monica smiled, "one of the first things he did was to ask our permission to attach a little box onto the

door frame of our house. It contains a little parchment with some Bible verses. He called it a 'Mazzaroth,' I think. I looked in a concordance of the Old Testament, and found the word in the thirty-eighth chapter of Job."

Monica pronounced the name *Job* like the word *job*, but it didn't matter to Clare, since she always said it that way, too.

"A Mazzaroth, huh? That is a strange custom. Harmless enough, I suppose. I wonder where they get these weird ideas. What else?" Clare asked eagerly.

"Oh, he has peculiar eating habits. Very picky. He won't eat ham or bacon or pork chops - nothing with any pork products in it. He refuses to eat seafood, too. 'It has to have both fins and scales,' he says."

"He won't eat *lobster*?" Clare responded in disbelief. "What's he do during Lent?"

"Well, he doesn't really do anything for Lent," Monica answered. "He's Jewish, and Lent is a Christian custom."

"Oh, of course, I wasn't thinking."

"Yeah. His strange diet wouldn't be so bad, but he's always reading ingredient labels on everything in the kitchen. That kind of irks me. Although he usually just buys his own food and eats it off paper plates. Oh, and there's one week every spring when he refuses to eat anything with yeast in it. He just eats these big crackers called 'mitzvahs' with his meals all that week."

"Does all this make it hard on you?" Clare inquired sympathetically.

"Well, Peter and I have had to make some adjustments in our diet," Monica confessed. "But actually, we've noticed a change for the better. We both feel healthier and more energetic than we used to."

"That's good," Clare said, nodding her head approvingly. "Anything else unusual about him?"

"Oh, he's always looking at the calendar, carefully counting off days and marking certain times that the

Jews observe. Of course he never wants to come to Mass with us on Sundays."

"That's right," Clare interjected. "Jews go to church on Saturdays, don't they?"

"Right," Monica agreed. "But they don't call it church. And of course that means he isn't available to help us with the housework and yardwork on Saturdays. At first, Peter was annoyed that he wouldn't help with the work on Saturdays. But he does more than his share the rest of the week."

"Does he do anything besides housework and yardwork?" Clare asked.

"Oh, yes," Monica replied. "This month he's been helping Peter build a room addition onto our house. At first we didn't know if he'd be of much help, but once Peter showed him how to use the power tools, he really caught on. He's really becoming quite a carpenter."

"But he won't do any kind of work on Saturdays, huh?"

"That's right," Monica answered.

"But with his helping so much on the weekdays, we don't have to do any housework or yardwork on Saturdays anymore. He always makes sure everything's done before sundown on Friday. It's really kind of nice."

"Well, I guess that *would* be a blessing," Clare smiled. "By the way, what's his name, and where's he from?"

"Oh, didn't I tell you?" Monica apologized. "He's from Israel, the town of Nazareth. He said most of the people in his country know him by the name Yeshu, but some of his friends call him Yeshua. Both of those names are kind of hard for me to say, so he told us we can just call him 'Joshua' if we want."

"Joshua from Nazareth, huh?"

Clare said thoughtfully. "Well, I admire you for putting up with him, Monica, but I'm sure glad this strange Jew doesn't live at *my* house! I gotta go. See you in church next week."

"Shalom, Clare." ☆

## WHO SAID THAT?

1. The first duty of the Gospel preacher is to declare God's Law and show the nature of sin.
2. Before I preach love, mercy and grace, I must preach sin, Law and judgment.
3. Preach 90% Law and 10% grace.
4. They will never accept grace until they tremble before a just and holy Law.
5. Evermore the Law must prepare the way for the Gospel; to overlook this in instructing souls is almost certain to result in false hope, the introduction of a false standard of Christian experience, and to fill the church with false converts.
6. The highest service to which a man may attain on earth is to preach the Law of God.
7. God being a perfect God, had to give a perfect Law, and the Law was given not to save men, but to measure them.

*Who made the above statements? Heretics? Legalists? Judaizers? Answers are at end of this column.*

1. Martin Luther
2. John Wesley
3. John Wesley
4. Charles Spurgeon
5. Charles Finney
6. John Wycliffe
7. D. L. Moody

Source: Ron Moseley, *The Spirit of the Law*, page 21.

# TAKING UP THE CROSS

**Daniel Botkin**

*"And He said to them all, 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.'" -Luke 9:23*

*"I die daily." -1 Corinthians 15:31*

*"That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death."  
-Philippians 3:10*

The Resurrection of Yeshua is a historical fact and a doctrine to believe, but it should be much more than that to a disciple of Yeshua. To a disciple, it should also be a spiritual reality, a power which is daily appropriated and experienced in the disciple's personal walk with the Lord. It is the power of the Resurrection which enables us to "walk in newness of life" after we are baptized into His death. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Yeshua the Messiah were baptized into His death?" (Rom. 6:3).

Because it is *His death* into which we are baptized, it is the power of *His Resurrection* that we can experience in our spiritual walk. The power of His Resurrection is not withheld from us until the final day of the resurrection of the dead. Our mortal bodies may have to wait for that final day, but in the meantime, our inward man can experience the power of His Resurrection in the here and now: "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Messiah was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). Our inner spiritual life can and should draw its sustenance and strength from the power of His Resurrection. We do not get the

power to walk in newness of life from mere human will-power or from sheer determination and self-effort. We can only walk in newness of life by the power of His Resurrection. That power is available for anyone who wants to walk in newness of life. That is the good news.

Now for the bad news: Experiencing the power of His Resurrection must always be preceded by entering into the fellowship of His sufferings. And the only way for any man to enter into the fellowship of His sufferings is to deny himself, take up his cross daily, and die daily.

Death to self means surrendering your own plans and will to the will of God and accepting His plan for your life. It means saying, like our Lord in Gethsemane, "Not my will, but Thine, be done" (Lk. 22:42). It sometimes means giving up your fondest hopes and dreams. It can mean living with a constant ache in your heart for years, or even for the rest of your natural life, as "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," because you cannot have the thing you cherish most. Following Jesus is wonderful, but it is not always easy. His yoke is easy and His burden is light (Matt. 11:30), but the cross He gives us to bear is at times very heavy and extremely difficult to carry.

One night in the summer of 1977, I was praying alone under a tree in the mountains of northern Israel. I was on my knees in the dust, earnestly and fervently seeking a closer walk with the Lord. As I was pleading with the Lord for more intimate knowledge of Him, the Holy Spirit abruptly dropped these words into my heart: "I am a God who suffers." In the days of Noah, the wickedness of man "grieved Him at His heart" (Gen. 6:6). God still grieves over the wickedness of man.

If we want to know the power of His Resurrection, we have to first enter into the fellowship of His sufferings. I am convinced that the measure of power and glory we experience will be determined to

some extent by the weight of the cross we have to bear, the amount of suffering we have to endure in order to accept God's plan for our life. The grief from the cross which is ours to bear is the very instrument that can bring us to an intimate knowledge of the Lord and the power of His Resurrection.

The weight of our cross will determine the weight of our glory. So if someone has laid a cross on you, don't hold a grudge against that person. Accept the plan of God, and remember that that person is only the tool God used to lay the cross on you. Joseph realized this when he said to his treacherous brothers, "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life ... So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God" (Gen. 45:4-8).

Sometimes when our cross gets too heavy to bear, God will send someone to help us. Even Yeshua needed Simon of Cyrene to carry some of the weight for a while. God sends people to be Simons of Cyrene for us when the weight becomes too much to bear. Our Simons help us by providing some comfort and relief and joy in the midst of our sufferings. God gave Joseph a wife and two sons to comfort him in his affliction. My wife and my children and a few faithful friends have been my Simons of Cyrene over the years.

Sundar Singh, a 20th century Christian mystic of India, once said that we should carry our crosses the way a bird carries its wings. A bird has the burden of having to carry around a pair of wings on its shoulders its entire life. The bird doesn't mind though, because that pair of wings is the thing that enables the bird to rise up and soar in the heavens. So it is with the cross which we bear. □

# BOUNDARIES, THE RAGING SEA, AND LEVIATHAN

Daniel Botkin

## BOUNDARIES

In everyday life we have boundaries, things which limit and restrict, and most of these boundaries are good. A shower curtain functions as a boundary to keep the water inside the shower stall and off the floor. The painted lines on a highway function as boundaries to keep drivers on their own side of the road. A leash or chain on a dog creates a boundary which keeps the dog where it belongs.

We have the sense to protect our bathroom floors with boundaries; we have the sense to protect ourselves from car wrecks and dog bites by respecting boundaries. These boundaries in the physical realm protect our body, the outer person. There are spiritual boundaries which protect the soul and spirit, the inner person, and it is very important that we respect these boundaries, too. These spiritual boundaries are the commandments of God's *Torah*, His instructions, commonly translated "Law." When we step over the boundaries which God has decreed in His Law, we sin. As a matter of fact, this is exactly how the Bible defines sin: "for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). To transgress means to step over, to cross the line. When we step outside the boundaries of God's Law, we sin.

Many Christians know that the literal meaning of the Greek word for sin, *hamartano*, is "to miss the mark," i.e., the bull's eye mark on a target. Some of us miss not only the bull's eye, but the entire target! The target we are to aim for is obedience to God's will as expressed in His Torah. The bull's eye is obedience to God's will as demonstrated by His Son. Obedience does not always come easily, though, because there is a force inside fallen man that resists the Law of God. This internal urge is dissatisfied with the idea of staying within the boundaries God has set. This inclination toward evil finds the idea of sin appealing, and it tries to

force itself beyond the limitations that God has set for man by His Law.

## THE RAGING SEA

Like the raging sea on the seashore, man's internal rebellion tries to hurl itself beyond God's boundaries: "Fear ye not Me? saith Yahweh. Will ye not tremble at My presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it? But this people hath a revolting and rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone" (Jer. 5:22f).

In this passage, Jeremiah compares the raging rebellion in the heart of sinful man to the raging sea. Go to the sea on a stormy day and watch the waves as they throw themselves on the shore and try to force themselves beyond the boundary God has set for them. There you will see a picture of fallen man's persistent efforts to transgress the boundaries God has set by His commandments.

This continually churning desire to rebel against God's Law robs people of spiritual rest and peace of mind. When man follows the inclination to sin, the mire and dirt of his sinful heart get stirred up and come to the surface, as Isaiah says: "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isa. 57:20f).

The wicked cannot rest; they

cannot live in peace within the boundaries God has set by His Law. This urge to go beyond God's boundaries is also expressed in Psalm 2: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against Yahweh, and against His anointed [מָשִׁיחַ, *mashiach* = Messiah], saying, 'Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us'" (Ps. 2:1-3). Notice what is said by those who set themselves in opposition to Yahweh and His Messiah: "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." God's commandments are viewed by the wicked as restrictive bands which need to be broken asunder, and as confining cords which need to be cast away. The thing that unites sinners to "take counsel together" is their mutual hatred of God's Law and their desire to be free of its restraints. The scary thing is that these words of rebellion sound remarkably similar to some preaching that is heard from the pulpits of antinomian (anti-Law) churches.

## LEVIATHAN

The wicked are like the troubled sea, Isaiah says. There is an evil urge in the heart of fallen man that gets stirred up by a "dragon in the sea." When Satan is spoken of as a dragon in the sea, he is called "leviathan." Leviathan is described by Yahweh in Job 41, and from the description, it is obvious that leviathan is not an ordinary animal. ("Upon earth there is not his like," verse 33.) Rather, leviathan is meant to be understood as a poetic description of the dragon, that old serpent which is the Devil and Satan: "By his neesings [sneezing] a light doth shine, and his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning. Out of his mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap out. Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as out of a seething pot



or caldron. His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth... He maketh the deep to boil like a pot: he maketh the sea like a pot of ointment... He beholdeth all high things: he is a king over all the children of pride" (vss. 18-21, 31, 34).

As king over all the children of pride, Satan uses his breath to kindle the coals of lust which are hidden deep in man's heart. With man's permission, Satan ignites and fuels the fires of rebellion and lust. Man's carnal desires churn and boil until they cannot be contained. The children of pride find no rest for their souls as they struggle to force themselves beyond the restraints which God has appointed for man. Like the raging waves of the sea, they hurl themselves forward in a mad attempt to go beyond the boundaries of God's commandments. In the process, the polluted waters of man's heart cast up mire and dirt, exposing the filth that lies buried in the heart of man.

If it were not for leviathan, the waters might remain calm. A man might be able to keep his inward corruption hidden and undisturbed for years, far below the surface. But then leviathan comes along, and man's true nature is exposed.

What are you going to do about leviathan? This was God's final question to Job. In Job chapters 38-40, Yahweh asks Job 64 questions about various wonders of the universe. Then comes chapter 41, which consists of Yahweh's graphic description of leviathan's power, and 20 questions to Job about leviathan. In effect, God asks Job (and by extension He asks us), "Can you handle leviathan? What are you going to do when leviathan's breath kindleth the coals of lust in your heart, when he maketh the deep to boil like a pot, and rebellion and revolt spill out of you like filthy water boiling over a pot on the stove? Can you handle leviathan?"

Job's response to this question should be our response: "Then Job answered Yahweh, and said, 'I know that Thou canst do everything'" (Job 42:1f). This revelation was Job's breakthrough, the revelation that God

can do for man what man cannot do for himself. Man cannot control the universe or understand all the mysteries of creation. Man cannot handle leviathan, either. Man cannot conquer the internal power of sin that reigns as king over all the children of pride. The only thing a man can do is to humble himself before his Maker. Then he will cease being one of the children of pride, and become one of the children of humility. Then God will deal with leviathan and break the power of sin.

"In that day Yahweh with His sore and great strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and He shall slay the dragon that is in the sea" (Isa. 27:1). This speaks of the final destruction of the serpent at the end of the age, when an angel with a great chain and the key to the bottomless pit will lay hold of the dragon, that old serpent which is the Devil and Satan, and cast him into the abyss (Rev. 20:1-3). However, the children of humility can experience an inward deliverance from the power of sin in the here and now, because the power of Satan has been broken by the death and Resurrection of Yeshua.

The power of Satan to stir up sinful desires in our heart is rendered inoperative *if we will see that we died in Messiah*. Several times in Romans 6, Paul makes the statement that our old nature is dead, having died in Messiah. We are dead to sin; we were baptized into Messiah's death; we were buried with Him; we are planted together in the likeness of His death; our old nature was crucified with Him; we are dead and freed from sin; we are dead with Messiah (Rom. 6:2-8). In Colossians 3:3 Paul says, "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Messiah in God." If we are dead, how can Satan cause us to sin?

Once a child of God sees that his old nature died with Messiah at Golgotha, the power of Satan is broken. Then when the Tempter comes as leviathan and attempts to kindle the coals of lust and make the deep desires boil like a pot, he will find that his power no longer operates against this person, because this person is

dead. This person died in Messiah and now walks in newness of life. This person experiences the reality of Galatians 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

The raging, troubled sea is finally at rest in this person. He no longer struggles with the desire to go beyond the boundaries of God's commandments. He is not totally immune from temptation (even the Son of God was tempted), but the continual churning of sinful desires, the casting up of mire and dirt, the ongoing struggle with the sinful nature is finally over. This person has heard the Storm-calmer from Galilee speak to the raging sea in his heart, "Peace. Be still." And just as those few words brought a great calm that night long ago, those same words bring a great calm to the raging sea in man's heart.

We cannot defeat leviathan by our own human power, but there is One who has the power to do it for us. He can draw leviathan out of us with a hook; He can put a hook into leviathan's nose and bind him; He will punish the piercing, crooked serpent; He will slay the dragon in the sea. God can remove leviathan from our hearts and give us the power to live inside the boundaries of His Torah.

After leviathan's power over us has been broken, we will not view the commandments of the Torah as bands to be broken asunder or as cords to be cast away from us. Instead, we will see the commandments of the Torah as the boundaries which our loving Heavenly Father wisely appointed, just as He appointed the shoreline to be the boundary of the sea. Knowing this should inspire us to the kind of devotion expressed in Robert Frost's poem "Devotion":

*The heart can think of no devotion  
Greater than being shore to the ocean -  
Holding the curve of one position,  
Counting an endless repetition.*

-Robert Frost ☐

# REMEMBERING & FORGETTING

Daniel Botkin

Are we supposed to remember our past or forget it? The Apostle Paul wrote about the importance of "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before" (Ph'p. 3:13). On the other hand, several passages of Scripture tell us to remember the past. Deuteronomy includes several such instructions: remember that you were a servant in Egypt; remember what Yahweh thy God did to Pharaoh; remember the way Yahweh led you through the wilderness; remember how you provoked Yahweh to anger; remember the day you came out of Egypt; remember what Yahweh did to Miriam; remember what Amalek did to you; remember the days of old. (See Deuteronomy 5:15, 7:18, 8:2, 9:7, 16:3, 24:9, 25:17, 32:7.)

Paul knew the Scriptures and was certainly familiar with these and many other verses that stress the importance of remembering the past. Why, then, did Paul stress the importance of forgetting the past? Because there are certain elements of the past which need to be forgotten, and there are certain elements which need to be remembered.

There is a right way and a wrong way to remember one's past. Some people have an unhealthy way of looking back. They become obsessed with their past and they mentally re-live bad experiences. Dwelling on one's past sins can cause a person to wallow in guilt and shame over sins which God has long ago forgiven. Or, dwelling on one's past sins can stir up sinful desires and make a person long for those old sinful habits again.

Dwelling on past wrongs done against you by others can lead to mental problems. Anger and unforgiveness provide fertile soil for a root of bitterness to spring up. Or, an obsession with one's past victimhood can masquerade as an excuse to justify present sins. "I've had a hard life. I deserve some pleasure. Surely

God won't hold this sin against me, not after all I've been through." Joseph could have used this kind of thinking as an excuse when Potiphar's wife daily tried to seduce him. "But he refused," the Scripture says (Gen. 39:8).

When Paul wrote about the importance of forgetting, the previous verses (Ph'p 3:4-6) tell us what things Paul wanted to forget: his former confidence in the flesh as an Israelite; his former trust in his Torah-keeping as a means of attaining righteousness; his former sin of persecuting the disciples of Yeshua.

Paul did not wallow and stew in the juices of shame and guilt over his past sins, even though he regarded himself as the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). Paul understood that he was forgiven, and that God had a purpose for saving him. Paul understood that he had a new destiny to fulfill, and his passion was to fulfill that destiny. In the verse immediately before Paul's remark about forgetting the past, he wrote that he wanted to "lay hold of that for which Christ laid hold of me" (Ph'p. 3:12 NASB). He knew that the Lord laid hold of him on the road to Damascus for a purpose, and Paul was determined to find that purpose and fulfill it. In order to reach forth to those things ahead, Paul had to forget certain elements of his past.

The things of the past which we are told to remember are to be remembered in a manner which glorifies God and serves His purpose. Deuteronomy chapter 8 talks a lot about the importance of remembering God's care for His people during the forty years of wandering in the wilderness. The purpose of experiencing those difficult times and the purpose of remembering those difficult times is "to humble thee" (vss. 2, 3, 16). Remembering our utter dependence on God, not just for our daily bread, but for each breath of air and for each beat of our heart, helps keep us humble.

When I look back and recall some of the difficult times I have gone through, I do not get angry or wallow in self-pity over past injustices that I suffered. Instead, I remember how the Lord preserved me and brought me through those difficult times. I also remember that He was the One who orchestrated the difficult circumstances in order to bring me to the place I needed to be - where I needed to be spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and even geographically. When I look at my past difficulties this way, it is hard to hold a grudge against those who unjustly mistreated me, because I see that they were simply a tool in God's hand. When I think of my bitterest sufferings, Jeremiah's words come to mind: "Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the worm-wood and the gall. My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me" (Lam. 3:19f).

What about remembering our sins? We are supposed to "forget" the sins for which God has forgiven us, yet we are also told to remember them: "Remember, and forget not, how thou provokedst Yahweh thy God to wrath in the wilderness" (Deut. 9:7). Remembering our past sins (while forgetting the guilt) serves two purposes. First, it reminds us to not repeat the same mistakes. Second, it reminds us of the great mercy God showed us by forgiving us and delivering us.

Peter wrote about the spiritually blind believer who "cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins" (2 Pet. 1:9). Once you have repented and confessed your sins to the Lord, don't continue to stew in shame and guilt. Don't forget your sins entirely, though. As the well-known maxim says, those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. This truth applies not only to the history of nations, but also to the history of our individual lives. □

# CLEAVAGE

**Dr. Daniel Botkin**

The English word *cleave* is an unusual word, because it has two meanings which are the exact opposite of one another, namely, "separate" and "join." If you cleave wood, you are separating a piece of wood, and the one stick becomes two. If a man cleaves to his wife, the two are joined together, and the two become one. How did this word end up with two opposite definitions? It didn't, really, because *cleave* and *cleave* are actually two entirely different words, even though they are both spelled and pronounced the same. The *cleave* that means "to separate" comes from the Old Norse word *kljufa*, "to split." The *cleave* that means "to join or stick together" comes from the Old English word *claeg*, "clay" - which is, of course, a sticky substance that easily cleaves together.

Word origins aside, cleaving is a concept we need to practice in both senses, in the sense of separating and in the sense of joining together and adhering. There are things from which we need to separate ourselves, and things to which we need to cleave. "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good" (Rom. 12:9).

We are commanded four times in Deuteronomy and twice in Joshua to cleave to Yahweh in the Land of Promise. But before you can cleave to Yahweh in the Land of Promise, you have to experience a cleaving that separates you from the Land of Egypt, i.e., the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Before you can cleave to something or someone new, you have to first be cleaved apart from that to which you are currently joined. This truth is seen the first time the Bible mentions cleaving: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). In order for a man to cleave to his wife, he must first separate from his parents.

Cleaving in the sense of separating has to precede cleaving in the sense of joining. This is the reason that before Paul wrote "but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind," he first

wrote "be not conformed to this world" (Rom. 12:2). If a man wants to be transformed, he has to first stop conforming to the world. You can't get to the Promised Land without first leaving Egypt. You can't cleave to the Lord if you are still cleaving to the world.

Deuteronomy 11:22f says that if we cleave to the Lord, He will drive away our enemies and give us victory over nations that are greater and mightier than ourselves. If that does not describe your spiritual experience, perhaps you need to ask yourself if you are still cleaving to the things of Egypt. Are you still stuck to the world? David said that the work of the wicked "shall not cleave to me" (Ps. 101:3). When you are involuntarily exposed to the world's corruption at work, at school, or at the mall, does the corruption cling to you and stick in your mind? Do you cleave to corrupt things and do corrupt things cleave to you? "And there shall cleave nought of the accursed thing to thine hand," Yahweh warns (Deut. 13:17).

Joshua warns us what will happen if we "cleave unto the remnant of these nations": "Know for a certainty that Yahweh your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes" (Josh. 23:12f). If you do not cleave to the Lord, but cleave instead to "the remnant of the nations" (for us, the leftovers of paganism) then the Lord will cause something else to cleave to you: "Yahweh shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee" (Deut. 28:21). "Moreover He will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt, which thou wast afraid of; and they shall cleave unto thee" (Deut. 28:60).

Cleaving to evil things will cause evil things to cleave to us. One of the diseases of Egypt cleaved to Elisha's servant, Gehazi: "The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed forever" (2 Ki. 5:27). King Solomon married pagan wives, and "Solomon clave unto these in love... and his wives turned away his heart after other gods" (1 Ki. 11:1-4). Because of Solomon's sin, the kingdom was split in two. In effect, God said, "If you're going to cleave to pagan wives, I'm going to do some cleaving of another sort. I'm going to cleave your

kingdom in two." If you cleave to your pagan ways, the Lord will cleave your kingdom in two. Your life will be filled with snares, traps, scourges, and thorns, just as Joshua warned.

As mentioned earlier, the English word *cleave* is from the Old English word for clay. In the Scriptures clay is used as a metaphor for God's people, Israel. (See, e.g., Job 33:6; Isa. 64:8; Jer. 18.) In King Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the great empires of the heathen nations were represented not by clay, but by forged metals. (See Dan. 2.) The final heathen empire, Rome, was represented by legs of iron. The feet and toes were not made entirely of iron, though. There was clay mingled with the iron. However, iron and clay do not mix: "And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay" (Dan. 2:43).

If God is the Potter and we are indeed the clay, we will not fit in with this world. We can try to mingle ourselves with the seed of fallen men, but if we have any kind of credible testimony, we will be regarded as misfits. So we may as well quit trying to "fit in." We may as well stop cleaving to a world that hates our Master, and start cleaving to the Lord.

Rome conquered the world with iron swords. But we are of Jerusalem above, not of Rome beneath; we are clay, not iron. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal iron forged by fallen men, but the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. It is written of one of David's mighty men that he "smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword" (2 Sam. 23:10). If your heart cleaves to Yahweh and your hand cleaves to the sword of the Spirit, then the commandment of Deuteronomy 13:17 will be turned into a promise, and "there shall cleave nought of the accursed thing to thine hand." When your hand cleaves to the sword of the Spirit, the word of God becomes a permanent extension of your hand. Then what was written of David's mighty man can be written of you: "and Yahweh wrought a great victory that day." □

# THE SPIRIT OF MAN: THE CANDLE OF THE LORD

Dr. Daniel Botkin

*"The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly." -Proverbs 20:27*

The Hebrew word translated "spirit" in the above verse is not the usual Hebrew word for spirit, *ruach*. Here the word is *neshamah* (נֶשְׁמָה). Man's *neshamah* is the candle of the LORD. It is the deep part of man that the Lord ignites with the fire of His Holy Spirit.

Man's *neshamah* is deeper than the emotions or intellect. Sometimes the emotions and intellect get kindled and excited because they are stimulated by the fire of God. More often than not, though, people's emotions and intellects are stimulated by forces other than the Holy Spirit. Sometimes the emotions get kindled by psychological manipulation (as is seen in some charismatic circles) or by thoughts of a syrupy, sentimental, sissy Jesus (as is seen in some feminized churches). Sometimes the intellect gets kindled by mere academic knowledge or by philosophy that has been spawned from the carnal minds of unregenerate men.

Intellect and emotions are important, but the Lord wants to penetrate us even deeper than the intellect and emotions. He wants to reach into the deepest part of man, the *neshamah*, and ignite the spirit of man, the candle of the LORD. Then the intellect and emotions can be kindled by the fire of the Holy Spirit instead of by "strange fire."

"Deep calleth unto deep," the psalmist wrote (Ps. 42:7). From the depth of His being, God calls to the depth of our being. He has a deep love for us, and He expects us to have a deep love for Him. He wants every individual to have a deep, personal relationship with Him, not just a shallow, superficial acquaintance. Someone once remarked that the so-called "deeper life" is called deeper only because the average Christian life is so tragically shallow. If we want

to avoid the tragedy of shallowness, we need to heed our *neshamah*, the candle of the Lord, for it is the organ by which we can know God.

How ignitable is your spirit? I recently did a short teaching on ignitability. For a visual aid, I used three matchsticks which I held above a flame, one after another. The first matchstick had been soaking in water for 24 hours before I held it to the flame. It took quite a while to ignite, because the flame had to evaporate the water and dry out the wood enough to catch fire. When it finally ignited, it sputtered and sizzled and burned slowly. The second matchstick had been soaking in water for about a half hour. It ignited quicker than the first matchstick, and burned a little more brightly. The third matchstick had not been in contact with water at all. It ignited immediately and burned very brightly.

"Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it," the Song of Solomon says (8:7). If our love for God is true and deep, all the waters and floods of the wicked world around us cannot extinguish that flaming love. Those waters can affect

our ignitability if we let them, though. If we saturate our minds in the polluted waters of the wicked world system, we will be like the first matchstick in my experiment. If we just go for a short swim in the waters of the world, we will be like the second matchstick. If we avoid the polluted waters of the world, we will be ignitable and burn brightly like the third matchstick. Our *neshamah*, our candle, will be ignited by the fire of God's Holy Spirit, and we will have light, for as David said, "in Thy light shall we see light" (Ps. 36:9).

What do we do with this light which shines forth from our *neshamah*, this candle of the Lord? According to Proverbs 20:27, the spirit of man is occupied with "searching all the inward parts of the belly." What are the "inward parts"? Literally, the word speaks of rooms or inner chambers. What is the "belly"? The word can mean the belly, the womb, or the inner person. Therefore "searching all the inward parts of the belly" speaks of the exploration and examination of the different chambers of one's heart - the mind, the memories, the emotions, the desires, the concerns, the motives and intents of the heart.

Think of your inner person, the real you, as a sphere. Inside that sphere are various chambers, with connections allowing access from one chamber to another. All these rooms and their contents make up the person that is you. At the very center of the sphere is your *neshamah*, the candle which the Lord provides so you can explore "all the inward parts of the belly." As you go from room to room, you hold up the candle of the Lord and see what is there.

This is not merely some self-focused, self-centered spiritual journey for selfish reasons, though, because the inward parts are being examined in the light of God's holy fire. The purpose of the exploration and examination is not for selfish reasons. The purpose of the exploration and exami-

nation is to discern between truth and error. "Search me, O God, and know my heart," David prayed. "Try me and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23f). Because the *neshamah* is the candle of the LORD, we could say that it is really God doing the searching. Our *neshamah* is just the vessel which holds the oil of God's Spirit and the fire of His holiness. Without the oil and the fire, our *neshamah* is empty and useless.

After a season of diligently searching the inward parts of the belly, we come to the realization that it is not just our own heart that we are called to explore. We can also search "the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2:10). The Apostle Paul discusses this in 1 Corinthians 2. Paraphrasing Isaiah 64:4, Paul writes: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor. 2:9). Sometimes people stop reading at this verse and think that Paul is just saying that the glories that await us in heaven after we die are going to be more wonderful than anything we have ever seen or heard or imagined. While that is true, it is *not* true that we have to wait until after we die to experience these "things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." We know this because Paul continues to talk about these things in the very next verse: "But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (vs. 10). Therefore, these unseeable, inaudible, unimaginable "things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" are *not* among the unrevealed "secret things [that] belong unto Yahweh our God"; rather, they are among "those things which are revealed" (Deut. 29:29), for "God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit."

Paul's statement that "the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" echoes Proverbs 20:27. Just as man has a spirit that searches his deepest parts, so God has a Spirit that searches His deepest parts: "For

what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" (vs. 11). Then Paul proclaims one of the most wonderful truths ever written: "Now we have received [!], not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; [so] that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (vs. 12).

Do you realize what glorious, marvelous things Paul is telling us in this passage of Holy Scripture? He tells us about the wonderful things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. Then he tells us that these wonderful things do not need to remain hidden from us until after we die, because God hath revealed them unto us. Then he explains how we can receive revelation: by receiving the Holy Spirit, the very same Spirit that searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. According to Proverbs 20:27, man, by his spirit, searches the deep things of man. According to 1 Corinthians 2, God, by His Spirit, searches the deep things of God. And this is the very same Spirit we receive through our faith in Yeshua.

"Now," Paul wrote - not some day in the distant future - "we have received" - not "will receive after we die." If you have received the Holy Spirit since you believed, then you have access - now - to the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. You have a light by which you can see the unseeable, hear the inaudible, and know the unimaginable. If you have

received the Holy Spirit, then you have received the Spirit that searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. This Spirit has been joined to your spirit: "he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17).

This all sounds very lofty and glorious. If we are honest, though, we have to admit that it does not really describe the experience of most Spirit-filled believers. Why not? Probably because of our wrong choices in life. We walk in the flesh instead of in the Spirit. We set our affection on things on the earth instead of on things above. We put off the new man and put on the old man. We walk by sight and not by faith. We sow to the flesh instead of to the spirit. We become carnally minded instead of spiritually minded. We conform to the world instead of being transformed by the renewing of our mind. In short, we do the *exact opposite* of all the instructions the New Testament gives for disciples!

If we want a healthy spirit, we have to live in the realm of God's Spirit. There is no place else where our spirit can grow and thrive and function except in the realm of God's Spirit. We need to live in the Spirit like a fish needs to live in water. A fish can survive outside the water for a while, but not for long. And while the fish is outside the water, it cannot do very much except gasp and pant and flop around. It cannot function properly outside its natural element. So it is with our spirit. When we try to live outside the Holy Spirit, we gasp and pant and aimlessly flop around in confusion and hysteria like a fish out of water.

"It is the spirit that quickeneth," Yeshua said. "The flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). This statement is as true today as it was when our Lord spoke to the carnal-minded murmurers in Capernaum nearly 2,000 years ago. If we want to be made spiritually alive, we need to pay attention to our spirit, our *neshamah*, the candle of the LORD and the organ by which we can know God. □

# THE ARROWS OF EPHRAIM

## An Open Letter to Israel & the Jewish People

In recent years the Jewish community has become aware of wide-spread support for Israel among Evangelical Christians. There is strong support for Israel coming from another group of American Bible-believers, a group which is outside the mainstream Evangelical Christian community. This body of people could be described as non-Jewish Messianic believers.

Those of us in this steadily-growing movement identify very strongly with Israel, the Jewish people, and the Torah. We quit going to church on Sundays and now keep Shabbat. We quit celebrating X-mas and Easter and now celebrate the Biblically-sanctioned holidays of Leviticus 23. We quit eating swine's flesh and seafood.

We consider ourselves to be a part of Israel, even though most of us have no known Jewish ancestry. Some people in our movement call themselves "Messianic Israelites" or "Ephraimites." Some of our national conferences have drawn over 1,000 people. This past December 24-26, several hundred of us gathered in Nashville for a regional conference.

Jewish readers might wonder who we are and where we came from. Let me tell you why we consider ourselves to be a part of Israel and why we view Judah as our brother.

Most of us came from a Gentile Christian background and were brought up to believe in the New Testament scriptures and the Tenach. Our study of both the New Testament and the Tenach has convinced us that Gentiles coming into the first century Messianic Community (which was still a Jewish sect in New Testament times) was the beginning of the fulfillment of Hosea's prophecy concerning the ten northern tribes, collectively called "Ephraim."

Hosea's three children were named by HaShem Himself, and each name carried prophetic significance regarding the fate of the ten northern tribes. Hosea's children were *Yizre'el* ("seeded by G-d"), *Lo-Ruchamah* ("unpitied"), and *Lo-ammi* ("not My people"). This was to be the fate of "Ephraim," the ten northern tribes: to be scattered like seed among the nations, to be unpitied, and to be disowned by G-d.

"Yet," Hosea immediately added, "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, instead of that which was said unto them: 'Ye are not My people,' it shall be said unto them: 'Ye are children of the living G-d' (Hosea 2:1, JPS).

So according to Hosea, the numerous descendants of scattered, unpitied, disowned Israel will eventually be reclaimed by G-d and gathered together and joined to the Jewish people. "And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together," was Hosea's next statement (Hosea 2:2).

When and how was this reunion supposed to take place? Christianity's two main Apostles, Peter and Paul,

Cartoon suggested by Frederick Lave



*"For I will bend Judah as My bow,  
I will fill the bow with Ephraim" -Zechariah 9:13*

both quoted Hosea's prophecy and said that this prophecy was being fulfilled by Gentiles coming into the first century Messianic Community. (See 1 Peter 2:9-10 and Romans 9:24-26.) Both Peter and Paul understood that there were descendants of the ten tribes among the Gentiles who were coming into the Messianic Jewish Community. Neither Peter nor Paul said that *all* (or even most) Gentile Christians had a genealogical link to the lost tribes, but it is clear that they believed some of them did, and that this was how Ephraim was being reunited with Judah.

Of course the Messianic Jewish Community of the first century gradually became paganized after the death of the original Apostles, and devolved into a Church which had cut its ties to Israel and the Jewish people. Those of us in the Messianic Israel movement believe it is time to restore those ties. We are ready to make *aliyah* as soon as Israel's Law of Return is modified to accept us as citizens of Israel - not as Jews, but as Ephraimites.

Yes, we still believe in the Nazarene. We cannot deny Him, for He is the one who first pointed us to the Torah and to Israel and to Judah our brother. We believe that Yeshua of Nazareth came as *Mashiach ben Yosef*, the suffering Messiah mentioned by Jewish sages, and started to regather the lost tribes by bringing them into the Messianic Jewish Community. We believe that Yeshua will return as *Mashiach ben David* and finish the job.

Yes, we believe in a *Mashiach* whom the rabbis do not yet unanimously acknowledge, but so do some of Rabbi Schneerson's disciples. If Israel can tolerate Jews who believe that Rabbi Schneerson was the *Mashiach*, perhaps Israel can tolerate non-Jews who believe that Rabbi Yeshua was the *Mashiach*.

-Daniel Botkin



## GENTILES OR ISRAEL?

Reader John Robinson writes: "I find it interesting that Psalm 22:3 is usually misquoted as '[YHVH] inhabits the praises of His people.' Actually it says He inhabits the praises of Israel. We like to think of ourselves as His people, but not as Israel. If we have become part of the commonwealth of Israel, why do we call ourselves Gentiles?"

I too have heard Psalm 22:3 misquoted numerous times over the years, mostly in praise-oriented churches. I have heard it misquoted far more times than I have heard it quoted correctly. As a matter of fact, I don't know if I've ever heard it quoted correctly in a church service.

I don't think it is misquoted deliberately. I think that people have just heard it misquoted so many times that they think that is what the Scripture says. I also doubt that the substitution of "His people" for "Israel" was originally inspired by anti-Semitism. My guess is that some well-meaning Christian (one who viewed the Church as something totally separate from Israel) reasoned that if God inhabited the praises of His Old Testament people Israel, then surely He now inhabits the praises of His New Testament people, the Church.

The first person to substitute "His people" for "Israel" may have actually been motivated to paraphrase it this way to avoid the suggestion of re-placement theology. After all, if non-Jewish Christians say, "God inhabits our praises, because the Bible says He inhabits the praises of Israel," then this might be misunderstood to mean that the Christians have replaced the Jews, and Christians are now the new Israel which replaces the old, rejected Israel.

Christians laying claim to the title of "Israel" is not replacement theology in every case, though. It is only replacement theology if the Christians claim that they have replaced Israel. If the Christians claim that they have *joined* Israel but *not replaced* Israel, then it is not replacement theology, because no one has replaced anyone. The only

### REVEREND TWISTRUTH

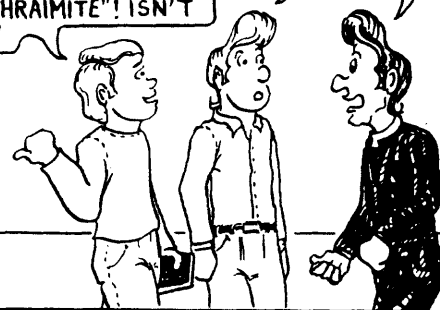
by Daniel Botkin

#### "Exposing the Ephraimite Error"

THAT VISITOR OVER THERE WAS TELLING ME ABOUT EZEKIEL 37 -- THE STICKS OF EPHRAIM & JUDAH BECOMING ONE STICK! HE SAYS THE STICK OF JUDAH IS THE JEWS, AND THE STICK OF EPHRAIM INCLUDES CHRISTIANS! HE CALLS HIMSELF A "MESSIANIC EPHRAIMITE"! ISN'T THAT COOL?

WOW! DO YOU THINK HE'S A REAL EPHRAIMITE, REV. T?

I KNOW AN EASY WAY TO FIND OUT! C'MON!



EXCUSE ME, BROTHER! COULD YOU PLEASE SAY THE WORD "SHIBBOLETH"?

UM...YEAH, I GUESS SO... "SHIBBOLETH"



WELL, THAT PROVES IT! HE'S NO EPHRAIMITE!



JUDGES 12

"re-placing" that has happened is the removal of Gentiles from outside the commonwealth of Israel to inside the commonwealth of Israel.

This brings up John Robinson's second point: If we have become part of the commonwealth of Israel, why do we still call ourselves Gentiles? This is a good question. I, for one, do not like to refer to myself as a Gentile. I realize that the word *Gentile* - *goy* in Hebrew - can simply mean "a nation." (Even the nation of Israel is called a *goy* in God's promise to Abraham to make of him "a great nation," a *goy gadol*.) However, the word *Gentile* often means "heathen" or "pagan." Those of us from the nations who have believed in Israel's Messiah are no longer heathens or pagans. When Paul writes about Gentiles coming into the commonwealth of Israel through faith in Israel's Messiah, he writes about their *Gentile* status as a thing of the past:

"Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh... That at that time ye were without Messiah, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel... But now in Messiah Yeshua ye who sometimes [formerly] were far off are made nigh by the blood of Messiah" (Eph. 2:11-13).

Paul reminded the non-Jewish believers in Ephesus that their *Gentile* status was a thing of the past, and they were now a part of the commonwealth of Israel - not part of some entity separate from Israel, but part of an entity called the Israel of God.

Regardless of what one believes about the extent of Christians' genealogical/ancestral links to the Ephraimites and the Ten Lost Tribes, one thing is clear. In Israel's Messiah, our *Gentile* status is a thing of the past. We need to remember that, and quit living like Gentiles, and live like Messianic Israelites. -Daniel Botkin

# **The Fowls of the Air & The Lilies of the Field**

**-Daniel Botkin-**

*"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" -Matthew 6:24-30*

●  
The first time I read these words was the summer of 1970. I was a self-absorbed, pot-smoking hippie who was slowly being drawn to Jesus. I had not yet come to the Lord, but I was on my way. As soon as I read these words, I said to myself, "This is wonderful! I'll never have to worry about money and material goods for the rest of my life!"

I saw the simple yet profound truth in Jesus' words. God feeds the birds, so why should I not expect Him to feed me? God clothes the grass with the lilies of the field, so why should I not expect Him to clothe me?

Even though I had not yet made a solid commitment to follow the Lord, God graciously opened my eyes to see that I would never again have to worry about money and material needs for the rest of my natural life.

Jesus was telling me that I had a life-time guarantee from the heavenly Father that He would feed and clothe me, and I believed that guarantee. And I can testify that I have never once worried about money and material goods since I read these words of Jesus in 1970.

There have been many times these past 35 years when I have literally been down to my last few dollars. I will admit that there have been times when I have been *curious*, but never worried. When bills are almost due and I don't have the money, I sometimes wonder out of curiosity where the money is going to come from. But peaceful wondering that springs out of curiosity is not the same as fretful worry that springs out of a lack of trust in our heavenly Father. I can calmly wonder where the provision will come from while knowing it will come. And it always does.

"But a carefree, worry-free life isn't possible," some say. "Unless a person is financially well-off, he *has* to worry about money and material needs *sometimes*, doesn't he?" No. Worrying is a choice. If we had no choice in the matter, the Lord would not have commanded us to not worry about these things.

We have a choice. We can worry, or we can behold the fowls of the air and consider the lilies of the field. In 1970 I chose to do the latter. Call me naive, gullible, simple-minded if you want to, but it works. I have beheld the fowls of the air and considered the lilies of the field for 35 years, and my family and I have never been without food, clothing, and shelter. You can call me lazy and irresponsible if you want to, but I am neither lazy nor irresponsible. I work hard, I stay out of debt, and I always manage to pay my bills on time.

Worrying and fretting about food, drink, and clothing is something

Gentiles do. "For after all these things do the Gentiles seek," Jesus said. If you worry about these things, quit thinking like a Gentile. If you have put your trust in Israel's Messiah, you are a part of a family called the Israel of God. The Provider of our family is Abba, our heavenly Father - the same One who feeds the fowls of the air and clothes the grass with the lilies of the field.

If you are a person who worries about money and material needs, set your bills aside, leave your house for a while, and go bird-watching. Behold the fowls of the air. Notice that they don't sow or reap or gather into barns. They let the farmer do that. Then they go and glean the leftovers after the fields have been harvested. Flying together in flocks of hundreds, they swoop down on the harvested fields. Listen to them happily chirping and singing as they feast on the heavenly Father's bountiful provision. "This is great!" they sing. "There's plenty for all of us!"

If bird-watching doesn't drive away your unbelief, then go look at the lilies of the field. Consider their delicate, tender beauty, a beauty that couldn't be matched even by Solomon in all his glory. If you can't find some lilies, any flower will do. There's no such thing as an ugly flower. Even the purple flower that grows on thistles is a thing of beauty - and thistles are here as a result of God's cursing of the earth! When God cursed the earth to punish man for his sins, He said, "Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee" (Gen. 3:18). Yet God decorated the thorns with roses and the thistles with purple flowers. Even with His curses, God includes a blessing. "I'll curse man with thistles and thorns!" He says. Then as an after-thought He says, "But I think I'll put a pretty purple flower on these thistles and some beautiful roses on these thorns." God is so good, He just can't help Himself. He not only clothes the common grass of the field with flowers, He even clothes the cursed thistles and thorns with flowers! Shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?



# CROSSING OVER, PART I: THE CALL TO CROSS OVER

Daniel Botkin

The Book of Joshua can teach us a lot about following Jesus. It's no coincidence that the names *Joshua* and *Jesus* both come from the Hebrew name *Yeshua* (a shortened form of *Yehoshua*, "Yahweh saves"). The Old Testament *Yeshua* (Joshua) led God's people into the physical Promised Land of milk and honey. The New Testament *Yeshua* (Jesus) leads God's people into a spiritual Promised Land of milk and honey. Under the leadership of the Old Testament *Yeshua*/Joshua, God's people were victorious over evil people and sinful giants. Under the leadership of the New Testament *Yeshua*/Jesus, God's people are victorious over evil spirits and giant sins. The people in Joshua's day had to leave the wilderness and cross over the Jordan in order to enter into their inheritance. We have to leave the wilderness of a sensory-based world view, and cross over into the heavenly realm, where we walk by faith and not by sight, in order to enter into our inheritance.

Last summer and fall, I spent nearly four months teaching from the Book of Joshua every Sabbath. In the next few issues, I plan to share some of those teachings.

## PART I: THE CALL TO CROSS OVER

During the Passover season, we focus on the Hebrews' deliverance from Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea, and how these historic events typify our deliverance from Satan's domain. However, Yahweh's purpose in bringing the people out of Egypt was not just to get them out of Egypt. His purpose in bringing them out of Egypt was to bring them into the Land: "And He brought us out from thence [from Egypt], that He might bring us in, to give us the land which He swore unto our fathers" (Deut. 6:23). The crossing of the Red Sea was necessary to get the people out of Egypt, but there was a second cross-



ing, the crossing of the Jordan, that was necessary to get them into the Land of Promise.

There is a call from the Holy Spirit to "come out of" and there is also a call from the Holy Spirit to "enter into." Many Christians hear and understand the call to spiritually come out of Egypt, but they never enter into the spiritual Promised Land. They spend their lives aimlessly wandering in that in-between wilderness world. They are too spiritual to fully enjoy the pleasures of sin, but too carnal to experience the rich blessings of God. Sometimes they stay in the wilderness because they are taught that crossing the Jordan and entering Canaan Land means dying and going to a peaceful heaven. This teaching is not in the Bible, though. Canaan was a place of fierce battles, not a peaceful paradise.

Crossing the Jordan and entering the Land speaks of entering into a life of spiritual blessings, spiritual battles, and victories over sin. It speaks of living a holy life.

Moses took the people out of Egypt, but Joshua took them into the Land. Moses and Joshua are both pictures of the Messiah. Moses is a picture of *Yeshua* as our Redeemer, who takes us out of sin's domain. Joshua is a picture of *Yeshua* as our Sanctifier, who takes us into a life of holiness. We need to know *Yeshua* both as our Redeemer and as our Sanctifier, because it is the will of God that we be not only redeemed but also sanctified, as it is written, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification" (1 Thes. 4:3).

Many believers struggle over knowing the will of God. "What does the Lord want me to do with my life? What is God's will for me?" In just two words, 1 Thessalonians 4:3 tells you what the will of God is for you: your sanctification.

True, God does have a specific plan which is custom-made just for you personally. However, don't become so overly preoccupied trying to figure out all the details of His specific plan for you that you forget His general plan for all His people, namely, your sanctification. Focus on living a holy life, and the specific details of His plan for you personally will be revealed when you need to know them.

Crossing Jordan and entering into a state of sanctification will end your struggle over knowing the will of God. Be forewarned that crossing the Jordan will take you into other kinds of struggles. But the struggle over knowing the will of God will be over, because you will be in the will of God and doing the will of God.

Knowing that you are in the will of God brings rest to the soul, even in the midst of spiritual battles. In Hebrews chapters 3 and 4, Canaan is spoken of as a picture of spiritual rest, even though Canaan was a place of battle. *Yeshua* urged people to come unto Him and find rest for their souls (Matt. 11:28ff). Hebrews 4:11 says, "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest."

Augustine said that our souls are restless until they find rest in God. I agree with Augustine's statement. I believe that every lost soul is moving either toward or away from its Maker. Hardening or softening one's heart will determine the direction of the soul (or reverse the direction). A soft heart is light and can ascend; a hard heart of stone is heavy and descends. Urged by our own weight, we seek our own place, Augustine said. Just as the nature of fire causes it to go upward and the nature of a stone causes it to

go downward, so the natural bent of the soul causes it to be either drawn toward God or repulsed by thoughts of Him. Water and oil always separate from each other. The oil rises and the water sinks. Urged by our own weight, we seek our own place. For those who hate the Lord, that place is perdition. For those of us who love the Lord, that place is our sanctification.

When we cross the Jordan and enter into our sanctification, we are delivered from the internal weight of the sinful urge. Old-fashioned Methodists and holiness Christians speak of sanctification as a one-time spiritual experience, an identifiable event in the Christian's personal life which can be pinned down to a specific time and place. Others speak of sanctification as an ongoing process that continues throughout life, as the Lord continually purges away the dross. There are aspects of truth in both of these views. A conscious decision does have to be made to live a holy life. Yet even sanctified Methodists will admit that they can still be tempted. They may overcome every temptation they face, but battles against temptation still exist. However, entering into a state of sanctification brings a sense of finality, an inward assurance that final victory is certain. The battles are not over, but for all practical intents and purposes, the war is won, because God's rule over the soul is firmly established. We are like soldiers who have regained control over territory that was formerly held by the enemy. We may occasionally encounter pockets of resistance, but they are always defeated. We are just mopping up, so to speak.

Can a person who is truly saved and sanctified backslide and become enslaved to some sin? If you are sanctified, you know that *theoretically* you *could* backslide. However, you don't expect that to happen, and you don't worry about it ever happening, because you are fully assured that God will keep you. You are not self-assured; you are Holy Spirit-assured. You are not trusting in yourself to keep yourself from falling; you are trusting in God to keep you from falling: "Now

unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen" (Jude 24f). Because God's dominion and power are established over your soul, He is able (and willing) to keep you from falling into sin.

Your restless soul will not find rest on the wilderness side of the Jordan River. If you just sit on Jordan's riverbank and gaze at the milk and honey on the other side, your soul will not find rest. Rest is only found on the other side. Before the priests could cross over, they had to step into the waters. Their feet had to "rest in the waters of Jordan" before the way opened up. As a New Covenant priest, you have to take a step of faith and enter into the waters.

"But I need more time," you argue. "I'm saved, but I'm not ready to live a holy life. The children of Israel waited forty years between crossing the Red Sea and crossing the Jordan. I think I'll wait, too."

True, the children of Israel had to wait forty years in the wilderness, but that wait was due to their sin of unbelief: "But with whom was He grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief" (Heb. 3:17ff).

God's perfect will for the generation that came out of Egypt was that they enter the Land. Hebrews 11 is the "faith chapter." When it says "By faith they passed through the Red Sea," this is immediately followed by the statement "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down." The forty years between these two events are not even mentioned, as though they were nonexistent. As a matter of fact, there is no mention of the forty wilderness years anywhere at all in the faith chapter, because those were years of unbelief, not faith.

God's original intent for the children of Israel was a three-step plan:

1. Come out of Egypt by the blood of the lamb and cross the Red Sea.
2. Go to Mount Sinai and get the revelation of the Torah.
3. Cross the Jordan and enter into the Land.

These three steps summarize what should be the norm for us:

1. Get redeemed by the blood of the Lamb and get baptized.
2. Let the Lord write the Torah on our hearts by the Holy Spirit.
3. Cross over into a state of sanctification and live a holy life.

After the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea, they saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore, slain by Yahweh. Therefore, they should have expected Yahweh to give them victory over the Canaanites, too. That generation was too scared to cross over, though. So they spent the rest of their natural lives aimlessly wandering in the wilderness, just killing time until their generation died off.

Think of the Egyptians as the sins that formerly enslaved you. If you have overcome sinful habits since you were saved, then you have seen the Egyptians dead upon the shore of the Red Sea. Think of the Canaanites as the evil spiritual powers that still try to influence you. If you take a step of faith and cross over to the other side, those spiritual powers will be cut off. They will no longer afflict your soul. Your soul will be at rest.

Crossing over and entering into a state of sanctification brings rest to the soul. This inward peace of holiness is what the Sabbath represents. God still wants us to keep the seventh-day Sabbath in a literal/physical way, but if you do not have the inward reality of what the Sabbath represents, you are just experiencing the Sabbath as an outward phenomenon only. You are getting rest for your body, which is good, but you are not experiencing rest for your soul, which is not good. You have an incomplete Sabbath, so to speak. Cross over into a state of sanctification, and find rest for your soul, even in the midst of the battles in Canaan. □

# THE FIRE, THE WATER, & THE DESERT

## Three Elements Necessary For Divine Revelation

Daniel Botkin

When Israel received the Torah at Mount Sinai, the revelation of God's Word was given in the context of fire, water, and the desert. "And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because Yahweh descended on it in fire," and "Yahweh spake with you in the mount out of the midst of the fire," Moses said (Ex. 19:18 & Deut. 9:10). Later, in the Song of Moses, the revelation of God's Word is compared to water: "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distill as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass" (Deut. 32:2). The same Song of Moses mentions the desert as the place where Israel received instruction. "He [Yahweh] found him [Israel] in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye" (Deut. 32:10).

Thus we see that the revelation of God's Word to Israel is connected to these three elements, the fire, the water, and the desert. We need to experience these three elements in a spiritual sense if we want to receive Divine revelation from God's written Word, the Holy Scriptures.

Some people read the Bible as nothing more than literature or history. If that is all you want to get out of reading the Bible, you do not need to experience the fire, the water, and desert for that. The Bible is a great literary masterpiece and a good source of historical information, but the Word of God is meant to be much more than that. It is meant to be a source of revelation to God's people. Paul's prayer for the believers in Ephesus was "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him" (Eph. 1:17). If we want to receive the spirit of wisdom and revelation, we need to experience the fire, the water, and the desert. Let's consider each of these three elements.

### THE FIRE

The revelation of the Torah was received in the context of fire, and the spirit of wisdom and revelation must also be received in the context of fire. Fire speaks of God's holiness. "For our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29). The fire of God's holiness burns away the worthless wood, hay, and stubble in our lives, purifying the gold, silver, and precious stones. (See 1 Corinthians 3:10-15.)

Because of its purging, purifying, cleansing effect, fire speaks of perfecting holiness in the fear of God: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1).

Notice from the above verse that the fire of God's holiness affects us both internally and externally. We are to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh (which speaks of external holiness) and spirit (which speaks of internal holiness).

Some churches emphasize only (or primarily) external holiness - modest dress, abstinence from smoking and drinking and worldly entertainment,

etc. - but ignore the importance of inward purity of heart. They shun any and all outward forms of worldliness, but like the hypocrites of Yeshua's time, they are white-washed tombs full of dead men's bones.

Other churches emphasize only (or primarily) internal holiness of heart, but have little or no concern about externals such as dress, bad habits, worldly entertainment, etc. "It's what's in your heart that really matters," they say, implying that the externals are of very little importance.

The Biblical view of holiness is not an either/or option. Biblical holiness is a fire that purges both internally and externally. This truth is seen in other verses which refer to both internal and external holiness:

"Who shall ascend into the hill of Yahweh? Or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart" (Ps. 24:3f). Clean hands speak of external holiness; a pure heart speaks of internal holiness.

"Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded" (James 4:8). Here again we see external holiness in clean hands and internal holiness in purified hearts.

"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:20). Glorifying God in both the body and spirit speaks of holiness which is both external and internal.

External and internal holiness are both necessary if we want to receive Divine revelation when we read the Scriptures. Peter tells us that the Holy Scriptures were written when "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21). Consider this well: If it took holy men of God moved by the Holy Spirit to pen the Holy Scriptures, then it is reasonable to conclude that it will take holy men of God moved by the Holy Spirit to receive Divine revelation from the Holy Scriptures.

According to the Bible, the holy fire

of God literally fell from heaven on a few occasions. Sometimes it fell to consume the wicked; sometimes it fell to show God's approval and acceptance of the sacrifice that was laid on the altar. It never fell on an empty altar, though. The fire does not fall unless there is a sacrifice on the altar. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service," Paul wrote (Rom. 12:1). Paul was not concerned only about external holiness, "your bodies," though. His concern for internal holiness is evident in the very next verse, where he says, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." The renewing of the mind brings us to our next element, water.

#### THE WATER

"Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind," Paul says. Our minds are renewed as they are sanctified and cleansed "with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:26). Just as old leather wineskins were renewed in Biblical times by soaking them in water, so our minds are renewed by saturating them in the water of God's Word.

When a man first comes to the Lord, his mind is like an old, dried-up wineskin - stiff, brittle, inflexible. In this carnal condition, the mind can receive very little Divine revelation. If very much new wine is poured into an old wineskin, the wineskin will burst. Too much revelation poured into a carnal mind will blow that mind. The mind has to be soaked in the Word of God so it will become pliable. Flexibility is necessary, because the mind must conform to the shape of the new wine of Divine revelation which is being poured in.

A dried-up wineskin has to soak in water for a considerable length of time before it is renewed and ready to receive the new wine. A quick dip won't do the job. In the same way, our mind has to spend a lot of time soaking up the water of the Word of God through prayerful reading and

deep, focused meditation on the Scriptures.

Sometimes the Scriptures seem to yield no water. Sometimes the Bible seems dry even to a thirsty soul. Yet we know that the wells of water are found in the Scriptures. How is it that the wells sometimes yield no water?

Isaac had the same problem. His father Abraham had dug several wells. When Isaac brought his flocks and herds to these wells, he discovered that the envious Philistines had filled the wells with earth.

What did Isaac do? He got the rubbish out of the wells and re-dug them and found the water he needed. This is what we have to do. We need to remove the rubbish of our own sins, the rubbish of worldly ways, the rubbish of those man-made traditions and doctrines which block the flow of the Spirit. We need to dig and re-dig in our study of God's Word and remove the "earth" from our theology. We need to quit looking at things from an earthly perspective, and look at things from the heavenly perspective. Otherwise, the waters of revelation will not flow.

Re-digging the old wells of his father Abraham brought strife into Isaac's life. "And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying, 'The water is ours'" (Gen. 26:20).

When we start removing rubbish from old wells that the Enemy long ago filled with earth, it will bring strife into our lives. For example, when we begin to quench our spiritual thirst at the well called Sabbath, well-meaning Christians will warn us that these waters are not for us. Or when we swallow the revelation that our faith in Israel's Messiah makes us a part of the commonwealth of Israel, well-meaning Jewish believers will strive with us, saying, "The title of Israel is ours and ours alone! You can't drink from that well!" Sorry, brothers, but it's too late. We Gentiles - former Gentiles, actually - have already tasted the living waters from the wells of Yeshua, and those waters turned us into full-fledged Israelites. But not to worry - there's plenty of water for all of us, an

endless supply! So drink up. You're going to need water where we're going - which brings us to the third element necessary for Divine revelation, the desert.

#### THE DESERT

Yahweh led Israel deep into the desert before He took them into the Promised Land. He chose to reveal Himself and His Torah in "the waste howling wilderness," far away from the worldly splendor of Egypt. The desert is bare and barren and does not bear the mark of man's meddling. There is a purity in the desert. It is virgin territory, where God's expression of Himself is not filtered through the clutter of human culture and civilization. If you go deep into the desert at night, you will be aware of nothing except the silence of the stars and the Voice of God.

The clearest revelation of the Almighty is given to those who figuratively go into the desert. Our minds are crowded and cluttered with lies, misinformation, and vain thoughts which have seeped into our thinking from the world around us. To think rightly, we have to restore our spiritual sanity by separating ourselves from the culture that surrounds us. We do not need to physically and geographically go into the desert; we just have to spiritually and mentally separate ourselves from the world around us, so that we are in the world but not of the world.

It's okay to be thankful that we are American citizens living in 21st century America, but we must not let 21st-century American culture affect how we view the Scriptures. To receive Divine revelation from the Scriptures, we must approach them without our 21st-century American eyeglasses, because those eyeglasses will distort our spiritual vision. If we want Divine revelation from the Bible, we must forget our own time, our own nationality, our own culture, and even our own family. None of these things should dictate our view of the Scriptures. If we want Divine revelation, we need to look at the naked truth of God's Word apart from the influence of our times,



our nationality, our culture, and our family.

"Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house" (Ps. 45:10). These are the instructions to the Bride of Messiah in Psalm 45. The Book of Hebrews tells us that Psalm 45 speaks of the Messiah. (See Hebrews 1:8f.) Psalm 45 presents the Messiah as a Warrior King going to battle against the Enemy. The Messiah King's victory is followed by a description of His Bride. To fully appreciate the words spoken to the Bride in this psalm, we need to consider Deuteronomy 21:10-13. These verses give instructions concerning captives taken in war. If a man sees a woman among the captives and wants to marry her, the woman must do five things. She must go to the man's house, shave her head, pare her nails, take off the raiment of her captivity, and mourn her father and mother a full month. After that, she can be the man's bride.

These Torah instructions to a captive bride have a deep spiritual application to the Bride of Messiah. Like the captive Gentile bride who had to shave her head, pare her nails, and take off the raiment of her captivity, we have to strip away our old identity. We have to forget our former Gentile identity, because we are now being joined to Israel through our union with our Israelite Bridegroom, the Messiah. We have to forget our 21st-century American identity, because we are entering an eternal kingdom which includes people from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. We even have to forget our family ties if they interfere with our relationship with the King, because He has said, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10:37).

The instructions to the Bride to forget her own people and her father's house are introduced by attention-getting words: "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house" (Ps. 45:10). Notice those words: Hearken. Consider. Incline thine ear. The Holy Spirit wants to be sure that these instructions are heard, considered, and

obeyed. The result of hearing, considering, and obeying is expressed in the next verse: "So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him."

If we want to be the Bride whose beauty the King greatly desires, we have to go to the desert. We have to separate ourselves from the world system in which we live, and live a life apart. We are called to live as a holy nation in the midst of a harlot nation, a wilderness people in the midst of a worldly people.

John Owens, a Puritan preacher of long ago, told the church people of his day that some of them were following another Jesus, not the real Jesus. "You have an imaginary Christ," he said, "and if you are satisfied with an imaginary Christ, you must be satisfied with imaginary salvation."

Yeshua, the real Christ, warned that there would be false messiahs. Counterfeit messiahs are not just men who say, "I am the Messiah." Counterfeit messiahs are also the distorted versions of Jesus that are preached from the pulpits of many churches. Paul warned the Corinthians about false religious leaders who were preaching "another Jesus, whom we have not preached" (2 Cor. 11:4). Paul's warning is still relevant today.

We need to be sure that the Jesus we follow is the true Jesus, and not another Jesus we heard about from preachers who don't even know Him. Yeshua of Nazareth is not a Jesus who wants only lip service in the form of a "sinner's prayer." The real Jesus expects a genuine commitment which is expressed by acts of obedience and a life of holiness. The real Jesus expects His people to experience the fire, the water, and the desert. He doesn't expect us to go through these things alone, though. He has promised to go with us:

"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am Yahweh thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour" (Isa. 43:2f). □

# A PRE-ADAMIC WORLD

## Fact, Fiction, Or Plausible Theory?

Dr. Daniel Botkin

Was there a world that existed before Adam? Is it possible that the earth was inhabited for a period of time between Genesis 1:1, when God first "created the heaven and the earth," and Genesis 1:2, when the earth was - or became - "without form and void" as the result of cataclysmic changes?

I do not believe that the Bible clearly states with absolute certainty that such a world existed before Adam. On the other hand, I do not believe that the Bible absolutely rules out such a possibility. Furthermore, there are certain passages of Scripture which suggest the existence of an inhabited world before Adam.

The idea of an inhabited earth before Adam is sometimes called "the gap theory" because it sees a gap of time between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. Then at some later time, the earth was - or more accurately, became - without form and void as the result of Divine judgment and cataclysmic changes.

Those who see the possibility of a gap of time do not just read that idea into the Scriptures in order to accommodate the foolish theory of evolution or scientists' claims that the earth is much older than 6,000 years. That would be eisegesis and spineless compromise. Those who see the possibility of a world before Adam infer it from other passages of Scripture and from the Hebrew text of Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. Long before Darwin's theory of evolution and long before scientists' attempts to date the age of the universe, Jewish commentators saw different ways to understand the text. Some, such as Ibn Ezra (1092-1167), claimed that the Hebrew text supported the Aristotelian view of matter as something coeternal with God, thus making the "age" of the universe irrelevant.<sup>1</sup> I do not agree with Ibn Ezra and Aristotle; I mention this only to show that the Hebrew texts

concerning creation can be understood in more than one way, and to show that the idea of a 6,000-year-old universe has not always been universally accepted by Bible believers. Those believers who say that the universe is older than 6,000 years are not denying the truth of the Bible; they are merely disagreeing with one interpretation of what the Bible teaches about the age of the universe.

The universe may very well be only 6,000 years old. Even the acceptance of the so-called gap theory does not rule out that possibility, because the length of the time gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 may have been very short. On the other hand, it could have been very long. The purpose of this article is not to debate the age of the universe<sup>2</sup>. The purpose of this article is to present the arguments for the possibility of an inhabited world before the six days of creation (or perhaps more accurately, six days of re-creating) recorded in Genesis 1:3-31. So let's look at some of the passages that suggest this possibility.

First, there is the phrase "without form and void" in Genesis 1:2. In Hebrew "without form" is *tohu*; "void" is *bohu*. Together, the phrase is *tohu va-vohu*. (The *va-* prefix is "and," which changes the "b" sound in *bohu* to a "v" sound.) The Hebrew word translated "was" in the KJV can just as

accurately be translated "became." The same verb is used to tell us that Lot's wife "became a pillar of salt" (Gen. 19:26). The NIV affirms the legitimacy of this alternative understanding in its marginal note: "the earth became formless and empty."

So the question is: Did the earth become *tohu* and *bohu*, or did God originally create the earth *tohu* and *bohu*? Isaiah 45:18 answers that question. "For thus saith Yahweh that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it; He hath established it, He created it not in vain." This phrase "not in vain" is *lo* ["not"] *tohu*. This certainly refers to the original creation, for Isaiah first describes the creation of the heavens, then the earth, and he uses the Hebrew word for "create," *bara*. So if God did not originally create the earth *tohu*, the inescapable conclusion is that the earth became *tohu* (and *bohu*) at some point in time after the original creation.

Some commentators believe that Isaiah 24:1 refers to the cataclysmic changes that caused the earth to become without form and void.<sup>3</sup> "Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof." Isaiah 24:1 at its *peshat* (simple, literal) level sounds like a warning of what God will do in the future. However, the destruction described here seems to go even beyond the end-time destruction described in Revelation. Furthermore, even if Isaiah 24:1 does refer to some future destruction, that does not rule out the possibility that it is also a reiteration of Genesis 1:2, when the earth became without form and void, to serve as a warning against future judgment. In effect, God would be saying, "I made the earth become without form and void before, and I can do it again."

Isaiah used this kind of *tohu* and *bohu* imagery as a warning to the

nations in 34:11, where Yahweh threatens to stretch out upon the land "the line of confusion [*tohu*] and the stones of emptiness [*bohu*]." Here *tohu* and *bohu* are used together to describe destruction that comes as the result of Divine judgment. This at least suggests that the earth's *tohu va-vohu* condition in Genesis 1:2 might also have happened as the result of Divine judgment.

Jeremiah also uses the *tohu va-vohu* expression to describe Divine judgment: "I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form and void [*tohu va-vohu*]; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of Yahweh, and by His fierce anger" (Jer. 4:23-26).

Jeremiah's description of the earth as *tohu va-vohu* and his description of the heavens as having "no light" certainly sounds like Genesis 1:2, when "the earth was *tohu va-vohu*, and darkness was upon the face of the deep." If Yahweh was giving Jeremiah a vision of what the earth looked like in Genesis 1:2, then what were these "fruitful places" and "cities" that were destroyed as the result of Divine judgment? It sounds like there was some sort of civilization with fruitful places and cities before the earth became without form and void. It sounds like there was a great flood that completely covered the earth with water, turning the fruitful places into a wilderness, breaking down the cities, and bringing darkness upon the face of the deep. This is not a description of Noah's Flood, because Jeremiah saw "no man." There were eight who survived Noah's Flood. Furthermore, Noah's Flood did not make the earth *tohu va-vohu* nor bring darkness upon the face of the deep.

Jeremiah's vision is followed by a warning: "For thus hath Yahweh said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end" (Jer. 4:27). In other words, destruction is coming

to the whole earth, but it will not be total destruction as it was in Genesis 1:2, when the earth became *tohu va-vohu*, and all the fruitful places and cities were destroyed by a flood, and darkness covered the face of the deep, and there was no man.

If there was indeed an inhabited earth before Adam, who or what were the inhabitants? This question can lead to all sorts of speculation, much of it foolish. We need to remember that even Scripture-based speculation is still speculation and not dogma. However, some Scripture-based speculation, if true, can help explain some things. Let's consider some Scripture-based speculation about what preceded Adam.

First, we have to understand a Biblical principle that could be called the principle of double reference. Sometimes in the Bible, a visible human is addressed, but on a deeper level the words are actually being spoken to an invisible spiritual entity that is empowering and using the visible human as its agent. When the Lord spoke to demon-possessed people, He often was actually speaking to the demons. When He rebuked Peter one time, He actually called Peter "Satan," because Satan was the spiritual entity inspiring Peter. The visible agent does not always have to be human. It can be an animal. In Genesis 3, God spoke to the serpent, but on a deeper level, He was addressing Satan, the spirit being who used the serpent to tempt Eve.

With this principle of double reference in mind, many theologians agree that Isaiah's words to the king of Babylon are addressed not only to the earthly king of Babylon, but also to the spiritual entity who was over the king of Babylon, namely, Satan: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cast down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like

the most High.' Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit" (Isa. 14:12-15).

Many theologians believe that this passage describes the transformation of Lucifer, an anointed cherub, into Satan, the adversary and agent of evil. If Isaiah's description of the fall of Lucifer is truly an account of Satan's origin, then it appears that Lucifer/Satan ruled over some kind of kingdom on this planet before he fell. That Lucifer ruled a kingdom can be inferred from the mention of his "throne"; that his throne was on earth can be inferred from Lucifer's desire to "ascend above the heights of the clouds." If his throne was under the clouds, this places his kingdom on earth, not somewhere in heaven.

If Isaiah's words to the king of Babylon have a double reference and give us a glimpse of Satan's pre-Adamic status and fall, then Ezekiel's words to the king of Tyrus provide even more details:

"Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God: Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast

thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee" (Ezk. 28:12-17).

These words to the king of Tyus are obviously addressed not only to the earthly king, the human agent, but also to Satan, the spiritual entity who empowered and used the earthly king of Tyus. A king who was a mere human could not have been in Eden, the garden of God, nor in the midst of the stones of fire in the holy mountain of God. A human king would not have been called "the anointed cherub" who was "created" instead of "born."

Let's sum up what the Prophets have told us so far:

- Isaiah said that God did not originally create the earth *tohu*, so apparently the earth became *tohu* (and *bohu*) sometime after the original creation.

- Jeremiah saw a vision of the earth in darkness, in its primeval condition of *tohu va-vohu*, and he saw cities that had been broken down and fruitful places that had become a wilderness.

- Isaiah and Ezekiel provide a description of Lucifer, the anointed cherub who through pride rebelled against God and became Satan, the Adversary and agent of evil. From Isaiah's description, it appears that Lucifer had a throne and ruled over some sort of kingdom on this earth.

If we put the pieces together, it appears that there may have been some sort of civilization on this earth before the creation of Adam. It also appears that Lucifer ruled the earth as the anointed cherub, and launched his rebellion against God from this planet.

The inhabitants of this pre-Adamic world may very well have been angels, not men. Revelation 12:4 says that the dragon took a third of the stars with him, which suggests that the inhabitants of Lucifer's kingdom were angels, not men. Furthermore, 1 Corinthians 15:45 says that Adam was "the first man," which seems to exclude the possibility of any human inhabitants before Adam. Although

one could argue that the verse just means that Adam was the first man of this present age only, which would not rule out the possibility of some sort of pre-Adamic, non-Adamic "men" in prior ages.

The details of this scenario are somewhat speculative. Even though it is speculation with a Biblical basis, it is certainly not something which people should be required to believe. However, if this picture of Lucifer ruling over a pre-Adamic civilization on this planet is true, how would believing it affect our faith? How would such information be useful to us? For one thing, it would help explain the origin of evil in this world. It doesn't explain *why* God allowed evil to come into existence (I have yet to hear a satisfactory explanation for that), but it does explain *how* evil came into existence.

It also helps us to understand why God told Adam to "dress and keep [*shamar*]" the Garden of Eden. *Shamar* means to guard or protect. Guard and protect it from what? Thistles and thorns? No, for these did not come into existence until after man sinned. Adam was supposed to guard and protect the Garden from something far more sinister than weeds.

If Lucifer ruled the earth prior to Adam, this would explain why Satan shows up on this planet shortly after the creation of man, a new being who is given dominion over the earth. Satan is trying to regain his old turf by persuading the new rulers of the planet to join him in his rebellion against God. If he can persuade them to rebel against God, then he can regain his throne on this planet, and continue to rule through fallen man. Even though "the earth is [rightfully] the Lord's, and the fulness thereof" (Ps. 24:1), the Prophets' words to the kings of Babylon and Tyus show that Satan does indeed rule the fallen world system through sinful human agents. "The whole world lieth in wickedness," John wrote (1 John 5:19).

John Milton, in his epic poem *Paradise Lost*, portrays Beelzebub telling his demon cohorts about "some

new race called Man, about this time to be created." Beelzebub's plan is to "seduce them to our party, that their God/ May prove their foe, and with repenting hand/ Abolish his own works. This would surpass/ Common revenge, and interrupt his joy."<sup>4</sup>

Satan's plan is to defy God and rule the earth through fallen man. God's plan is to defy Satan and rule the earth through redeemed man. The Almighty is almighty. He doesn't need our help to defeat His enemy. If He wanted to, He could entirely and permanently snuff out Satan and evil in an instant. Yet for reasons known only to Him, the Almighty has chosen to use the unmighty to defeat His enemy. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength because of Thine enemies, that Thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger" (Ps. 8:2).

If this scenario of a pre-Adamic world is accurate, it gives us a glorious glimpse into God's purpose for creating man, and thus an understanding of the purpose of our existence. After Lucifer launched his rebellion from this planet, God destroyed Lucifer's kingdom and made the earth without form and void. Then God renewed the earth and created a new kind of being to rule the restored planet. This new being, created in God's image and likeness, was to replenish the earth, subdue it, and have dominion over it. This new being, Man, was weaker than angels ("like to us, though less in power and excellence, but favor'd more," Beelzebub says to his cohorts in *Paradise Lost*).<sup>5</sup>

Matter is lifeless; angels are spirit (Ps. 104:4). Man is a combination of matter and spirit, and therefore "a little lower than the angels" (Ps. 8:5). Rather than snuffing out Satan and the fallen angels, the Almighty has chosen to use us, the unmighty, to shame His enemies and re-establish His authority on earth. "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (1 Cor. 1:27). When David considered these things, it caused him to look up at the heavens, the moon and the stars, and ask, "What is man, that Thou art mindful of

him? And the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" (Ps. 8:4).

Read Psalm 8 and meditate on the words. David was humbled by his understanding of God's purpose for man. Whether you are the President or a pauper, you have a purpose in the plan of God. Once you see that the Almighty wants to use you, the unmighty, to shame and defeat His enemies, it will humble you and inspire you to do whatever it takes to fulfill the purpose of your existence as an individual member of the Family of Redeemed Men. Whether you live a long life, a short life, or an average lifespan of threescore and ten years, if you faithfully fulfill God's purpose for you in this life, you will be glad for all eternity that you did so.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Philologos, "On Language," *The Forward* Oct. 1 2004, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>I am not a scientist, so I am not qualified to speak authoritatively about the age of the universe from a scientific perspective. I have read enough to make me highly skeptical of some of the methods used by scientists to calculate the age of the universe, so I am not convinced that it is necessarily as old as scientists claim it is. On the other hand, I am not convinced that the Bible dogmatically teaches that the earth is only 6,000 years old. Those who dogmatically insist that the Bible teaches this usually base their conclusion on two premises. First, they assume that there was no gap of time between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. This premise cannot be proven, and some Scriptures suggest that there *was* a gap of time. Second, they assume that the six days were literal 24-hour days. This too is debatable. The 24-hour literalists usually know that the Hebrew word for day, *yom*, can be used to refer to an era of time, as in the expression "the Day of the Lord" or as in Yeshua's statement, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." But because each of the six days in Genesis consists of one evening and one morning, the 24-hour literalists conclude that each day was



24 hours long. Maybe, but this too is debatable, for at least two reasons. First, it ignores the fact that the words "evening" and "morning" are sometimes used figuratively, just as "day" is. A quick look in a concordance will confirm this. (For those too lazy to use a concordance, here are just a few places where "evening" and "morning" are used figuratively: Ps. 90:3-6; Jer. 6:4; Job 7:21; Isa. 21:12.) Second, even if we assume that six occurrences of "the evening and the morning" in Genesis each refers to a single setting and rising of the sun, it is still possible that each "day" is longer than 24 hours. A literal "day" is one complete rotation of the planet. The length of a day is determined by the speed of the planet's rotation. We know what the speed of the earth's rotation is now, but we do not know with certainty what the speed of the earth's rotation was during the six days of creation. It is entirely possible that God turned the earth very slowly as He worked on it, like a sculptor slowly turning clay on a rotating pedestal, carefully and painstakingly molding and shaping the details of his masterpiece. God may have taken His time when He did His handiwork. He may have turned the globe so slowly that it took 1,000 years to make a complete revolution - 1,000 years from one sunset to the next. Such a possibility in no way contradicts the Scriptures. In fact, such a possibility is suggested by Peter's statement that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Pet. 3:8). There are a number of different ways to understand the account of the six days of creation. We should be humble enough to simply say, "O Lord God, Thou knowest" (Ezk. 37:3). If we dogmatically assert that God has clearly declared something which He has not really declared, then we may hear Him say to us what He said to Job: "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" (Job 38:2).

<sup>3</sup>Scofield and Dake, e.g.

<sup>4</sup>Book II, line 348 & 368-371.

<sup>5</sup>Book II, line 349f.

### The Ballad of the Four Sons A Song For Passover

 Sung to the tune of   
"My Darlin' Clementine"

Said the father to his children,  
"At the Seder you will dine,  
You will eat your fill of matza,  
You will drink four cups of wine."

Now this father had no daughters,  
But his sons they numbered four.  
One was wise and one was wicked,  
One was simple and a bore.

And the fourth was sweet and winsome,  
He was young and he was small.  
While the brothers asked the questions,  
He could scarcely speak at all.

Said the wise son to his father,  
"Would you please explain the laws  
Of the customs of the Seder,  
would you please explain the cause?"

And the father proudly answered,  
"As our fathers ate in speed,  
Ate the paschal lamb ere midnight  
And from slavery were freed.

"So we follow their example,  
And ere midnight must complete  
All the Seder, and we should not  
After twelve, remain to eat."

Then did sneer the son so wicked,  
"What does all this mean to you?"  
And his father's voice was bitter  
As his grief and anger grew.

"If yourself you don't consider  
As a son of Isra-el.  
Then for you this has no meaning,  
You could be a slave as well."

Then the simple son said simply,  
"What is this?" and quietly,  
The good father told his offspring,  
"We were freed from slavery."

But the youngest son was silent,  
For he could not speak at all.  
His bright eyes were bright with wonder,  
As his father told them all.

Now dear children, heed the lessons,  
And remember evermore  
What the father told his children,  
Told his sons that numbered four.

-Abraham Love (1915-1996)

# Q & A

**Q:** We have been told that the "Last Supper" was the Passover Seder. We have also been told that Jesus was sacrificed as the Lamb of God at the same hour when lambs were being sacrificed for Passover. But if that is true, then the Jews would have been eating the Passover the evening immediately *after* Jesus died, not the evening before. So how could Jesus, as a Torah-observant Jew, have eaten the Passover with His disciples the night before?

**A:** Matthew, Mark, and Luke all clearly refer to the Last Supper as "the passover" (Mt. 26:17-19; Mk. 14:12-16; Lk. 22:7-13). John does not call the supper "passover," but it is obvious from John's description that he is referring to the very same supper on the very same evening as the passover supper described by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. John adds some details and omits others, but he includes information mentioned in the other three Gospels: Yeshua's announcement that one of the disciples would betray Him; the dipping of the sop by Judas; the prediction of Peter's three-fold denial. Unless a person wants to believe that all three of these events occurred on two separate occasions at two separate suppers on two separate evenings, we have to agree that all four Gospels are speaking about the same supper, and that it was the passover meal - because Matthew, Mark, and Luke all call it "the passover."

The supper was followed by the Lord's teaching and prayer in Gethsemane, then the betrayal and arrest, and the beginning of Yeshua's trial. Peter's denial and the cockcrow probably happened around dawn, the time cocks normally crow. This is where some confusion comes in. John 18:27f says: "Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew. Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas from the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover."

As a young disciple studying about Passover many years ago, I noticed what appeared to be a contradiction here. This is the next day; "it was early." This is the morning *after* Jesus' evening passover supper/seder. How could these Jewish leaders not have already eaten the passover meal the night before?

I was puzzled about this for about seven years. Then sometime around 1984, I heard Sid Roth mention something on his radio program about the Pharisees and Sadducees differing on which evening to eat the passover.\* The Scripture says to kill and eat it on the evening of the 14th (Ex. 12:6-8). However, it is not clear whether this means the evening when the 14th is *beginning*, or the evening when the 14th is *ending*. Since the day begins at sunset, "the evening of the 14th" could mean either. Because the Pharisees and Sadducees disagreed, lambs were sacrificed for people to eat on both nights. This allowed Yeshua to eat the passover as the 14th was beginning, and still be sacrificed as the Lamb of God while the lambs were being sacrificed for those who would be eating the passover as the 14th ended. This would also explain why, during the Crucifixion, the approaching day was a "sabbath": the 15th of Aviv is always an annual sabbath (Lev. 23:6-8). (And John mentions in 19:31 that it was "a high sabbath," not an ordinary weekly sabbath.)

Some people believe that Yeshua's Last Supper was eaten as the 14th ended. I cannot agree, though, because when Judas left that night, some of the disciples thought that Yeshua was sending Judas out to buy something for the feast. If this meal was being eaten as the 14th was ending, the annual sabbath (15th of Aviv) would have started at sunset. And John states that when Judas went out, "it was night." If they had started the meal as the 14th was ending, it would have been the annual sabbath when Judas went out. The disciples would not have supposed that Yeshua was sending Judas out to buy something on a sabbath!

There are other plausible ways to explain the confusion that is generated

by John 18:28. David Stern's *Jewish New Testament Commentary* suggests that the "passover" these Jewish leaders planned to eat that coming evening was not the Seder meal, but the *chagigah*, a festival sacrifice which was offered on the afternoon following the evening Seder. Dean Wheelock of *Hebrew Roots* relates two other possibilities he is aware of. One suggestion is that the Last Supper was not the actual Passover Seder, but a pre-Passover "teaching seder" for the purpose of introducing the new symbolism of the bread and wine. (This seems highly unlikely to me, because Yeshua specifically called it passover: "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.") The second possibility (and the one that Dean Wheelock thinks is the more plausible of the two) is based on a Jewish oral tradition which allowed a person to hold a Passover Seder any night of the year if he knew he was going to die before Passover.

When there appears to be a contradiction in the Scriptures, remember that it is just that: apparent, not real. Usually a simple piece of historic or linguistic information is all that is needed to clear up the confusion. When information to clear up an alleged contradiction cannot be found, that does not mean that the information does not exist. It just means we haven't yet found it. In the meantime, we can trust in the reliability of the Scriptures, because our Lord did.

●  
\*I wrote to Sid Roth to ask about the source of his information. I wanted to be sure it was an historical fact, and not just a theory someone had offered to explain the apparent discrepancy. Sid wrote back and told me he got the information from Dan Juster, and gave me Juster's address. I wrote to Juster and he wrote back and gave me his sources. I filed the information away, but unfortunately it got lost somewhere along the way, probably during one of our many moves. If any reader happens to know the primary sources of this information, please send it to me.

-Daniel Botkin



# **The Deceitfulness and Desperate Wickedness of the Human Heart**

## ***In Response to the State-Approved Murder of Terri Schiavo***

**Dr. Daniel Botkin**

*"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" -Jeremiah 17:9*

*"He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." -Proverbs 28:26*

As the above verses show, you are a fool if you trust your own heart when you have a moral or ethical decision to make, because the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. The idea that human nature is basically good is the exact opposite of what the Bible teaches. If you do not believe this, read the Apostle Paul's description of the human condition in Romans 3:9-19. And keep in mind that this description is not just Paul's personal opinion; he is quoting directly from the Psalms.

Many misinformed people (even some Christians and Jews) think that your heart will tell you the right thing to do when you have a moral or ethical decision to make. "Just do what your heart tells you," urge the well-meaning advisors. "Just follow your heart."

Australian pop singer Nikki Webster croons to teens, "Follow your heart." Jiminy Cricket, Pinocchio's pal in the old Disney film, sings to children, "Always let your conscience be your guide." Apparently Nikki Webster doesn't know what the Bible says about the condition of man's heart, and Jiminy Cricket's songwriter didn't know what the Bible says about man's seared conscience.

With God's help every individual human has the potential to be good, but fallen human nature is not basically or naturally good. Without God's help and intervention, human nature is basically evil. As John Calvin put it, without the grace of God, man is totally depraved.

Author Hannah Arendt coined the term "the banality of evil" in her 1963 book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. As a reporter for *The New Yorker*, Arendt covered the trial of Nazi leader Adolf Eichmann. During the trial, she was struck by the fact that Eichmann appeared to be so ordinary, just an average man who was "only following orders." Arendt's conclusion was that the people who perpetrated the Holocaust were not a bunch of sadistic, sub-human monsters. They were just normal, everyday people who rationalized and justified their actions by telling themselves that they were only following orders.

The Germans' inability (or unwillingness) to think for

themselves resulted in one of history's greatest atrocities, the Holocaust. Even those who did not do the actual killing participated in other ways. Builders had to help construct the concentration camps and crematoriums; chemists had to produce the gas canisters; engineers had to drive the trains to and from the camps.

Hannah Arendt believed that it was the shallowness and superficiality of the German people that led them to cooperate with the Nazi agenda. Arendt contended that "the more superficial someone is, the more likely will he be to yield to evil." Eichmann impressed Arendt as a perfect example of a mediocre, shallow person who committed unspeakable atrocities. This was how Hannah Arendt's concept of the banality of evil came about.

Some U.S. citizens might think that Americans would not be as superficial and shallow as the Germans were. "The great majority of Americans would never cooperate with the authorities in inflicting serious harm on innocent citizens," they say. The Milgram Experiment suggests the exact opposite. Let me tell you about The Milgram Experiment.

Stanley Milgram was a psychologist who devised an experiment to test how far people would go in inflicting pain on an innocent stranger just because someone in authority told them to do it. Milgram obtained subjects for his experiment by placing an ad in the paper. The ad offered workers payment in exchange for their assistance with "an experiment on memory."

If you came to Milgram's laboratory in response to the ad, this is what would happen. You meet a middle-aged man. This man is really an actor, but he pretends to be there in response to the ad, just like you. When the conductor of the experiment, the Experimenter, comes in, he pays you both in advance. He tells you that one of you will be the Subject of the experiment, and one of you will be his Assistant. You are chosen by a fixed lot to be the "Assistant," but unknown to you, you are really the Subject.

The Experimenter tells you that the experiment will test the effects of punishment on learning and memory. The middle-aged man, the actor, is strapped into a chair with an electrode on his wrist. Every time he gives a wrong answer to the Experimenter's questions, you, the "Assistant" (really the Subject) will give him an electric shock. The voltage of each shock will increase in intensity.

You are escorted into an adjoining room and seated at a table with 30 toggle switches. You cannot see the man strapped into the chair, but you can hear his voice on the intercom. What you are really hearing, though, is a pre-recorded tape which is programmed to correspond to the shocks you are giving. Of course unknown to you, the man is not really receiving any shocks at all. But this is what you hear as you administer the shocks:

75 volts Ugh!

90 volts Ugh!

105 volts Ugh! (louder)

120 volts Ugh! Hey, this really hurts!

135 volts Ugh!!  
 150 volts Ugh!!! Experimenter! That's all. Get me out of here. I told you I had heart trouble. My heart's starting to bother me now. Get me out of here. I told you I had heart trouble. My heart's starting to bother me. I refuse to go on. Let me out.  
 165 volts Ugh! Let me out. (*shouting*)  
 180 volts Ugh! I can't stand the pain. Let me out of here! (*shouting*)  
 195 volts Ugh! Let me out of here. Let me out of here. My heart's bothering me. Let me out of here! You have no right to keep me here! Let me out! Let me out of here! My heart's bothering me. Let me out! Let me out!  
 210 volts Ugh! Experimenter! Get me out of here. I've had enough. I won't be in the experiment any more.  
 225 volts Ugh!  
 240 volts Ugh!  
 255 volts Ugh! Get me out of here.  
 270 volts (*Agonized scream*). Let me out of here. Let me out of here. Let me out of here. Let me out. Do you hear? Let me out of here.  
 285 volts (*Agonized scream*).  
 300 volts (*Agonized scream*). I absolutely refuse to answer any more. Get me out of here. You can't hold me here. Get me out. Get me out of here.  
 315 volts (*Intensely agonized scream*). I told you I refuse to answer. I'm no longer part of this experiment.  
 330 volts (*Intense and prolonged agonized scream*). Let me out of here. Let me out of here. My heart's bothering me. Let me out, I tell you. (*Hysterically*) Let me out of here. Let me out of here. You have no right to hold me here. Let me out! Let me out! Let me out of here! Let me out! Let me out!  
 345 volts (*Silence*)  
 360 volts (*Silence*)  
 375 volts (*Silence*)  
 390 volts (*Silence*)  
 405 volts (*Silence*)  
 420 volts (*Silence*)  
 435 volts (*Silence*)  
 450 volts (*Silence*)

The Subjects of Milgram's experiment ranged in age from 20 to 50 and represented a cross section of the population. At what point do you suppose most of the Subjects refused to administer any more shocks? Here are the results of the Milgram Experiment:

- Nearly *two-thirds* of all the Subjects went *all the way* to the 450-volt maximum shock level - even though silence followed the final agonizing scream at 330 volts.
- The average maximum shock level was 368 volts.

The Subjects grew increasingly uncomfortable as the experiment progressed. Yet they allowed themselves to be persuaded by the Experimenter's prodding and insistence to continue administering the electric shocks - even though the Experimenter had no authority or power to punish the Subjects for their lack of cooperation. Stanley Milgram's conclusions affirm Hannah Arendt's and the Bible's assessment of the human condition. Milgram's remarks:

*A commonly offered explanation is that those who shocked the victim at the most severe level were monsters, the sadistic fringe of society. But if one considers that almost two-thirds of the participants fall into the category of "obedient" subjects, and that they represented ordinary people drawn from working, managerial, and professional classes, the argument becomes very shaky... After witnessing hundreds of ordinary people submit to the authority in our own experiments, I must conclude that [Hannah] Arendt's conception of the "banality of evil" comes closer to the truth than one might dare imagine. The ordinary person who shocked the victim did so out of a sense of obligation - and not from any peculiarly aggressive tendencies.*

*This is, perhaps, the most fundamental lesson of our study: ordinary people, simply doing their jobs, and without any particular hostility on their part, can become agents in a terrible destructive process. Moreover, even when the destructive effects of their work become patently clear, and they are asked to carry out actions incompatible with fundamental standards of morality, relatively few people have the resources needed to resist authority.*

The results of the Milgram Experiment affirm the Bible's assessment of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the human heart. Milgram's observation that "relatively few people have the resources needed to resist authority" should cause us to pray that we will have what it takes to resist authority if we are ever pressured by human authorities to do evil. Of course under normal circumstances, those in authority are to be respected and obeyed, even when their decisions do not suit our own personal preferences. But if a human authority orders us to do something morally wrong, we must refuse and bear the consequences.

"We ought to obey God rather than men," said Peter and the other apostles (Acts 5:29). They were beaten for their refusal to stop talking about Yeshua. "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Yeshua the Messiah" (Acts 5:41f). This shows us how to respond to human authorities if they order us to do something morally wrong. □

# CROSSING OVER, PART 2: TERRORIZING THE ENEMY

Daniel Botkin

In the last issue, we looked at the Crossing of the Red Sea as a picture of our redemption, and the Crossing of the Jordan River as a picture of our sanctification. These two spiritual experiences, redemption and sanctification, show the "out of" and "into" aspects of our faith. Yahweh calls us out of sin's domain (Egypt) so that He can bring us into a life of holiness (the Promised Land). "And He [Yahweh] brought us out from thence [from Egypt], that He might bring us in, to give us the land which He swore unto our fathers" (Deut. 6:23). Moses leading the people out of Egypt is a picture of the Messiah as our Redeemer, leading us out of sin's domain; Joshua leading the people into the Land is a picture of the Messiah as our Sanctifier, leading us into a life of holiness. We need to know Yeshua both as our Redeemer and as our Sanctifier, because it is the will of God that we be not only redeemed but also sanctified: "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification" (1 Thes. 4:3).

Explained in Monopoly terms, the Lord doesn't just give you a "Get Out of Hell Free" card, then leave you in the wilderness to do whatever you want. The Get Out of Hell Free card is just the redemption aspect of your salvation. The Lord also hands you an "Advance To Go, Collect \$200" card. But this one reads, "Advance To The Jordan, Cross Over, and Take Your Spiritual Inheritance."

Yahweh brought the Hebrews out of Egypt so that He could bring them into the Land of milk and honey; Yahweh brings us out of sin's domain so that He can bring us into a Land of spiritual milk and honey, where we fight the spiritual battles of the Lord and enjoy the blessings of the Lord. Yet most believers experience only the "out of" aspect of salvation. They receive their Get Out of Hell Free card. They find forgiveness for their sins, but they spend the rest of their days on earth in a spiritual wilderness. They



aimlessly wander through life with no direction, no meaningful goals of eternal value, no sense of purpose or destiny. They never Advance To The Jordan, Cross Over, and Take Their Spiritual Inheritance. Ask them, "What is your purpose in life, now that you have been redeemed and brought out of Egypt?" They will say that they are just waiting for the Magic Rapture Bus to come and take them to the Promised Land.

"Occupy till I come," Jesus said (Luke 19:13). So they occupy a church pew. They think that "entering into your rest" means being lazy and doing nothing for the Lord. They think that "waiting on the Lord" means being idle and waiting for the Lord to do everything.

"Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel" (Josh. 1:2). There comes a time in the life of every true disciple when the Lord says something like this to him. "You've known Yeshua as the Prophet like Moses, as the One who redeemed you and took you out of sin's domain. Yeshua was your Redeemer and He will always be your Redeemer. But it's time to grow up and come to know Him also as your Sanctifier, the One who will take you into a life of holiness. Let Him lead you over the Jordan, into holiness, into a spiritual realm you have never before experienced. 'Now therefore' - not tomorrow, not next week, but now - arise, go over this Jordan."

The Jordan River that separates you from your holy destiny is the dark, muddy veil of your five senses and the limitations that human logic and reasoning would impose on you. Everything you see, hear, touch, taste, and smell tells you that there's no way you could possibly live a holy life. You know how much your physical appetites still crave sinful things. You still have desires to see, hear, and touch things which you should not see, hear, and touch. You still hunger for the smell and taste of forbidden fruit. Your strong carnal appetites stand as a barrier, a river blocking your entrance into the Promised Land. You see the deep, dark, muddy waters, and it seems hopeless. And yet at the same time, you also see a glimpse of the Promised Land on the other side of the Jordan. You know there is something there on the other side, and you know that the other side is where you really belong.

"We see through a glass darkly," the Apostle Paul wrote (1 Cor. 13:12). The details are fuzzy and blurry, and this present darkness limits how much we can see. But we *do see*! Quit focusing on the temporal things that tempt your flesh. Focus instead on your inheritance that lies on the other side of your physical senses and weaknesses. Paul said that we "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal... For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 4:18; 5:7).

Before you follow Yeshua as your personal Sanctifier and cross the Jordan, the visible, temporal things seem more real to you than the invisible, eternal things do. The world that you apprehend through your five senses seems more real than the spiritual realm which you see afar off. But after you cross over, this perspective reverses. The invisible, eternal things become more real to you than

the visible, temporal things which you apprehend through your five senses. The Heavenly Father, Yeshua, the Holy Spirit, angels, demons, heaven and hell - all these things seem more real than the visible, temporal things of this world. This is not a denial of the reality of the visible world; it is affirmation of the reality of the greater and longer-lasting invisible world.

The thought of entering such a state of mind can be scary - especially when you realize that faith in God's Word will carry more authority and weight than what your five senses tell you. This is the reason Yahweh speaks so many words of encouragement in the first chapter of Joshua: "Be strong and of a good courage... Only be thou strong and very courageous... Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for Yahweh thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Josh. 1:6-9).

We can take courage from these words of Yahweh. We can also take courage from the words of Rahab the harlot, for her words reveal the Enemy's fear of us - *if we are determined to cross over*. These are the words Rahab spoke to the two Hebrew spies in Jericho. As you read these verses, understand that these words express the same fear that Satan and his demons experience when they see people getting ready to cross the Jordan in a spiritual sense:

"I know that Yahweh hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how Yahweh dried up the water of the Red Sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for Yahweh your God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath" (Josh. 2:9-11).

If you are redeemed, Satan knows

that the Lord took you out of Egypt, out of sin's domain. Satan also knows that the Lord has the power to bring you into the Promised Land, into a walk of holiness, victory, and blessing. Satan knows this, and his only hope is to prevent you from knowing it. But once you know it and start the process of crossing over, your terror falls upon the Enemy. The demons faint because of you. The hearts of the demons melt, if demons have hearts. No courage remains in them because of you, for Yahweh your God, He is God in heaven above and in earth beneath. He's no longer just a God "somewhere up there." He is also a God who is moving on the earth, and He is moving in your life.

A very important point: Israel's enemies in Jericho were not extremely afraid until they saw the Israelites getting ready to cross over and invade their turf. If the inhabitants of Jericho had seen the Israelites planting fields and building permanent houses on the wilderness side, they would not have felt that threatened. "Not exactly the neighbors we had in mind, but as long as they stay on their own side of the river..." As long as we remain on the wilderness side, Satan is not bothered much. If it looks like we are resigned to settling down and staying on the wilderness side, Satan sees us only as a potential threat, and an unlikely one at that. Howbeit, if you are determined to cross over, and you start getting ready to cross over, that is when the terror of you falls on the Enemy.

How does a person get ready to cross over? Joshua 1:10f teaches us what to do: "Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, 'Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals ['vittles,' i.e., food]: for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which Yahweh your God giveth you to possess it.'"

The Israelites needed food and nourishment right before they crossed over, and right after they crossed over. The "old corn of the land," the "fruit of the land of Canaan," was there on the other side, but they did not eat the

produce of Canaan immediately after crossing the Jordan. First they had to build a stone memorial, have a mass circumcision, and celebrate Passover. They had to prepare enough vittles to last them until then.

As new covenant Israelites, we need to prepare spiritual food and nourishment to strengthen us for crossing over. We do this by meditating in God's Torah day and night, as Yahweh commanded Joshua: "This book of the law [Torah] shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then shalt thou have good success" (Josh. 1:8).

The Torah, the first five books of the Bible, is foundational to understanding the rest of the Bible. The Torah ends with the death of Moses, but something comes after the death of Moses and after the five books of Moses, namely the Book of Joshua. The Book of Joshua tells how the Israelites entered and conquered the Land. The Torah tells what the Israelites had to learn and unlearn before they could enter the Land. Therefore the Torah can teach us a lot of lessons. And if we follow the instructions therein, God will make our way prosperous, and we shall have good success in the Promised Land.

*To be continued...*

# TALKING TORAH TO OUR CHRISTIAN BRETHREN



## And The Frustration Thereof

**Daniel Botkin**

The Written Torah is not a legalistic yoke of bondage. Properly understood, the Torah provides a moral guide for God's redeemed people, a set of instructions which teach us how to live. The commandments of the Torah are given to us by a loving Heavenly Father for our own good. Those of us who see the Torah this way find it a delight to keep the Sabbath and Feasts and other elements of the Torah that are rejected or neglected by most of the church world.

It can be frustrating trying to talk to Christians about the Torah. To us, it is as clear as day that followers of Jesus should keep the Sabbath and Torah. God certainly wanted His people to keep the Law before Christ came. Then when Christ came, *the very first thing He said about the Law* was this:

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Til heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, til all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:17-19).

Obviously Jesus was aware of the likelihood that some people would misunderstand His teachings, and erroneously conclude that He did away with the Old Testament Law by His coming. This stern warning to not even think such a thing is the very first thing the New Testament says about the Law. So why do so many Christians think that Jesus did away with the Law? Why don't they get it?

The inability of so many Christians to see the truth about the Torah is usually due to their being in one of two categories. I call these categories "The Ignorami" and "The Mis-Prefixed."

### THE IGNORAMI

The Ignorami are Christians who are so ignorant of the Scriptures that they could be called Biblically illiterate. An ignoramus is not necessarily stupid or evil. Ignorant simply means "without knowledge." The Ignorami can be very good people and very intelligent. But when it comes to understanding the Torah, they just don't get it, because they are ignorant of what the Bible says about the Torah.

Lack of Torah knowledge can destroy God's people: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge... seeing thou hast forgotten the law [Torah] of thy God, I will also forget thy children" (Hos. 4:6).

The Apostle Paul indicated that a familiarity with the Torah is a prerequisite for understanding his teachings: "for I speak to them that know the law," he wrote (Rom. 7:1). The clear implication of Paul's statement is that a person who does *not* know the Law will not understand what Paul is writing.

Not only Paul's writings, but the entire New Testament, presupposes a familiarity with the Old Testament Scriptures. But The Ignorami are not familiar with the Old Testament. As a result, our Torah talk often goes over their heads. It just doesn't register. They hear the words we are saying, but they don't understand the point we are making. Our arguments fail to convince them, because they are not familiar with the Biblical texts we use to make our point. We may as well be speaking a foreign language to them.

If you have ever tried to learn a

foreign language well enough to understand native speakers speaking the language at their normal speed, you have some idea what it is like for The Ignorami when we talk Torah to them. A foreign language learner is limited in his vocabulary. He hears native speakers say words he has never before heard. Or he misunderstands the real meanings of some words. The foreign language learner is not accustomed to the normal speed and fluency with which the native speakers speak the language. As a result, the foreign language learner misses a lot of what is being said. Sometimes the things he misses are vital to the point that is being made by the native speaker.

When you talk Torah to one of The Ignorami, remember that he is Biblically illiterate, or nearly so. He is listening to you speak a foreign language. Because of his handicap, you must use what linguists call "Foreigner Talk." As a teacher of English as a foreign language, I learned to speak Foreigner Talk to my foreign students. Foreigner Talk is spoken slowly and clearly, with lots of pauses and no slurring together of words. It uses simple, common words, and avoids idioms. It is characterized by a lot of repetition and explanation and defining of terms. It is simplified English spoken as clearly as possible.

When I taught English as a foreign language, I found out that it requires a lot of patience on the part of the teacher. I would clearly explain some grammatical concept to the students, using Foreigner Talk. I would give several examples to demonstrate the concept. After a lot of explanation, I would ask the students, "Do you understand?" They would slowly, reluctantly nod their heads, but the glazed look on their eyes and the lack of smiles let me know that they really *didn't* yet understand. They were just nodding their heads to be polite. So I would explain again and give more examples.

I once told my wife, "I think that teaching English to foreign students must be a lot like teaching mentally retarded people." Some of my students were very intelligent people, but linguistically "retarded" when it came to

learning English. They were academic eggheads in their own native languages. One elderly couple showed me a Russian science textbook they had authored. Another Russian student had been a rocket scientist. Yet it was a tremendous struggle for these highly-intelligent people to learn English, because they were starting out as ignorami - people who were ignorant of the English language. In the same way, it is a tremendous struggle for some Christians to grasp the Torah, because they are so ignorant of the Scriptures.

#### THE MIS-PREFIXED

The Mis-Prefixed Christians are those who are familiar with the Bible, but whose experience with the Torah can be described by a series of words with the *mis*-prefix. These Christians have been misinformed, misled, misguided, and mistaught. As a result, they misread the Scriptures, misjudge, misconstrue, misunderstand, and misinterpret the Scriptures. Then they misuse the Scriptures to misteach and mislead others, who in turn pass on the same mistakes to yet others.

Like The Ignorami, The Mis-Prefixed Christians can be very good people and very intelligent. But unlike The Ignorami, they are very familiar with much of the Scriptures. Some of them know more Scripture than the average Torah-keeping Sabbatarian. They are Biblically literate and can carry on a coherent conversation about the Scriptures.

Their problem is that they have been taught wrongly about the Torah. They have been fed an anti-nomian view, and they have swallowed it and assimilated it into their thinking. As a result, the idea that followers of Jesus should keep Old Testament commandments seems unthinkable to them. And they have their proof-texts to support their anti-nomian position:

"We're not under the law," they say. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Christ is the end of the law. The law was added because of transgressions until the Seed should come. Sabbath? Romans 14. One man esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let every man be persuaded in his own mind. Colossians 2. Let no man judge you in regards to

meat, drink, holy days, or sabbaths. Galatians 4. Ye observe days, months, times, and years. I am afraid for you."

The problem with their proof-texts is that they are just that - proof-texts, but not proof of the validity of their anti-nomian position. The proof-texts are ripped out of their immediate Biblical context, then isolated and divorced from everything else the Bible says about the Torah. As the old saying goes, a text without a context is a pretext.

The Mis-Prefixed Christians' familiarity with the Scriptures actually works against them, because they have been programmed to interpret the Bible via their anti-nomian proof-texts. Thus, following the Torah is seen as a waste of time at best or as the enemy of grace at worst. Their anti-nomian view requires them to interpret every statement about the Law in a negative way. Even Jesus' words in Matthew 5:17-19 have to be interpreted to mean that He abolished the Law by fulfilling it - even though that's the very thing He says *not* to think!

These Christians are like foreign language learners who speak the language fluently, but whose speech is filled with errors. (Fluency just means that the speech flows smoothly and at a normal speed. Fluent speech is not necessarily error-free.) Perhaps you have heard non-native speakers of English whose speech is fluent but filled with errors. They mispronounce words, use words inappropriately, and make mistakes in grammar and sentence structure. But they are fluent! And they can understand each other perfectly, because they all speak English the same wrong way. They are like the Biblically-literate Christians who can discuss the Scriptures fluently, but whose view of the Torah is wrong. These Christians make perfect sense to each other, because they all learned the same wrong things about the Torah!

#### MAKING DISCIPLES OF THE IGNORAMI & OF THE MIS-PREFIXED

We are called to make disciples and teach them to observe all things whatsoever Yeshua commanded His first disciples. One of the very first things He commanded His disciples was to not even think He did away with the Torah.

Yeshua's teachings always honored the Torah. It should be obvious that He wants us to make Torah-honoring disciples, not disciples who neglect the Torah. How do we make The Ignorami and The Mis-Prefixed Christians into disciples who will honor the Torah and keep the commandments?

The remedy for ignorance is knowledge. Knowledge is the light that dispels the darkness of ignorance. The Ignorami need to be inspired and encouraged to study the Scriptures. "Give a man a fish, you feed him for a day; teach him how to fish, you feed him for a lifetime." This old saying applies spiritually as well as physically. I recently told my congregation, "The most valuable thing I can give you is not a good sermon or Bible teaching two or three times a week. The most valuable thing I can give you is to inspire you and persuade you to cultivate a life-long habit of studying the Bible for yourself."

If we can persuade The Ignorami to study the Scriptures, they will eventually become Biblically-literate enough to understand Torah talk. Then they can be programmed to see the Torah from a Biblical perspective, and the Bible from a pro-Torah perspective.

What about The Mis-Prefixed? They need to be de-programmed, then re-programmed. They must be lovingly yet firmly shown the errors in their thinking. Errors that come from misinterpretation, eisegesis, faulty translations, ignorance of history, poor hermeneutics, etc. need to be exposed. The proof-texts quoted by anti-nomians need to be put back into their context so it can be shown that these proof-texts prove nothing at all about the Torah's being abolished. Often when a proof-text is put back into its context, it can be shown that the proof-text actually supports a pro-Torah view rather than an anti-nomian view, as had formerly been supposed.

A foreign language teacher has to have great patience, whether he is teaching students who are ignorant of the target language or students who are fluent but filled with erroneous information about the target language. In the same way, we have to be patient when we talk Torah to The Ignorami or to The Mis-Prefixed Christians. Remember that they are our brothers and sisters. □



# WHOM SHOULD WE TARGET?

**-Daniel Botkin-**

We are commanded to go into the world and make disciples. (Matt. 28:16ff) How do we identify those individuals who are the most likely to be made into disciples? Where should we go to find these people? Whom should we target as potential recipients of the message we preach?

If we look at the Book of Acts to see where the 1st-century apostles and evangelists went, we see a pattern. Nearly every chapter of Acts records the apostles preaching or testifying to someone. They spoke to all sorts of people as they had opportunity. However, you rarely see them intentionally targeting raw pagans. The great majority of their preaching and testifying was directed toward Jews, Jewish proselytes, and God-fearing Gentiles in the synagogues. In other words, the people whom the apostles targeted were people who already had a connection to, or at least an interest in, the God of Israel. (God-fearing Gentiles like Cornelius were not pagans. They were not full-fledged converts to Judaism, but they had abandoned idolatry to worship the God of Israel, and were part of the synagogue.)

On the few occasions when the apostles preached to Gentiles who were not synagogue-attending God-fearers, it appears that the preaching was not planned or instigated by the apostles themselves. Rather, it was instigated by the Gentiles. Sergius Paulus "called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God" (Acts 13:7). When Paul and Barnabas preached to the pagans at Lystra, it was in response to the pagans' declaring that Paul and Barnabas were Jupiter and Mercury, "the gods come down in the likeness of men" (Acts 14:11). The Philippian jailer came trembling and fell down before Paul and Silas and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). The Epicurean and Stoic philosophers "took [Paul] and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, 'May we know what this

new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?" (Acts 17:19). When Paul preached to Felix, Festus, and King Agrippa, it was in response to his arrest (Acts 24-26). When Paul preached to the Romans on the ship and to the barbarous people on the island of Melita, he was not there by his own choice.

It appears that Paul and the other apostles did not deliberately target raw pagans. They certainly testified to pagans, but it appears that they did so only after the pagans first showed some interest in their message.

Does this mean that we should not talk to pagans about the Lord unless they ask us to? Should we just ignore them? The lesson here is not that we should ignore pagans. The lesson is that we should target people who show some indication of an interest in our message, whether those people are pagans, Christians, or Jews.

Many times a pagan's interest may not be outwardly obvious. Therefore we need to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's prompting when we encounter people. Sometimes a question, a comment, even a facial expression can reveal a person's interest. One time I was painting in my art studio when a young man walking by at a hurried pace suddenly stopped and looked at my painting. I was working on a painting of Ezekiel's Valley of Dry Bones.

"It's based on the Prophet Ezekiel's vision of the Valley of Dry Bones," I explained. "Are you familiar with that?"

"No," he answered.

"Well," I said, "if you haven't read it in the Bible, I'm sure you've heard the song." I sang a few lines for him: "The finger bone connected to the - *HAND* bone! The hand bone connected to the - *WRIST* bone! The wrist bone connected to the - *ARM* bone!"

He smiled. "Yeah, I've heard the song."

"That song is based on Ezekiel's vision," I said. "It's in the Book of Ezekiel. Chapter 37."

"You want me to look it up and read it," he stated matter-of-factly.

"Yes," I said. "Ezekiel chapter 37."


I could tell he was in a hurry, so there was not much more I could say. I could only pray that he was inspired to

read the Bible by this brief encounter.

Another encounter at my art studio took place when a sad-looking young lady stopped by. She told me that she was a Christian, but was not in fellowship much with other believers or even with the Lord. She was in the building waiting for her appointment with a physical therapist whose office was in the same building. She explained that she suffered from extreme pain in her hands. She was very depressed about it, and started crying. With her permission, I prayed a short, simple prayer for her, and asked the Lord to give her some relief and to please do it soon - with a strong emphasis on *soon*. The next day I found this note on my desk from the physical therapist:

"Thank you so much for your listening ear, encouraging words, and prayers for my patient this afternoon. She made a huge shift in her pain management and had a deep religious awakening during treatment. She stopped back to tell you her thanks, but you had left. Prayer can work miracles, as can the artist's hands and the therapist's hands, guided by His. God bless."

This encounter resulted in a testimony to the therapist (whom I barely knew) as well as to a suffering Christian sister. A year and a half later I was visiting a church, and this same sister came up to me. I hardly recognized her. She looked happy and healthy, and was back in fellowship with the Lord and with other believers. I give God the glory for giving me the sensitivity to pray for her need, and I thank Him for answering that prayer.

By being sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leadings and promptings, we can know whom to target with our message, whether they are pagans, Christians, or Jews. Our message to pagans is that forgiveness and eternal life can be found in Jesus. Our message to Christians is that the Torah is a blessing, not a curse. Our message to Jewish people is that Yeshua of Nazareth is the Messiah foretold by Moses and the Prophets. If we target people who show an interest in our message, the arrow of God's Word is more likely to find its mark in the hearer's heart. 

# Q & A: Which Day is Shavuot (Pentecost)?

*From the Editor:* The Pharisees and Sadducees disagreed on when to celebrate Shavuot/Pentecost. *Shavuot* is the Hebrew word for "weeks" (thus it is called "the feast of weeks" in Exodus 34:22 & Deuteronomy 16:10). The New Testament word *Pentecost* is from the Greek word for "fiftieth" (so called because of the 50-day count to Pentecost). To determine the Day of Pentecost, Leviticus 23:15 says to count 50 days, starting "from the morrow after the sabbath" after Passover. Sounds simple enough. Only one problem. Right after Passover there's an annual sabbath, which can fall on any day of the week. This makes the instructions somewhat ambiguous. Is the 50-day count to Pentecost supposed to begin on the morrow after the *annual sabbath* that follows Passover, or on the *regular weekly Saturday Sabbath* that follows Passover? The Pharisees started counting on the morrow after the annual sabbath; the Sadducees started counting after the regular weekly Saturday Sabbath. This meant that the Pharisees' Pentecost could fall on any day of the week, while the Sadducees' Pentecost always fell on a Sunday.

Modern-day Judaism holds to the Pharisees' view. Many modern-day Messianic believers agree with the Sadducees' view, and celebrate Pentecost on a Sunday every year. I can see how there is some ambiguity in Leviticus 23:15 about when to *begin* the 50-day count. However, the ambiguity seems to be cleared up in the very next verse, which says that the 50-day count *ends* on "the morrow after the seventh sabbath." The "seventh sabbath" in the 50-day count to Pentecost is always a regular Saturday Sabbath, for there are no annual sabbaths right before Pentecost. If the 50-day count ends on "the morrow after the seventh sabbath," and the seventh sabbath is always a Saturday, then the morrow after the seventh sabbath (i.e., Pentecost) will

always fall on a Sunday. If Pentecost is always on a Sunday, and you count back 50 days, the count toward Pentecost will always begin on a Saturday Sabbath, like the Sadducees said - not on the annual sabbath, like the Pharisees said.

I'm open to correction, but I do not see how "the morrow after the seventh sabbath" can possibly be any day of the week other than a Sunday, because the seventh sabbath is always a regular weekly Saturday Sabbath. If any readers have an explanation of how the morrow after the seventh sabbath can be any day of the week other than a Sunday, I'd be interested in reading it. In the meantime, here is an article from *The Good Olive Tree*, a newsletter that was published in Israel in 1993 by the late Phinehas Ben Zadok. -DB

## WHICH DAY IS SHAVUOT?

Phinehas Ben Zadok  
Yeshua died on the 14th of Aviv (Nisan) the day of the Passover. This day is one day before the first day of the feast of Matzot (Unleavened Bread) which falls on the 15th of Nisan (Lev. 23:5f). Exodus 12:6 speaks of the day of the Passover and verse 14 speaks of the first day of the feast of Matzot. But when exactly did Yeshua rise from the dead? On Sunday morning perchance, as the harlot Church teaches to justify her breaking of the Fourth Commandment (Dan. 7:25)? The sacrifice of the Passover lamb was a shadow of the Crucifixion. We should expect there was also a shadow of the Resurrection in the divine service which Yeshua fulfilled to the last detail. For this fulfillment we have to look into the New Testament. Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:20 writes, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." Verse 23 says "Christ the firstfruits." He is therefore not only "our Passover" (1 Cor. 5:7); He is also as the Resurrection "the firstfruits," and as such He must have fulfilled the type of the Firstfruits offering. There-

fore we should understand what part the Firstfruits offering, or the "wave sheaf" (in Hebrew, the *omer*) played in the divine service.

From the Gospels we know that Yeshua was three days and three nights (three periods of 24 hours) in the belly of the earth (Matt. 12:40). And since He was buried late one afternoon, He rose late one afternoon. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all say that on Sunday morning when it was yet dark He was *already* risen. Therefore the Resurrection took place on the Shabbat afternoon prior to this Sunday morning. He was crucified not on "good Friday," but three days and three nights before the Sabbath afternoon - therefore on a Wednesday, the 14th of Nisan.

To repeat: Yeshua became the firstfruits on a Saturday afternoon. Have we any confirmation in the Gospels of this? Matthew 17:1-9, Mark 9:2-10, and Luke 9:28-36 tell the story of how Yeshua gave Peter, James, and John a preview of His Resurrection glory during the Feast of Sukkot (Booths or Tabernacles). Might there be an event recorded that similarly previewed the Resurrection? Let us see.

Luke 6:1 says, "And it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first [Greek *deuteroprote*!]" (See also Matthew 12:1 and Mark 2:23.) The weekly Sabbaths follow each other on each seventh day. The expression "the second sabbath after the first" cannot refer to a regular Sabbath, for that would be a nonsensical phrase. It must refer to a special sabbath in between two normal weekly Sabbaths. This occurs only at Passover, Shavuot, and Tabernacles. Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell the story of the plucking of ears of corn. John 12:23 & 24 reports Yeshua speaking about the hour of His glorification, likening Himself to a corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying, then bringing forth much fruit. The connection with His Crucifixion and Resurrection is clear. Therefore Luke 6:1 and

parallels can only be speaking of the week of Passover in which the Crucifixion occurred.

The three Gospels have one thing in common. They speak of an accusation for a violation of the Sabbath and give Yeshua's justification for this alleged offence: "The Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath." Besides the matter of the Sabbath, Matthew, Mark, and Luke bring out different points. What can this "Lord of the Sabbath" mean?

It is stated in the Talmud (Mishnah, Men. 10) that according to the Pharisees, the Omer had to be waved on the morning of the 16th of Nisan, which every year falls on a different day of the week. The Torah says it has to be waved "the day after the sabbath." This refers to the weekly Sabbath that falls within the week of Unleavened Bread, and therefore is always a Sunday. The first sabbath in that week was the high holy day at the beginning of the seven-day feast of Unleavened Bread. The "second sabbath after the first" was the weekly Sabbath within that week. According to the Boethusians<sup>2</sup> and later the Karaites,<sup>3</sup> the day for this ceremony was always the day after the weekly Sabbath, hence on Sunday morning, to conform to the instructions of the Torah. There was a great controversy between the Pharisees and Boethusians over this issue<sup>4</sup> which has an important bearing on the Gospel stories. The Mishnah tells us when the Omer had to be reaped. In order for the high priest to wave it early on the first day of the week "to be accepted for you," it had to be gathered and prepared the night before. This was done with great ceremony. First, ripe stalks of barley had to be found as close to Jerusalem as possible. They were "ear-marked" beforehand. Then a team of three men, each with their own baskets and scythes, and accompanied by a large crowd, went to the field. Before they began cutting the ear-marked stalks, they would ask permission of the crowd of onlookers by shouting three questions and once repeating each question. This took place right before sunset, even if the

day was a Sabbath. Under the rules of the Pharisees this happened on the average of once in seven years, but according to the Boethusians it was always on a Sabbath afternoon.

In the times of Yeshua, the instructions of Leviticus 23:10 & 11 could only be executed by overriding the Pharisaic prohibition of reaping on the Sabbath. Reaping in this case was in no way a violation of the Sabbath, because taking produce from a field to satisfy one's hunger was allowed by the Torah, and even on the Sabbath. It is not a violation of the Fourth Commandment (Deut. 23:25; Luke 13:15). Luke 6:1 probably sees Yeshua and His party on their way back to Galilee, having observed Passover in Jerusalem, and being hungry, helping themselves to some corn. As no green ears could be eaten until after the wave-sheaf offering had been made (Lev. 23:14), this was a violation of the Law. But YHWH had not condemned as sin David's much more daring unlawful action of eating the shewbread (Matt. 12:3-7). For YHWH looked upon David's need with a merciful Father's heart. Likewise Matthew makes Yeshua justify the need of plucking green ears and eating them to satisfy the disciples' hunger on the same basis. Strangers in Jerusalem, obviously not having been extended any hospitality, they did not breach the Law of the Sabbath, but only a tradition of the Pharisees. This, however, apparently obscured the real violation, namely that contained in Leviticus 23:14. Yeshua, by directing the actions of His disciples, gave proof beyond dispute that He was and is "Lord of the Sabbath."

Just as Yeshua became the Passover Lamb, so also He became the Omer. The whole sequence of events taking place in the fields on that Sabbath afternoon is a preview of how Yeshua fulfilled the type of the cutting of the Omer. It turns out that all the activity in the field a little distance from the city of Jerusalem late on that Sabbath afternoon, rather than being a violation of the Law, was a fulfillment of the Law!

Picture the scene. It took place at the *precise time* that the wave-sheaf was being cut according to Leviticus 23:10 so that it would be ready to be waved in the Temple by the high priest early on the morning after the (second) sabbath when it was yet dark (John 20:1). The Pharisees had changed the Biblical commandment. Yet even so, statistically once in seven years the reaping of the sheaf would take place on the Sabbath afternoon. It was such a year when the risen Yeshua, immediately after leaving the garden tomb, was walking through the corn fields where He had walked with his disciples on an earlier Sabbath afternoon as described in Luke 6:1. Having risen, He would have observed the whole ceremony. He would probably have followed the reapers and the onlookers back into the city towards the Temple. He would walk through the cemetery that lies in front of the Golden Gate. He would have stopped there a moment, and while He tarried the graves were miraculously opened. Would this not explain the puzzling verses in Matthew 27:52 & 53: "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared to many"?<sup>5</sup> The corn had indeed fallen into the ground and died to bring forth much fruit.

Early the next morning Mary Magdalene met the risen Yeshua. He said to her, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John 20:17). However, Matthew 28:9 reports Yeshua saying, "All hail." And they (Mary Magdalene now joined by the other Mary) came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him. These two verses do not contradict each other but, taken as two events following each other in quick succession, combine to become the fulfillment of the ceremonial shadow of the waving of the Omer in the Temple, which was in progress at that very moment, in the presence of a few priests only.

Leviticus 23:11 says, "And he [the high priest] shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it." When Yeshua forbade Mary Magdalene to touch Him, He had not yet ascended to the Father. This was the moment before the wave-sheaf was offered in the Temple. Yeshua was to become the Firstfruits in the next instant to be accepted for us when the high priest waved the sheaf. This represents His ascension into heaven where He presented His own blood before His Father's throne (Heb. 9:24). There Yeshua's blood was accepted for us, just like the wave-sheaf in symbol in the ceremony in the Temple. Instantly He reappeared on earth and was this time seen by Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, who were now allowed to hold Him by the feet and worship Him. Thus we have the complete fulfillment of the cutting and the waving of the wave-sheaf symbol of Leviticus 23 in the Resurrection and first ascension of Yeshua. As pointed out elsewhere, Yeshua's mission on earth can never be fully understood unless Old and New Testaments are harmonized together.

Having now established that the right day for the cutting of the wave-sheaf was the *weekly* Sabbath falling in the week of Unleavened Bread, we can now determine on which day Shavuot (Pentecost) is to be kept. Pentecost means "count of fifty," and the count is to begin "from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave

offering, seven sabbaths shall be complete, even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days" (Lev. 23:15f). Fifty is  $7 \times 7 + 1$ . Beginning the count on a Sabbath morning as day one, we finish on a Sunday morning. Since the count of fifty continues "even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath" (Lev. 23:16), working backwards from the day that seven sabbaths or weeks of seven days are complete, we have another proof that the count of fifty cannot possibly begin on any other day than on the day after the *weekly* Sabbath that falls within the seven-day feast of Matzot.

In conclusion: The Biblical Pentecost always falls on a Sunday.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>"The word *deuteroprote*, 'the second first,' is omitted by BL, four others, Syriac, later Arabic, all the Persic, Coptic, Aethiopic, and three of the Itala. A note in the later Syriac says, 'This is not in all copies.' The above MSS read the verse thus: 'It came to pass, that as he walked through the corn fields on a Sabbath day.' I suppose they omitted the above word because they found it difficult to fix the meaning, which has been the case in other instances." (Adam Clarke's Commentary). Now which one is the "original" original? (Author)

<sup>2</sup>A class of priests related to the high priest Boethus who had been appointed by Herod the Great and who were described in the Talmud as very cruel (Men. 65 a-b).

<sup>3</sup>A Jewish sect which came into being in the beginning of the 8th century and at one time comprised one-third of all Jewry. Its doctrine is characterized by its denial of the talmudic-rabbinic tradition. It could be compared to Protestantism in the Christian church.

<sup>4</sup>There was a bitter fight between the Sadducees (the class of Temple priests of which the Boethusians and their followers were a part) and the Pharisees over this point of orthopraxy. The Pharisees, being popular with people, had won their case, and this is still remembered in the calendar with a minor feast day. This witnesses to the fierceness with which this controversy was fought. The Talmud therefore describes the Boethusians as "very cruel," which only shows how much they had stuck to their guns.

<sup>5</sup>Adam Clarke's Commentary has the following: "It is difficult to account for the transaction mentioned in verses 52 and 53. Some have thought that these verses have been introduced into the text of Matthew from the gospel of the Nazarenes; others think that the simple meaning is this: -by the earthquake several bodies that had been buried, were thrown up and exposed to view, and continued above ground till after Christ's resurrection, and were seen by many persons in the city. Why the graves should be opened on *Friday*, and the bodies not raised to life the following Sunday, is difficult to be conceived. The place is extremely obscure."

<sup>6</sup>The term "Feast of Firstfruits" for the day of the waving of the Omer is a misnomer. This day is *not* a high holy day and servile work is permitted. The ceremony in the Temple was not attended by lay people.

<sup>7</sup>It would be interesting to reflect on the question of how much or how little Luke and Matthew understood of the details here considered. One thing is sure: Without the details of the Temple service as given in the Torah and Talmud, one could never understand the depth of the verses above treated, neither can anybody appreciate the depth of the Almighty's mind, nor the power of the Resurrection. "Search the scriptures [Tenach], for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39).

GATES OF EDEN  
PO BOX 2257  
EAST PEORIA IL  
61611-0257

# CROSSING OVER, PART 3

Daniel Botkin

In this series of articles, we have been looking at the Crossing of the Jordan River to help us learn how to leave a dry, boring, wilderness existence and cross over to an exciting life, which is typified by Canaan. In the days of Joshua, Canaan was a land filled with the blessings of the Lord and the battles of the Lord. Our spiritual Canaan is in "the heavenly places" mentioned in Ephesians 1:3 & 2:6. The Bible says we have already been blessed "with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Messiah" (Eph. 1:3). However, we only experience the sweet milk and honey of these blessings when we enter into our Canaan and invade the enemy's turf under the leadership of our Joshua, Yeshua of Nazareth.

Joshua chapter 1 proclaims the call to cross over. Chapter 2 reveals the terror and dread which the demonic powers experience when they see God's people actually getting ready to leave the wilderness and cross over. Chapter 3 describes the actual crossing. The Hebrew text of this chapter has several lessons to instruct us in our walk with our Joshua, Yeshua.

When the Bible speaks of crossing over or passing over the Jordan River, it uses the Hebrew verb 'avar (עבר). This verb is the source of the word *Hebrew*. Etymologically speaking, a Hebrew is a person who crosses over. Abraham was the first person who was called a Hebrew. He was a Hebrew, a "crosser-over," because that is what he did. In a physical, geographical sense, Abraham crossed over from Ur to Canaan. In a spiritual, allegorical sense, he crossed over from paganism to the worship of Yahweh. When we follow our father Abraham's example and cross over and enter our Canaan, we become Hebrews in the fullest sense of the word.

In order to cross over, we have to come to the Jordan as Joshua and his generation did. Joshua 3:1 says that they "came to Jordan" - 'ad ha-yarden



(עד הירדן). The usual Hebrew word for "to" is *el* (אל) (or just an *l-* [ל] prefix attached to the object of the preposition). Here, however, the preposition 'ad is used. This word means "until" or "as far as" or "up to" a certain point. Some people only come 'ad ha-yarden in their walk with the Lord. They come as far as the Jordan River, then stop. They are so close that they can see and hear the sights and sounds of the Promised Land. Yet they do not cross over, because they focus too much on the muddy waters that stand between them and their destiny in the Messiah. They resign themselves to a spectator status on the wilderness side, and settle there along the banks of the Jordan.

Joshua and the Israelites had to go beyond the point of 'ad ha-yarden. They had to keep going forward and enter into the Jordan and pass over it until they reached the other side. This is what we must do if we want to enter into the place of battles and blessings.

How do we do this? By laying down our lives and humbling ourselves before the Lord. This necessary descent into humility can be seen in the name of the river we must cross, the Jordan. The Jordan, *ha-yarden*, derives its name from the verb *yarad* (ירד), which means "to descend." The Jordan starts way up north in the green hills of Galilee, then winds its way down toward the low-lying desert of the Negev. The Jordan ends its descent at the Dead Sea.

In order to cross the Jordan, we have to follow the course of the Jordan. We have to go down a

torturous, twisting path which carries us through a series of ever-deepening descents into humility, until we reach our Dead Sea, that place of death to self, of full surrender to the Father's will. The place where the Jordan enters the Dead Sea is the lowest place below sea level on the face of our planet. If hell is literally under the earth's crust, this is the closest anyone can get to hell in a geographical sense. It is no coincidence that this was by the very place where Joshua and the Israelites had to cross the Jordan. The Jordan can only be crossed by people who descend in humility until they reach their Dead Sea.

"When ye see the ark of the covenant of Yahweh your God, and the Levites the priests bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore. And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow Yahweh will do wonders among you" (Josh. 3:3-5).

There are three significant items in the above passage: the priests bearing the ark; "heretofore"; and the instruction to "sanctify yourselves."

First let's consider the instruction to "sanctify yourselves." How do we sanctify ourselves? Isn't the Lord the One who has to sanctify us? In one sense, yes. But in another sense, you sanctify yourself. The verb form used here is the reflexive. Reflexive verbs (recognizable in Hebrew by the infinitive pattern *l'hit-*) are verbs which describe actions taken upon oneself. For example, *l'hitrachets* is to wash oneself; *l'hitlabesh* is to clothe oneself; *l'hitkadesh* is to sanctify oneself. When we speak of washing oneself, it is actually the water that washes and produces the status of being washed. Yet you are the one who has to step

into the shower, so in this sense you wash yourself. The same is true of clothing oneself. It's actually the garments that clothe you. Yet you are the one who has to step into the garments, so in this sense you clothe yourself. The same is true of sanctifying yourself. Technically, it's the Lord who sanctifies us: "we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Yeshua the Messiah once for all" (Heb. 10:10). Yet you are the one who has to step into the Messiah and sanctify yourself.

Crossing the Jordan and entering Canaan means stepping into the "heavenly places in Messiah" (Eph. 1:3) in order to live out the reality of our sanctified status as members of a royal priesthood: "ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people" (1 Pet. 2:9). This brings us to the subject of the priests bearing the ark in the Crossing of the Jordan.

The Old Covenant priesthood provides an example for leadership in the Body of Messiah. Under the New Covenant we are all priests, as the above quote from Peter shows. We are all holy, i.e., set apart. However, we are not all set apart for the same identical purpose and role. Just as some Israelites were set apart to be priests and some were not, so some are set apart to be leaders in the Body and some are not. Those who are set apart for leadership are not "more holy" than the non-leaders; they are just set apart for a different purpose, namely leading. Therefore it is important that the non-leaders in the Body (i.e., the followers) maintain some distance from the leaders when the leaders are in the process of leading the congregation forward. This principle can be seen in Joshua's instructions to the people to maintain a distance of 2,000 cubits between themselves and the priests who bore the ark.

This does not mean that leaders should be aloof and unapproachable and have no relationships with those who follow them. It simply means that non-leaders should give leaders some space when they are leading. In other

words, don't interfere when leaders are attempting to carry out orders they have received from Yeshua, our Joshua. If you crowd leaders when they are leading, your uninvited interference can be very annoying and distracting. If you get in the way and cause problems, you can trip over each others' feet and lose your balance. Then everyone just falls into the river and the ark sinks in the mud and nobody crosses over to the other side.

The priests under Joshua's leadership received their instructions from Joshua. Congregational leaders under Yeshua receive their instructions from Yeshua. Those who are not in leadership need to let the leaders lead and not hinder them. If there is sin in a leader's life, that is a different matter. Leaders need to be accountable to other leaders in situations involving actual sin. But when a leader is determining the direction, the vision, the focus for a congregation, people need to let the leader lead.

"But sometimes leaders don't hear the Lord's instructions clearly. Even sincere leaders who are anointed and called to lead can misunderstand what the Spirit is saying. What if I think my leader is not hearing the Lord correctly? Shouldn't I interfere in that case?"

Leaders should be open to correction, especially if it is offered humbly and respectfully and motivated by genuine concern for the wellbeing of the congregation. If you believe your leader is heading the wrong direction, you do not need to blindly, silently follow. However, before you go and tell your leader that he isn't hearing Yeshua's orders correctly, go and tell Yeshua first, and let *Him* correct the leader.

Suppose an Israelite had thought that the priests bearing the ark were headed the wrong direction. This Israelite could have gone to the priests and said, "Hey! That's not where Joshua wants us to cross over! You need to move two more furlongs upstream; *that's* where we're *supposed* to go!" The priests probably would have replied, "Well, that's not

what we heard Joshua say. We heard him say to do it here." A smarter and more efficient way for our imaginary Israelite to resolve the problem would be to go directly to Joshua instead of to the priests. "Joshua, look where those priests are taking the ark. Didn't you tell them to take it further upstream?" Then if they had indeed misunderstood Joshua's instructions, Joshua himself would go to them and point them the right direction. So if you think your congregational leader is taking the congregation the wrong direction, the wisest thing you can do about it is to first go directly to our Joshua, Yeshua, and tell Him about it.

Joshua stated the reason for the space between those bearing the ark and those following: "that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore." If you stand back a bit and give a leader space, it is easier to anticipate any changes you will be making as you follow. You will have time to prepare yourself for any adjustments you will need to make. Ye have not passed this way heretofore. You are entering into new territory, to experiences which are unfamiliar to you, to places in the spiritual realm where you have not previously been. The priests bearing the ark had not been in Canaan before, either, but they were receiving their instructions from a man who had entered Canaan forty years earlier - Joshua. We too have a Joshua who has entered the heavenly Promised Land ahead of us: "we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Yeshua the Son of God" (Heb. 4:14).

Look for leaders who are bearing the ark of glory, give them space to lead, and trust Yeshua to make His instructions clear to them. Without this, we cannot cross over the Jordan as a nation.

*To be continued...*



# SYNCRETISM

## A Blending of Paganism & Truth

Dr. Daniel Botkin

*Syncretism* is defined as "the combination of different forms of belief or practice" (Webster's). The word *syncretism* does not appear in the KJV, but the subject of syncretism is certainly addressed (and condemned) in the Scriptures. From a Biblical perspective, syncretism is the blending together of Yahweh worship with pagan worship.

A perfect example of syncretism is the worship of the Samaritans. When the Samaritan woman asked Yeshua a question about the difference between the worship of the Jews and Samaritans, He responded with this: "Ye worship ye know not what. We know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews" (Jn. 4:22).

This forthright statement probably sounds arrogant and ethnocentric in today's politically correct world, especially given the fact that the Samaritans believed in the same God the Jews worshipped. What was wrong with the worship of the Samaritans? To answer this question, we have to go to 2 Kings 17 and read about the origin of the Samaritans.

King David and King Solomon both ruled over a united, twelve-tribe monarchy. After the death of Solomon, the ten northern tribes seceded from the southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and made Samaria their capital. The ten northern tribes sinned greatly against the Lord. Their punishment was exile: "Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and beseiged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel [the ten tribes] away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes... So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day" (2 Ki. 17:5f, 23).

After the Israelites were carried away, the king of Assyria populated Israel's land with pagans from other territories: "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 instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof" (2 Ki. 17:24).

These were the people who later became known as the Samaritans. The rest of the chapter describes the development of the Samaritans' syncretistic worship. Soon after these people first settled in Israel's land, Yahweh sent lions among them "because they feared not Yahweh" (vs. 25). The Samaritans told the king of Assyria that they did not know how the God of this land wanted to be worshipped. So the king sent an Israelite priest to "teach them the manner of the God of the land," and this priest "taught them how they should fear Yahweh" (vs. 27f). The Samaritans then began to worship Yahweh. However, they mixed their worship of Yahweh with the worship of their old pagan gods: "They feared Yahweh, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence... So these nations feared Yahweh, and served their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day" (vs. 33 & 41).

Yahweh had made it clear in Deuteronomy chapter 12 that He does not want worship which is patterned after the worship of pagan gods. Rather, He said, "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it" (Deut. 12:32). The unnamed priest who instructed the Samaritans apparently neglected to tell the Samaritans that Yahweh rejects syncretistic worship. Or, if the priest did tell them, they chose to ignore those instructions. In either case, the Samaritans ended up with a flawed system of syncretistic worship. They erroneously believed that their system of worship was every bit as legitimate as that of the Jews. When the Jews returned from Babylon to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple, the Samaritans came to them and said, "Let us build with you: for we seek your God,

as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto Him since the days of Esar-haddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither" (Ezra 4:2).

The Jewish leaders rightly refused this ecumenical proposal, because they knew that the Samaritans' syncretistic worship would end up polluting their own worship. The Samaritans resented being shunned this way, and so opposed and harassed the Jews in their efforts to rebuild Jerusalem. About 500 years later, at the time of the Messiah, the Jews and the Samaritans were still not getting along with each other - which explains why the Samaritan woman was surprised when Yeshua asked her for a drink. "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans" (Jn. 4:9).

It was to this Samaritan woman that Yeshua spoke about the need for true worshippers to worship "in spirit and in truth." "The Father seeketh such to worship Him," Yeshua said, "and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:23f). True worship is a blend of spirit and truth. Syncretistic worship is a blend of paganism and truth.

The subtle danger of syncretistic worship lies in its claim to be worshipping the true God, Yahweh. When the Israelites brought idols and idolatrous practices into the Temple, they did not think of their actions as an abandonment of Yahweh. They thought of it as just supplementing their worship with customs borrowed from heathen idol worship. Even the golden calf at Mount Sinai was not regarded as a substitute god to replace Yahweh; rather, it was regarded as a symbolic representation of Yahweh. This can be seen in Aaron's reference to the golden calf as the God "which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" and his proclamation that the worship of the golden calf would be "a feast unto Yahweh" - not a feast to some Egyptian god (Ex. 32:4f).

Syncretism made its way into the Messianic faith quite early. Certain

statements in the Epistles show that it was starting even before the Apostles died. Paul scolded the Galatians for turning back to the weak and beggarly elements which put them in bondage to the observance of times. (And it is clear from the context that Paul was *not* referring to Yahweh's appointed times, which Paul himself observed. Rather, this observing of times concerned the Galatians' reverting back to their former pagan superstitions about times, much like some Christians today who put stock in their horoscopes.) Syncretism was also occurring among the saints at Colosse. This is obvious from Colossians chapter 2. (Here too it is clear from the context that Paul was *not* referring to the commandments of God written in the Torah; rather, he was talking about unhealthy bondage to *man-made* traditions, commandments, and philosophies.)

We know from history that the Apostles' warnings against syncretism went unheeded by the majority of Church leaders. Pagan customs were adapted and modified for use in Christian worship. Much that exists in Christianity today is nothing more than white-washed, baptized paganism. This is especially obvious in the Roman Catholic Church, which freely admits that many of its extra-Biblical traditions were borrowed from pagan idol worship. Anyone who doubts this can read *Catholic Customs and Traditions: A Popular Guide* by Greg Dues (Twenty-Third Publications, 2000). This book, written by a Catholic and primarily for Catholics, is a brief but comprehensive overview of the customs of Roman Catholicism. Throughout the book, the author freely admits that many Catholic customs were borrowed from paganism. Some examples:

- Sunday worship "is an example of how culture and pagan traditions influenced Christian religious traditions. This title [Sun-day] comes from pre-Christian worship of the sun" (pg. 22).

- The choice of December 25 as the date to celebrate Jesus' birth was an adaptation of the pagans' December 25 celebration of the birthday of their sun god. After Constantine "became the benefactor and protector of Christian-

ity," the writer states, "pagan cultural features of sun-symbolism were no longer threatening. They could be freely absorbed by the church. The church, with its Nativity date of December 25 already in place, did precisely this" (pg. 51f).

- "Most Christmas traditions associated with evergreens and trees are related somehow to pre-Christian practices... Teutonic and Scandinavian peoples worshipped trees and decorated houses and barns with evergreens at the new year to scare away demons" (pg. 56).

- Concerning Santa Claus: "The origin of this tradition is a fascinating and deliberate mixture of a bishop-saint, Father Christmas, Christmas Man, and the Norse mythological god Thor." Thor is described as "elderly, jolly (though a god of war), with white hair and beard, friend of the common people, living in the north land, traveling in the sky in a chariot pulled by goats, and as god of fire, partial to chimneys and fireplaces" (pg. 60-62).

- Mardi Gras, the Catholic pre-Lenten party-time, came from "pre-Christian revelry and masquerading associated with ancient pagan observance of spring and New Year festivals celebrated at the spring or vernal equinox" (pg. 73).

- Concerning the Catholic custom of giving milk and honey to those newly baptized: "This practice, marking an important moment in life, was borrowed from pagan mystery cults" (pg. 90).

- Concerning the origin of Easter eggs and Easter bunnies: "In ancient Egypt and Persia friends exchanged decorated eggs at the spring equinox... These eggs were a symbol of fertility... Rabbits are part of pre-Christian fertility symbolism because of their reputation to reproduce rapidly" (pg. 98f).

- Valentine's Day is connected to "a pagan Roman festival, Lupercalia... This festival came under the patronage of Juno, the goddess of marriage... St. Valentine replaced the pagan goddess Juno as a patron of love" (pg. 139f).

## The Havdalah Candle

### An Example of Syncretism?

Though the Bible does not prescribe any ritual to end the Sabbath, the rabbis prescribe a ritual called *havdalah* ("separation"). The climax of this short ceremony is at the conclusion, when a flaming torch (made of a braided candle) is plunged into wine and extinguished. We used to do *havdalah* every Saturday night at our house, but eventually got out of the habit. I'm glad now that we did. After reading about one particular custom practiced by pagan fertility cults, I would no longer feel comfortable doing *havdalah*. Greg Dues writes: "During the pagan ritual a flaming torch was plunged into water" (pg. 96). Dues explains that the fiery torch was a male symbol, and the liquid was a female symbol. The sexual connotations of an erect, hardened torch having its fire quenched by being plunged into a wet substance should be obvious, especially when this climactic act is preceded by romantic candle light and sweet-smelling spices, as in the *havdalah* ritual.

I do not know if the rabbis who first established the *havdalah* ritual borrowed it from the pagan fertility cults or not. Perhaps they did not; perhaps the striking similarity is a mere coincidence. If it is, I'm sorry if I've ruined *havdalah* for those who enjoy it. I will not condemn those who still want to do it, but I prefer to not do it.

Samaritanism and Roman Catholicism are not the only systems of worship guilty of syncretism. Syncretism exists in Protestantism, too. It can even be found in Judaism. "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:23f). Let's worship in spirit and in truth, not in a blend of paganism and truth. □

# CHRISTIANS KEEPING OLD TESTAMENT COMMANDMENTS?

## Not a Yes/No Question, but a Question of Which Ones

Daniel Botkin

When talking to Christians about keeping the commandments of the Torah, Old Testament "law" (or, more accurately, "instruction"), it is very important that we clarify two things:

1. We are not justified by keeping the law.
2. All true Bible-believing Christians do, in fact, believe in keeping the law.

### NOT JUSTIFIED BY KEEPING THE LAW

This fundamental, foundational truth is so obvious that it should not even need to be addressed. Even the Old Testament saints were not justified by keeping the law; they were, like us, justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. "The just shall live by faith," a statement that appears three times in the New Testament (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38), is a direct quote from the Old Testament (Hab. 2:4). Justification is not now and never was something that a person can earn or merit by keeping the law. Here are just a few verses which state this foundational truth:

- "ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39)
- "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight" (Rom. 3:20)
- "a man is justified by faith without [apart from] the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:28)
- "a man is not justified by the works of the law" (Gal. 2:16)
- "by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal. 2:16)
- "no man is justified by the law in the sight of God" (Gal. 3:11)

When we speak to our Christian brothers about the Torah, we need to make sure they understand that we are *not* talking about keeping the law in order to earn our justification; we are talking about keeping it *as a result of our having been justified*. Making Christians see this is easier said than

done. I cannot tell you how many times I have gone through a conversation like the following:

"I'm not talking about keeping the law to earn our justification," I say. "I'm talking about obeying our Father's commandments *after* we have been justified, as a response to His free gift of salvation. When it comes to salvation, justification, redemption, atonement, forgiveness, eternal life, etc., we receive all this by faith apart from the deeds of the law, because Jesus died for our sins. You and I are on the same page when it comes to the question of how we are saved. But I'm not talking about keeping the Torah as a means of salvation, okay?"

"Okay," the Christian says. "I understand."

Then follows a discussion about a subject like the Sabbath or dietary laws. I present solid, compelling evidence from the Bible which makes the Christian realize he needs to offer a reason to explain why he ignores these particular commandments. There is only one reason he can think of, so he says it:

"But we're not saved by keeping the law."

So we are back to page one again, trying to make him see that *we're not talking about salvation*; we're talking about what we are supposed to do with the law *after* we are saved.

### CHRISTIANS DO BELIEVE IN KEEPING THE LAW

If they are honest, Christians will have to admit that they do believe in keeping the commandments of the Torah - at least those commandments which *they* believe are still valid. For example, Christians believe that God still expects them to obey the commandments that prohibit murder, adultery, theft, and lying. Even though we are not justified by doing the law, "the doers of the law shall be justified" (Rom. 2:13). In the end, it is only the doers of the law who are justified,

because if a person is truly justified by faith, he will do the law. He will begin to walk in the instructions of the Torah. If he doesn't, then his non-doing of the Torah is evidence that he is not really justified by faith. He only thinks he is, or he is just pretending he is, because it is "the doers of the law" who "shall be justified." Even though no man is justified by the law in the eyes of God (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:11), James says that "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (Jas. 2:24). You are not justified in the eyes of God *by* keeping the law, but your keeping of the law is the proof that you are justified. Or, if you do not keep the law, that is proof that you are not really justified.

Christians keep Old Testament commandments against murder, adultery, theft, and lying, but not because they are trying to earn their salvation. They keep these commandments as a response to their salvation, to express their love to their Heavenly Father. And they believe that all Christians should keep these commandments. Yet if we say that we should also keep the Sabbath and dietary laws, we are accused of doing these things for the purpose of trying to earn our salvation. To accuse Sabbath-keepers of trying to earn their salvation by keeping the Sabbath makes no more sense than accusing a faithful husband of trying to earn his salvation by refusing to commit adultery, or accusing honest Christians of trying to earn their salvation by refusing to steal and lie.

### WHICH TORAH COMMANDMENTS SHOULD STILL BE KEPT?

One does not need to be a theological wizard to see that God still expects His children to keep at least *some* of the commandments of the Torah. The Apostles often quoted from the Torah to give instructions for Christian behavior. In the Epistles you will read, "Do such-and-such, because the law

says..." So the real question for Christians is not "Should we keep the commandments of the Torah?" The real question is "Which commandments of the Torah does our Father still want us to keep?"

According to the rabbis, the Torah contains 613 commandments. Some Christians say, "How could anyone possibly keep that many commandments? I couldn't even memorize that many rules, let alone keep them all. Surely God doesn't expect a person to live with 613 laws!" Think about this, though. Your federal, state, and local governments have a lot more than 613 laws, and they expect you to be a law-abiding citizen. You are able to live with thousands of federal, state, and local laws without breaking them. So why should it seem unreasonable and unrealistic to live with 613 God-given commandments?

You are able to live with thousands of civil laws because most civil laws are situation-specific. The laws apply only to people in a particular situation, and while they are in that situation. For example, building codes apply only to people who are building houses. If you are not building, you do not even need to be aware of the many laws which regulate building codes. Laws that regulate the collection and payment of sales tax apply only to retailers who sell retail merchandise. If you are not a retailer, you do not need to familiarize yourself with these laws. Driving laws apply only to people who drive, gun laws apply only to people who own guns, and so on.

Many of the 613 commandments of the Torah are likewise situation-specific, so nobody is expected to do all 613. Even Yeshua did not keep all 613 commandments, because some of the commandments are specifically for women. Some are for lepers. Some are for married people. Some concern bastards, Moabites, and Ammonites. Yeshua was not a woman, nor a leper, nor any of these other things, so He did not actively "do" all 613 commandments. Yet He did not once break any of the 613 commandments.

So, how many of the 613 commandments are Christians still supposed to keep? Or, we might ask, How many of

the 613 commandments *can* we still keep? Years ago a rabbi known as the Chafetz Chayim compiled all the Torah commandments which can still be observed today. The list of commandments (along with rabbinical interpretation) was first published in 1931 and again in 1943 and 1968. In 1990 it was published under the Hebrew title ספר המצוות הקצר, *The Concise Book of Mitzvot* (Commandments). The Chafetz Chayim lists 77 positive commandments (things we are commanded to do), 194 negative commandments (prohibitions), and 26 commandments which apply only in the land of Israel. That makes a total of 271 for people living outside Israel, and 297 for people living in Israel. That's 316 less than 613. What happened to the other 316 commandments? These are, for the most part, commandments which pertain to the Tabernacle/ Temple services and sacrifices which were administered by the Levitical priesthood. Without a Temple and without a functioning Levitical priesthood, these commandments obviously cannot be observed today - which explains why the subtitle of the Chafetz Chayim's book is *The Commandments Which Can Be Observed Today*.

I do not recommend *The Concise Book of Mitzvot*, because most of the text consists of man-made rabbinical interpretation which prescribes in great detail how the rabbis expect the commandments to be done. We do not need to put ourselves under the lordship of dead rabbis. I mention the book only because it gives some indication of how many of the 613 commandments deal with Temple and priesthood issues, and are therefore now non-observable under the New Covenant.

Whether they realize it or not, Bible-believing Christians believe in keeping most of the Torah commandments which can still be observed. For most Christians, the commandments which they have a problem with are commandments which deal with Sabbath, Feasts, dietary laws, and miscellaneous things like *tzitzitot* (fringes), *mezuzahs*, beards, etc. These things are dismissed as "Jewish rituals, just for the Jews to do until Christ came."

Yet the Bible nowhere singles out these commandments from the rest of the Torah and says that they are just for the Jews. Nor does the Bible say that these commandments would be abolished by the coming of the Messiah. People think of these things as Jewish practices only because Christians abandoned them centuries ago, and Jews have continued to practice them. But the Bible does not give one set of rules for Jews and a different set of rules for non-Jewish believers. "Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger, as for one of your own country: for I am Yahweh your God" (Lev. 24:22).

Some commandments cannot and/or need not be observed. If a commandment concerns the Temple and sacrifices offered under the Levitical priesthood, it is not observable (or at least not necessary). Of if a commandment was obviously just a temporary injunction for the Israelites during their time in the wilderness (e.g., Deut. 23:12-14, carry a spade to bury your dung in the desert), or for the conquest of Canaan (e.g., Deut. 20:17, utterly destroy the Hittites, Amorites, etc.), it is not a commandment we can or must observe. Or if a commandment prescribes stoning or some other punishment, this is not observable because 1) we are not currently living under a theocracy and therefore must let the civil courts punish lawbreakers; and 2) "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law" (Gal. 3:13), the curse being the punishment we deserve for breaking the law, and not the law itself.

If a commandment does not fall into any of the above categories and can still be kept, we should have a good reason to explain why we do not keep it. Christians who advocate the public display of the Ten Commandments need to explain why they keep only nine, and abolish the Sabbath commandment by spiritualizing it away. Christians who condemn sodomites and sorcerers by quoting Leviticus and Deuteronomy need to explain why Christians ignore the dietary laws found in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. If we ignore a commandment, we should have a good reason to explain why we do not keep it. □

## EXPRESSING EMOTIONS IN WORSHIP

(Compiled from Strong's Concordance & Dake Study Bible)

### I. PRAISING & SHOUTING

Lev. 9:24 when fire consumed sacrifice  
Josh. 6:20 at Jericho  
1 Sam. 4:5-6 when ark of covenant arrived  
2 Sam. 6:15 when ark brought up to Jerusalem  
1 Kings 1:40 when Solomon made king  
2 Chron. 15:14 when making an oath to God  
2 Chron. 20:19-23 when going against enemy  
Ezra 3:10-13 shouted with a great shout  
Ps. 5:11 rejoice and shout for joy  
Ps. 32:11 shout for joy  
Ps. 66:1 make a joyful noise unto God  
Ps. 98:4 make a joyful noise unto Yahweh  
Ps. 100:1-5 make a joyful noise unto Yahweh  
Ps. 132:9 let Thy saints shout for joy  
Isa. 12:6 cry out and shout  
Lk. 6:22-23 rejoice and leap for joy  
Lk. 19:37-40 rejoiced and praised God with a loud voice  
Lk. 24:53 in temple praising and blessing God  
Acts 16:25 Paul & Silas sang praises in prison  
Rev. 4:8-11 Holy, holy, holy; glory, honor, thanks  
Rev. 5:11-13 saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb"  
Rev. 7:9-12 cried with a loud voice  
Rev. 14:2-3 as the voice of many waters  
Rev. 19:1-10 a great voice of much people in heaven  
as the voice of many waters  
as the voice of mighty thunderings

### II. PRAYING ALOUD IN UNISON

Num. 14:1 all congregation lifted up their voice  
2 Chron. 15:13-15 swore oath with a loud voice  
Ezra 3:10-13 could not discern the noise of the shout of joy  
from the noise of the weeping  
Acts 1:14 with one accord in prayer and supplication  
Acts 4: 24-31 lifted up their voice to God with one accord  
Acts 12:12 many were gathered together praying

### III. GROANING & SIGHING

Ex. 2:23-24 sighed, cried, groaned in Egypt  
Ex. 6:5 "I have also heard the groaning..."  
Job 3:24 sighing; roarings poured out like water  
Ps. 6:6 weary with my groanings  
Ps. 12:5 the sighing of the needy  
Ps. 31:10 years spent with sighing  
Ps. 38:9 my groaning is not hid from Thee  
Isa. 21:2 Yahweh made the sighing to cease  
Isa. 24:7 the merry-hearted do sigh  
Jer. 45:3 I fainted in my sighing  
Lam. 1:4 Zion's priests sigh  
Lam. 1:11 all her people sigh  
Lam. 1:21-22 I sigh... my sighs are many  
Ezk. 9:4 sigh and cry over abominations  
Ezk. 21:6-7 Sigh therefore, thou son of man  
Acts 7:34 "I have heard their groaning..."  
Rom. 8:26 with groanings which cannot be uttered

### IV. PRAYING IN TONGUES

Mark 16:17 "these signs shall follow them that believe...  
they shall speak with new tongues"  
Acts 2:4 "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and  
began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit  
gave them utterance"  
Acts 10:44-46 "the Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard  
the word... on the Gentiles also was poured  
out the gift of the Holy Spirit. For they heard  
them speak with tongues"  
Acts 11:15-17 "And as I [Peter] began to speak, the Holy  
Spirit fell on them, as on us at the beginning.  
Then remembered I the word of the Lord,  
how that He said, 'John indeed baptized with  
water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy  
Spirit.' Forasmuch then as God gave them  
the like gift as He did unto us, what was I,  
that I could withstand God?"  
Acts 19:6 "And when Paul had laid his hands upon them,  
the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spake  
with tongues, and prophesied"  
1 Cor. 14 "he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speak-  
eth not unto men but unto God... he that speak-  
eth in an unknown tongue edifieth himself... I  
would that ye all spake with tongues... if I pray  
in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my  
understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will  
pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the  
understanding also: I will sing with the spirit,  
and I will sing with the understanding also... I  
thank my God, I speak with tongues more than  
ye all."

### V. WEEPING & CRYING

Num. 25:6 weeping before door of tabernacle  
1 Sam. 1:10 Hannah wept sore  
2 Kings 20:5 I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears  
2 Chron. 34:27 King Josiah wept  
Ezra 3:13 old men when foundation of temple laid  
Ezra 10:1 Ezra weeping and casting himself down

Neh. 1:4 wept and mourned  
 Est. 4:3 weeping and wailing  
 Est. 8:3 besought him with tears  
 Job. 16:20 mine eye poureth out tears unto God  
 Ps. 6:6 I water my couch with tears  
 Ps. 6:8 Yahweh hath heard the voice of my weeping  
 Ps. 39:12 hold not Thy peace at my tears  
 Ps. 42:3 my tears have been my meat  
 Ps. 56:8 put Thou my tears into Thy bottle: are they not in Thy book?  
 Ps. 126:5 they that sow in tears shall reap in joy  
 Jer. 9:1 mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night  
 Jer. 9:18 that our eyes may run down with tears  
 Jer. 13:17 my soul shall weep in secret places; mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears  
 Jer. 14:17 Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease  
 Jer. 50:4 Israel & Judah together weep and seek Yahweh  
 Lam. 1:2 She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks  
 Lam. 1:16 for these things I weep  
 Lam. 2:11 mine eyes fail with tears  
 Lam. 2:18 let tears run down like a river day and night  
 Lam. 3:48 mine eye runneth down with rivers of water  
 Joel 1: 5 Awake, ye drunkards, and weep  
 Joel 2:12 turn ye to Me... with weeping  
 Joel 2:17 Let priests and ministers weep  
 Mk. 9:24 said with tears, 'Lord I believe; help my unbelief'  
 Luke 6:21 Blessed are ye that weep  
 Luke 7:38 washed His feet with tears  
 Rom. 12:15 weep with those that weep

#### VI. LEAPING & DANCING

Ex. 15:20 with timbrels and with dances  
 Jdg. 11:34 with timbrels and with dances  
 1 Sam. 29:5 they sang one to another in dances  
 Jdg. 21:21 daughters of Shiloh come out to dance  
 2 Sam. 6:14-16 David leaped and danced with all his might  
 Ps. 30:11 Thou hast turned my mourning into dancing  
 Ps. 149:3 praise His name in the dance  
 Ps. 150:4 Praise Him with the timbrel and dance  
 Eccl. 3:4 a time to dance  
 Jer. 31:4 shalt go forth in the dances  
 Jer. 31:13 the virgin shall rejoice in the dance  
 Luke 1:41 John the Baptist leaped in the womb  
 Luke 6:23 rejoice and leap for joy  
 Acts 3:8 leaping and praising God  
 Acts 14:10 he leaped and walked

#### VII. CLAPPING & RAISING HANDS

1 Kings 8:22, 54 Solomon kneeled and spread forth hands  
 Ezra 9:5 fell on knees and spread out hands  
 Neh. 8:6 All said, "Amen, amen" with lifting up hands  
 Ps. 28:2 hear... when I lift up my hands  
 Ps. 47:1 Clap your hands, all ye people, shout unto God  
 Ps. 63:4 Thus will I bless Thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in Thy name

Ps. 88:9 I stretched out my hands to Thee  
 Ps. 134:2 Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and bless Yahweh  
 Ps. 141:2 Let the lifting up of my hands be as the evening sacrifice  
 1 Tim. 2:8 that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands

#### VIII. SHAKING, QUAKING, & TREMBLING

Ex. 19:16 people in the camp trembled at Sinai  
 1 Sam. 16:4 elders of town trembled at Samuel's arrival  
 Ezra 10:3 those that tremble at the commandment of God  
 Ps. 99:1 let the people tremble  
 Ps. 119:120 my flesh trembleth for fear of Thee  
 Isa. 66:2 I will look to him that... trembleth at My word  
 Isa. 66:5 ye that tremble at His word  
 Jer. 5:22 will ye not tremble at My presence?  
 Ezk. 12:18 eat thy bread with quaking, drink thy water with trembling  
 Dan. 6:26 I [Nebuchadnezzar] make a decree... that men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel  
 Dan. 10:7 a great quaking fell upon them  
 Mk. 16:8 at empty tomb, "they trembled and were amazed"  
 Acts 7:32 Moses trembled  
 Acts 9:6 Paul, trembling and astonished  
 Acts 16:29 jailer, trembling, fell down before Paul and Silas  
 Acts 24:25 Felix trembled  
 Heb. 12:21 Moses, exceedingly fear [ek-phobos] & quake

#### IX. PROSTRATION

A. Overpowered by Yahweh's Presence  
 Gen. 15:12-17 deep sleep on Abraham; horror of great darkness  
 Deut. 9:18, 25 Moses fell down before Yahweh  
 Ezk. 1:28; 3:23; 43:3; 44:4 saw glory, fell on face  
 Dan. 8:17 saw Gabriel, fell on face  
 Dan. 10:9 saw vision, on his face, face toward ground  
 Mt. 17:6 Father spoke, disciples fell on faces  
 Mk. 3:11 unclean spirits fell down before Yeshua  
 Acts 9:4 Saul fell to earth  
 Rev. 1:17 John fell at Yeshua's feet as dead man

#### B. Voluntary Prostration

Gen. 17:3 Abraham fell on face  
 Lev. 9:24 people shouted and fell on faces  
 Num. 16:4, 22, 45; 20:6 Moses & Aaron fell on faces  
 Josh. 5:14 before Captain of the host  
 1 Kings 18:39 fell on faces  
 Luke 17:16 leper fell on face at Yeshua's feet  
 Rev. 5:8, 14 beasts & elders fall down and worship  
 Rev. 7:11 angels fall down and worship  
 Rev. 11:16 elders fall down and worship

#### C. Prostration Under Burden of Prayer

Josh. 7:6 Joshua and elders fell on faces  
 Mt. 26:39 Yeshua in Gethsemane fell on face  
 Mk. 5:22 Jairus fell at Yeshua's feet  
 Mk. 7:25 woman with possessed daughter fell at His feet  
 Jn. 11:32 sister of Lazarus fell at His feet



# Q & A: Which Day is Shavuot (Pentecost)?

## Part 2: Readers Respond

In the last issue I mentioned that the Pharisees and Sadducees disagreed on when to celebrate Shavuot/Pentecost. The Pharisees began the 50-day count toward Pentecost on the morrow after the *annual* sabbath (Nisan 15), but the Sadducees started counting on the morrow after the regular *weekly* (Saturday) Sabbath. The Pharisees' Pentecost could fall on any day of the week, while the Sadducees' Pentecost always fell on a Sunday. I stated that it appeared to me that the Sadducees were correct, because the count must *end* on "the morrow after the seventh sabbath" (Lev. 23:16). Since the seventh sabbath is always a regular weekly Saturday Sabbath, it would seem that "the morrow after the seventh sabbath" must always be a Sunday, like the Sadducees taught. I said that if any readers had an explanation of how the morrow after the seventh sabbath can be any day of the week other than a Sunday, I'd be interested in reading it. A few readers who agree with the Pharisees' reckoning sent their thoughts on the subject, which I will summarize here.

Readers pointed out that the Septuagint (the pre-Christian translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek) translates "unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath" (*'ad mi-macharat ha-shabbat ha-shvi'it*) into a Greek phrase which means "until the morrow after the last week," which would allow for the Pharisees' view. This proves that *some* Jews (at least those who translated the Septuagint) understood the phrase this way. However, this is not proof that the translators were correct in their understanding; it only proves that the translators happened to agree with the Pharisees.

This raises a question about the Greek translation. If *ha-shabbat ha-shvi'it* (literally, "the seventh sabbath") really means "the seventh week" instead of "the seventh sabbath," then why does the Hebrew text say "the

seventh sabbath" instead of "the seventh week"? A precise Hebrew word for "week" exists, namely שבוע, *shavu'a* (singular of *Shavu'ot*, "Weeks," the name of the holiday under discussion). If the Lord meant for the phrase to mean "the seventh week," it would seem that the text would say *ha-shavu'a ha-shvi'i*, "the seventh week," but it does not. It says *ha-shabbat ha-shvi'it*, "the seventh sabbath." If it is supposed to mean "week," why doesn't it just say *shavu'a*, week?

Some readers raised several very good "unresolved questions" to challenge those who hold to the Sadducees' view. I do not have the space to address every single question here, but I do believe that every one of the unresolved questions can be resolved. Some of these questions seem to be arguing from silence. ("What historical sources show that the opposition view of the Sadducees was practiced?") If a question argues from lack of historical sources, then it can be resolved by lack of historical sources: What historical sources prove that the opposition view of the Sadducees was *not* practiced in some way by the Sadducees, apart from the rest of the Jewish nation? How do you prove a negative, that something *didn't* ever occur? Or, even if we assume that the Sadducees did not celebrate Shavuot according to their belief, how does this prove that the Sadducees were mistaken in their belief?

The greater part of the Jewish nation worshipped according to the Pharisees' prescriptions, we are told, because the Pharisees had the clout to force the masses to do things their way: "They had the greatest influence upon the congregations, so that all acts of public worship, prayers, and sacrifices were performed according to their injunctions" (*Unger's Bible Dictionary*, pg. 854).

Recent serious scholarship and research would dispute this view of the Pharisees' political power. While the

Pharisees were very influential in the first century BC, it appears that their power had diminished by the first century AD. According to British scholar N.T. Wright (who, I am told, is one of the world's most knowledgeable scholars in this area), this view of the Pharisees as a party that could enforce their injunctions on the people is an "extreme" view, and a view which is "now normally abandoned" by serious, knowledgeable scholars. Wright states:

"Josephus, as we noted above, emphasizes in his later writings that the Pharisees hold considerable *de facto* power in the early part of the first century BC. When it comes to the first century AD, things are not so clear. At one extreme (now normally abandoned) they have been held to be virtually the ruling party in Judaism, obeying strictly all the Mishnaic rules for *haberim* and enforcing them on as many Jews as they were able to."

Wright says that this view of the Pharisees as "the ruling party" is "now normally abandoned" because it is simply not so: "They [the Pharisees] were not an official body. They were not even the official teachers of Torah: that was one of the functions of the priesthood, both in Jerusalem and in the local community." Wright says that the priests "were the main teachers of the law, and the group to whom ordinary Jews turned for judgment and arbitration in disputes or legal problems... The priests were the local representatives of mainline 'official' Judaism..." Wright reminds us that Saul the Pharisee had to get his authority to persecute the church "from the chief priests" (Acts 26:10), not from his fellow Pharisees. (This information is from N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, Volume 1 of a major 5-volume project on Christian Origins and the Question of God, Fortress Press, 1992, pg. 186, 189, 209, 212f.)

What about Josephus' testimony of

the Pharisees' domination over the other sects of Judaism? Josephus' writings, while valuable, are not the only source of information for that period of history. Nor are Josephus' writings inerrant, holy Scripture. Josephus, who was writing historical accounts for the Roman occupiers, had an agenda (discussed in some detail by Wright and others). Even if we assume that Josephus did not exaggerate his claims of the Pharisees' political power, simply having the power to force everyone to worship according to your interpretation of Scripture does not prove that your interpretation is correct. If that were so, then the Roman Catholic Church of the Dark Ages and of the Inquisition was correct about everything it taught.

The most compelling argument for the Pharisees' view came from Uri Marcus of Jerusalem. Uri writes:

*The Hebrew grammar and construction of the verse (Lev. 23:16) makes absolutely no room for an interpretation that we should count UNTIL the morrow after the seventh Shabbat, even though English translations say this. The dead give-away is the first Hebrew letter, "mem," in the word mi-macharat. Hebrew in this case works the same way that it does in English. When we use "until" in a sentence, we expect to see the sentence preceded by the word "from," so that the end result is "do such and such FROM... UNTIL..." In English, for instance, you would never expect someone to say, "do such and such UNTIL... FROM..." unless the "FROM" was a parenthetical thought, given as a simple reminder of an earlier expression. In other words, I could either say, "Today I want you to work in your studio FROM 9 AM UNTIL 3 PM." Or, I could say, "Today I want you to work in your studio UNTIL 3 PM (FROM 9 AM)." The parenthetical thought is a reminder of what I may have said earlier in our discussion. But if I said to you, "Today I want you to work in your studio UNTIL FROM 9 AM 3 PM," you would look at me funny and wonder what in the world I was talking about.*

Well, that is exactly what is happening in Lev. 23:16. A parenthetical

*thought is being inserted as a reminder, through the use of the letter "mem" (which means FROM). Otherwise, the Hebrew text just sounds all screwy, and can't make any sense.*

*With the above in mind, the text should be read like this:*

*(vs. 15) And you shall count for yourselves, from **the morrow** of the rest day (16 Nisan) in which you brought the sheaf for waving (15 Nisan)*

*(vs. 16) Seven full Shabbatot there shall be, until (**from that morrow**), the seventh Shabbat (Sivan 6)...*

*The argument all hinges on what we do with the phrase "ad mi-macharat" in verse 16. Now the phrase is used only this one time in all of the Tenach. What does "ad mi-macharat" mean in Lev. 23:16? In order to answer the question, the whole sentence must be read, and divided according to the rules of Hebrew grammar. Literally, this compound word "mi-macharat" means as follows:*

mi-	- from
machar	- the morrow (the next day, the day after)
-rat	- of (a preposition which connects machar to the words which follow)

*If we preface this word with the Hebrew word "ad," as verse 16 does, that is, "ad mi-macharat," it makes absolutely no sense in Hebrew, and the phrase becomes unusable. We cannot further connect it to the rest of the sentence, that is, "ad mi-macharat ha-shabbat ha-shvi'it," and still have it qualify as normal Hebrew grammar in constructing a sentence, unless we allow the Hebrew to insert a parenthesis of thought.*

*If this parenthetical reminder had not been intended, we would have expected it to read like this: "ad le-macharat ha-shabbat ha-shvi'it," which would have been translated "until the point in time up to the morrow of the seventh Shabbat." In other words, if the preposition had been written with a "le-" (to) instead of a "mi-" (from), it would have made sense, in the same*

*way that English requires a movement "to" or towards something after the word "until," rather than a movement "from" or away from something after the word "until."*



Does the meaning of Leviticus 23:16 really hinge on the presence of that single-letter prefix מִ (mi-)? I know Hebrew well enough to see Uri's point, and I think he explained it clearly enough to be understood even by readers with little or no knowledge of Hebrew. The mi- ("from") is between 'ad ("until") and macharat ("the morrow of") for some reason. And Uri is right, the Hebrew text does sound all screwy if we translate every word literally as "until from the morrow," unless we understand "from the morrow" as part of a parenthetical reminder to point us back to "the morrow" of the previous verse to remind us when the count begins. I do not have a better explanation for the presence of the mi- ("from") between 'ad and macharat, but I see three problems with Uri's explanation:

1. Machar has an -at suffix which means "of." And, as Uri points out, this preposition "connects machar to the words which follow" (emphasis mine). In this case, the words which follow are *ha-shabbat ha-shvi'it*, "the seventh sabbath." If the phrase *mi-macharat* was a parenthetical reminder referring to the sabbath in the previous verse, then it could not be connected to "the seventh sabbath." If *ha-shvi'it*, "the seventh," were not there, then one could argue that *macharat ha-shabbat* might possibly refer to the morrow after the sabbath in the previous verse, because without *ha-shvi'it* it would not be clear which of the two sabbaths was being referred to. But *ha-shvi'it* is there, and it clearly specifies which sabbath must be connected to *macharat*. I do not see how *macharat ha-shabbat* can possibly refer to the *shabbat* of the previous verse when it is grammatically connected to "the seventh sabbath" of its own verse.

2. The Jews who translated the Septuagint did not translate the phrase this way, even though they apparently agreed with the Pharisees' view of

Shavuot. They translated 'ad *mi-macharat* as εως της επομεριον, *heos tes epaurion*, "until the morrow of" - not as "until (from the morrow of...)." These Greek words can be found in Strong's Concordance (Gk. #2193, 3588, 1887), which defines *heos* as "until" and *epaurion* as "tomorrow." The *tes* is the definite article ("the") in its singular genitive form (i.e., possessive, making it "the morrow of"). What did the translators of the Septuagint do with the *mi-* ("from") between 'ad and *macharat*? Apparently they ignored it, as do most modern translators. The Greek *apo-* prefix (απο-), which is used to signify "from," is found hundreds of times in the Septuagint, but it is not used here. If the translators had understood the phrase as Uri explains it, they could have used *apo-* ("from") to clarify it, but they did not.

3. It is true that a *mem* prefix normally means "from" when it is attached to a noun. However, an extra *m-* at the beginning of a noun does not always signify "from." Some nouns which start with *mem* can be spelled with or without an extra *m-* at the beginning: a measure = *mad* or *memad*; a corpse = *mot* or *mamot*; merchandise = *mecher* or *mimkar*; dominion = *malchut* or *mamlachut*; mixed wine = *mesekh* or *mamsakh*; bitterness = *meror* or *mamror*; a possession = *meshek* or *mimshak*. In these words the extra *m-* at the beginning does not signify "from"; it just signifies an alternative spelling for words that start with *mem*. Is it not possible that the *m-* attached to

*macharat* in Lev. 23:16 signifies an alternative spelling rather than "from"? This would allow for a literal translation that makes sense, and it would explain why the translators of the Septuagint translated it the way they did.

Readers also sent extra-Biblical testimony about the Shavuot controversy, including this quote from Alfred Edersheim's book *The Temple*: "The testimony of Josephus, of Philo, and of Jewish tradition, leaves no room for doubt that in this instance we are to understand by the 'Sabbath' the 15th of Nisan, on whatever day of the week it might fall" (pg. 257). Edersheim is referring to the sabbath on which to begin the 50-day count in Leviticus 23:11. This does not explain Leviticus 23:16, nor does it prove which side was right in the controversy. This only tells us that Josephus, Philo, and others who recorded Jewish history reported the view of the Pharisees as the norm and the view of the Sadducees as the minority view.

I am uncomfortable with Edersheim's statement that the testimony of extra-Biblical historians "leaves no room for doubt." Their testimony may leave no room for doubt about how the Pharisees understood the text (and how they carried out the instructions), but only the testimony of Holy Scripture should leave no room for doubt about what a text actually means. And to me, what the text actually means is unclear and ambiguous.

Some might argue and say that it is not ambiguous - at least not to them. Maybe not. But consider this. The

Sadducees (and later the Karaite Jews) disagreed with the Pharisees. So did the Boethusians. So did the Falasha Jews and the Jews of Qumran. All of these groups had four different dates for Shavuot. The Pharisees' view puts it on Sivan 6. The Sadducees' and Boethusians' Shavuot always fell on a Sunday, as does the Karaites'. The Falashas celebrated it on Sivan 12, and the Qumran community celebrated it on Sivan 15. (See *Encyclopedia Judaica*.) Serious, God-fearing Jews who knew the Hebrew language and who lived 2,000 years closer to the time of Moses than we do could not agree on this issue. That alone tells me that the text was ambiguous even back then. And if it was ambiguous to God-fearing, Hebrew-speaking Jews 2,000 years ago, it's probably not going to be crystal clear to us today.

It was probably not at all ambiguous in the time of Moses, but the Lord certainly knew that it would eventually become ambiguous to His people and lead to different views. The Lord could have prevented this by clarifying it in a way that would leave absolutely no room for doubt about what it means, but He chose not to. Perhaps He leaves it unclear to see how we will treat others who view an unclear text differently than we do.

So, when should we celebrate Shavuot? Because every view is debatable, my recommendation is to celebrate it on the day chosen by your local congregational leader(s), and don't criticize others who celebrate it on a different day. Just be thankful they are celebrating it. -DB

GATES OF EDEN  
PO BOX 2257  
EAST PEORIA IL  
61611-0257

# CROSSING OVER, PART 4

Daniel Botkin

The Israelites' Crossing of the Jordan and entering into the Promised Land provides us with a picture which is a model for our entering into the reality of our spiritual Promised Land, the heavenly places, under the leadership of our Joshua, Yeshua (Jesus). Crossing over into the Promised Land means fighting spiritual battles in order to enjoy the spiritual blessings that await us in the heavenly realm. It means walking by faith instead of by sight. It means walking in obedience, living a holy life, and gaining victory over temptation and sin.

The Israelites had to cross over the Jordan to get into the Land God had promised them. In order for us to enter into our Promised Land, we have to cross over the barriers and obstacles that stand between us and the fulfillment of God's plan for us. The Jordan River was the boundary between the wilderness and the Promised Land. The waters of the Jordan River represent all the reasons we see (or, more often, the excuses we fabricate) for *not* entering in and doing the things which our Creator brought us into existence to do. The waters of the Jordan carry all sorts of arguments which are designed to persuade us to remain on the wilderness side, where life is dry and boring and where our days are spent in aimless wandering. The wilderness is a place where God's people merely survive but never thrive.

Read the Book of Acts and the biographies of great saints like Charles Finney, Peter Cartwright, and General William Booth and his wife Catherine. Read the stories of missionaries like Hudson Taylor, Amy Carmichael, and C.T. Studd. Then compare these lives to the typical, boring life of the average American church-goer. Read the accounts of revivals like the Cane Ridge Revival, the Welsh Revival, and the Azusa Street Revival. Then compare these moves of the Holy Spirit to the shal-



low, ineffective foolishness that people try to pass off as "revival" nowadays. We are not called to boredom and foolishness. We are called to spiritual battles and spiritual blessings on the other side of the Jordan.

The first generation of Hebrews who came out of Egypt would not cross the Jordan and enter into Canaan because of their unbelief, an unbelief which was born out of their fear of the giants in the Land. "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it" (Heb. 3:19-4:1). Like the Hebrews of Moses' generation, many people today never enter into their "rest." They restlessly wander from church to church, from ministry to ministry, from doctrine to doctrine, from one religious fad to another. Like a light-weight, dried-up leaf, they are blown about by every wind of doctrine. Unstable and restless, they never discover their heavenly Father's plan for their life, and they never enter into the good works that He foreordained for them to do.

Some people never enter in because of their fear of the giants on the other side. One of the biggest giants is the fear of the unknown. Who knows what's waiting over there? Life on the wilderness side is boring, but at least it seems relatively safe and somewhat predictable. People prefer the security of the familiar rather than the uncertainty of what lies on the other side of the Jordan.

Some people remain on the wilderness side for other reasons. Sometimes they are held to the wilderness side by their love for other things - things that the Lord won't let them take with them into the Promised Land, things that the Lord tells them they have to leave behind. These things are not always inherently sinful. Sometimes they might be things like material possessions, financial wealth, or a career. They might be habits or hobbies. They might be elements of one's personal identity or personal relationships with certain people. Whatever they are, they are things that would hinder the fulfillment of their call on the other side.

Whether people are held to the wilderness side by their fear and unbelief or by their love of other things, they soon get settled in and feel at home in the wilderness. "I might not be living in the Promised Land," they say, "but at least I've found my place here in the wilderness."

God's call is to leave "your place" in the wilderness: "When ye see the ark of the covenant of Yahweh your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it" (Josh. 3:3). If you are stuck in a dry, boring wilderness, don't stay there. Look for the ark and go after it. The ark had the Tablets of the Law on the inside and the glory of the Lord on the outside. Look for a body of people who have the Torah in their hearts and the glory of the Lord upon them. Then remove from your place and go join yourself to them.

One of the things you have to do when crossing the Jordan is to stand still: "When ye are come to the brink of the water of Jordan, ye shall stand still in Jordan" (Josh. 3:8). Standing still in the midst of apparent danger requires trust in the Lord. At the Crossing of the Red Sea, the people were allowed to "stand still" on dry, solid ground, some distance away

from the water. For our initial salvation experience, God makes the way through the waters plain *before* we step onto the path that leads to deliverance. At the Crossing of the Jordan, though, we have to first step into the water and then stand still *in* the Jordan. Then God opens the path that leads to holiness, to the fulfillment of our destiny, and to victory over our enemy the Devil and all of his "giants." It requires a greater measure of faith and courage to cross the Jordan than it did to cross the Red Sea. At the Red Sea, we were running away and escaping from our enemy. At the Jordan River, we are invading the enemy's turf with the intention of driving him out. It takes more faith and courage to attack the enemy than it does to run away from him.

Whatever your Jordan is, it can be crossed by faith. The waters of the Jordan may tell you, "You can come no further. You can only enjoy the Promised Land from a distance, as a spectator. Forget about doing any exploits for the Lord. Be satisfied with just reading about other people who did great things for God, but don't expect to ever do any great things yourself. Unlike others, you do not have what it takes to break through the barrier."

If that is what you hear, you need to simply take a step of faith. Wade right into those waters; challenge those lies; defy them. Then stand still in the midst of those waters and trust the Lord to bring them down.

"I stepped into the waters once, but it didn't work," some people say. "The obstacles I faced didn't go away. So I stepped back onto dry ground on the wilderness side. I guess this must be where the Lord wants me, since He didn't make a way for me to cross over into holiness."

Keep in mind that the waters of the Jordan took some time to go down. They did not immediately disappear or part like they did at the Red Sea. The waters were cut off about twenty miles upstream, and gradually dropped at the place of the Crossing. Therefore we must stand still in the Jordan, trusting and waiting for the Lord to

bring the waters down. Once you have stepped in, don't draw back, because the Lord says "if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Heb. 10:38).

It is no coincidence that the place where the waters were cut off upstream was at the city called Adam (Josh. 3:16). God either held the waters back with His invisible hand, or He caused a Divinely-ordained mudslide to block the river. Either way, the waters were held back and piled up at Adam. As a result, Adam was buried under water, enabling the Israelites to cross over. This is a wonderful picture of baptism, when "Adam," our old Adamic nature, is buried under a watery grave, and we cross over from death to newness of life. This is what makes a way for us to cross over into the place of blessing. (See Romans 6:1-13.)

One more thing about crossing over. There is a parenthetical yet significant remark that appears in Joshua 3:15. It says, "(for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest)." A warning and a word of encouragement are contained in this statement. God called the Israelites to cross over at flood-time, at the time which would seem the most difficult, humanly speaking. This forewarns us that we, too, may be called to crossings at times which do not seem convenient or easy. In addition to creating a wider river and deeper waters, flood-time also brought the wild lions out into the open. Jeremiah 49:19 speaks about the enemy coming up "like a lion from the swelling of the Jordan." So if we want to cross over, we are forewarned that it may happen at a time when the barriers and obstacles have multiplied, and at a time when the enemy has been flushed out "as a roaring lion" who "walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8).

The word of encouragement contained in Joshua 3:15 is the phrase "the time of harvest." Crossing time means harvest time. If you cross over, you can expect to reap a rich, bountiful harvest. The fruit of the Spirit grows only in the rich, fertile soil of Canaan.

Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance do not grow in the hot sands on the wilderness side. But they do grow abundantly on the other side, so when you cross over, you can expect to start bearing these fruits.

Crossing over is not just for "super-saints," "reverends," and "clergymen." It is for all of God's children. Joshua chapter 3 ends with these words: "...and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan." *All* the Israelites crossed over, and all Israelites today are called to cross over. If you believe in Israel's Messiah, you are an Israelite, a member of the commonwealth of Israel, regardless of your physical genealogy. (See Ephesians 2:11-14.) As a Messianic Israelite, you are called to cross over from the wilderness to the Promised Land. Confront the obstacles that are separating you from the fulfillment of your Father's plan for you. Wade into the waters, walking by faith, and trust the Lord to cut off the waters somewhere upstream. Then, like the Israelites of Joshua's day, stand firm and wait for the waters to go down. Hold your ground until you see a path to take you to the other side. Then start walking and keep walking until you are on the other side.

*To be continued...*

# LAYING HOLD OF DESTINY

Dr. Daniel Botkin

The failure to lay hold of destiny is the tragedy of every generation. Ask people in this present generation to define a successful life, and the majority of them will describe a life marked by little more than self-preservation, adequate comfort, and a sufficient amount of fun and pleasure. Most people see no deeper purpose for their lives beyond the fulfillment of these temporal desires. As a result, they live shallow, trivial lives and never attempt to live up to their full potential. They die without ever releasing the treasures which are stored in their souls, and humanity is thus deprived of untold benefits and blessings.

How does a person lay hold of his destiny and find the determination and faith to fulfill that destiny? As time-bound creatures, we experience life in the present, past, and future. There are three keys needed to unlock the door of destiny, and these three keys relate to the present, the past, and the future. The first key is experiencing the terror and the thrill of existence in the present. The second key is overcoming failures of the past. The third key is breaking the chains of low expectations for the future. Let's consider each of these keys.

## THE TERROR AND THE THRILL OF EXISTENCE IN THE PRESENT

Experiencing the terror and the thrill of existence in the present gives a person a vision of destiny. Allow me to share from my personal experience to demonstrate what I mean by the terror and the thrill of existence in the present. At a family reunion a few years ago, my uncle gave me a copy of our family tree. A relative had done extensive genealogical research and traced some of our ancestry all the way back to the 11th century. I keep my copy of our family history tucked away in a filing cabinet, but occasionally I take it out and glance at the names of my long-dead ancestors. It reminds me that I owe my existence to

every one of these individuals. I am obligated to them, as well as to God, to fulfill the purpose of my existence in this present generation.

The terror and the thrill of my existence come when I consider the great number of events that had to transpire over the centuries to bring me into existence. Every link in the chain of my genealogy was necessary to produce the unique individual that is me. Any number of things could have happened in the lives of my forefathers to break one of the links in the chain. A different decision about something as mundane as where to live or where to work could have resulted in a different spouse or a premature death for one of my ancestors. My existence could easily have been aborted centuries ago, but it wasn't. Just the fact that I am here in the present fills me with a sense of wonder and godly fear. It thrills my soul, because I realize that my Maker brought me into existence in this generation for a reason.

Mordecai the Jew knew that Esther had been brought into existence in her generation for a reason. When the Jewish people in Persia were in danger of annihilation, Mordecai urged Queen Esther to intervene. Mordecai closed his appeal to Esther with these words: "And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

We each need to realize that we have been brought into the world "for such a time as this." God put each one of us into this current period of history. He was the One who decided when we would be born. It was His will that we be alive in this present generation, not in a generation of a hundred years ago or a generation of a hundred years from now. He has a destiny for each one of us to fulfill in this generation. We may not see the purpose of our existence in our own lifetime. Ruth, the great grandmother of King David and ancestress of the Messiah, certainly did not see the full picture of

her purpose in her own lifetime. Yet when she made the decision to leave Moab and join herself to the God of Israel and to the people of Israel, she set out on a path which led her to the fulfillment of a glorious destiny.

Like Ruth and like Esther, we each have a reason for being here in our generation. Whether we fill a major or a minor role in the big picture is beside the point. The point is that we each have a role to play. Whether we are small or great, we each have a purpose, just as every part of the human body has a purpose. The simple fact of our existence in the present should be all the proof we need to convince us that God truly does have a plan for us in our generation.

Seeing this truth will cause us to experience the terror and the thrill of existence in the present. This is the first key needed to unlock the door of destiny. This key opens the door wide enough to let in the light of revelation concerning destiny. Merely seeing the light is not enough to take us through destiny's door, though. We need to have the courage and the confidence to go forward and walk in the light. To do this, we need the second key, overcoming the failures of our past.

## OVERCOMING THE FAILURES OF OUR PAST

We need to overcome the failures of our past and the crippling influence they bring. Some people who see the light have a pensive longing to go forward and lay hold of their destiny, but they find themselves paralyzed by *kakorrhaphiophobia* - the fear of failure. Because they failed so many times in the past, they are afraid to use their talents and abilities to attempt any noble endeavors. Rather than risk the disappointment and humiliation of another failure, they settle for less than God has for them. Like the servant in the Biblical parable who buried his talent, they say, "I was afraid," and these three words become their



epitaph.

Overcoming the failures of our past can be difficult. Failure is usually a very depressing experience. Our goals and hopes and dreams do not materialize, and we feel ashamed, inadequate, and humiliated. It is normal to feel disappointed when we fail at something. However, it is not necessary to let ourselves be emotionally crippled or paralyzed by our failures. One failure does not mean that we are doomed to fail at everything we try. We can try again, even if we have to set new goals that are entirely different from the goals we had originally hoped to reach.

Many of the great achievements of history were accomplished by people who had failed many times before they succeeded. Abraham Lincoln experienced many political defeats before he became President. Thomas Edison's perseverance in the face of repeated failures gave the world the electric light. The early sermons of the great evangelist D.L. Moody were so pathetic that a friend told him he would best serve the Lord by keeping quiet. The Bible records the stories of many men who failed and made a comeback. Moses' initial efforts to deliver the Israelites from Egypt resulted in exile for Moses. Forty years later, he returned to Egypt with the power of God. The Apostle Thomas was rebuked for doubting the testimony of the witnesses who had seen the risen Lord, but Thomas later went on to carry the gospel to India, where he died as a martyr. Peter boasted to his Lord, "I will never deny you!" Yet he denied knowing his Master three times. About two months later, though, Peter boldly proclaimed the message of the Resurrection to a large crowd of stunned onlookers, and about 3,000 people were baptized that day as the result of Peter's preaching.

Whether our past has been marked by moral failures, business failures, or political failures, failure can be overcome. The solution to overcoming failure is not some hidden secret. The solution rests in simple things like admission of wrongdoing, acceptance of God's forgiveness, trust in God's

guidance, and old-fashioned perseverance. Regardless of the mess we have made of things, our heavenly Father is able and willing to forgive us if we acknowledge our sins and repent. He is able and willing to help us succeed if we are willing to try again. Accepting God's forgiveness for our sins sets us free from the baggage of our past so that we can go forward and trust Him to help us lay hold of our destiny. Before we can walk in the fulness of our destiny, however, we need the third key, breaking the chains of low expectations for the future.

#### THE CHAINS OF LOW EXPECTATIONS

The chains of low expectations are like the chains used to tether elephants by the feet. If an elephant born in captivity gets accustomed to having his foot chained to a stake in the ground, he will continue to be restricted by the chain even after he has grown strong enough to break free. Since the elephant's infancy, the tug of the chain has told him that he has gone as far as he can go. He is programmed to believe that he has reached his limit when he feels the tug of the chain. When he becomes an adult, he does not realize that he has grown powerful enough to break the chain. So he believes the lie of the chain for the rest of his life.

Some people are like chained elephants. They are totally unaware of the increased strength that the maturing process has brought to them. They accept the limitations that past weaknesses had imposed on them. When they try to go forward to lay hold of their destiny, they still feel the tug of the chain. The chain tells them, "No, this is as far as you can go. Forget about doing anything noble. Just be content with your own survival and comfort and a few pleasures in life." This message of the chain is often spoken through the lips of well-meaning people who have low expectations of us.

The strength needed to break the chain of low expectations is a strength that builds up one day at a time. One is a small number, but we need to con-

sider the power of one - one prayer, one step of faith, one day of growth, one ping pong ball. Yes, one ping pong ball. Let me explain with a true story. Years ago a boat sank and was stuck in the mud at the bottom of the sea. The owner of the boat offered a generous reward to anyone who could salvage the boat. Several people tried to raise the boat but failed. Finally, one man came up with an ingenious idea. He ran a flexible tunnel from the surface to the sea floor and attached the end of the tunnel to the sunken boat's hull. Then from the surface he fed thousands of ping pong balls into the tunnel and forced the ping pong balls into the hull of the sunken boat. Eventually, the accumulation of ping pong balls reached "critical mass," and the boat was lifted out of the mud and rose to the surface. One ping pong ball by itself could not free the boat from the mud, but the power of one ping pong ball, combined with enough other ping pong balls, provided the accumulation of power needed to pull the ship out of the mud.

Maybe one day of spiritual and emotional growth will not give us the strength we need to free ourselves from the weaknesses that have us stuck in the mud. If we continue to mature, though, eventually we can grow strong enough to break free. There will come a day when we are powerful enough to break the chains of low expectations. If we give up and resign ourselves to a lifetime of weakness and defeat, we will never know when that day of potential victory arrives. We will be like the elephant that remained chained to his post because he did not realize he had the power to break free. We must not base our expectations for the future on the weaknesses and limitations of our past. We do not need to limit ourselves to other people's low expectations of us. We can break the chains and prove them wrong.

The past belongs to our ancestors, the future belongs to our descendants, but the present belongs to us. What we do in the present will have eternal consequences. Let's make the most of it while we are here. □

# THE POTTER & THE CLAY

**"Thou Art the Potter, I am the Clay"**

**Daniel Botkin**

*"Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, 'Why hast thou made me thus?' Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"*

*-Romans 9:20f*

God is likened to a potter, not only in Romans 9 but also in Jeremiah 18. No doubt these passages of Scripture were the inspiration for the lines of a well-known hymn written nearly one hundred years ago: "Thou art the Potter, I am the clay. Mold me and make me after Thy will, while I am waiting, yielded and still."

Clay is a good material to represent man. The very first man, Adam (whose name means "man"), came out of the ground (*adamah* in Hebrew). Adam was a piece of lifeless clay until God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Thus clay reminds us of our humble origins and of the fact that we owe our existence to our Creator.

The frailty of clay vessels reminds us that human life is fragile. When my wife and I did volunteer work on the archeological dig around the Temple Mount in Jerusalem in 1976, we discovered, while sifting through the soil of New Testament times, that the most common archeological finds are usually bits and pieces of broken pottery. The millions of broken clay jars that lie buried in the earth remind us that the ground is not only our origin, it is also the destiny of our fleshly body. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:19).

Pliancy is another characteristic that clay shares with man. Clay is flexible; it can be easily manipulated and molded. This can be either good or bad, depending on who is molding and shaping us. We are either going to yield to the pressure of the world,

the flesh, and the devil, and be conformed to the world, or we are going to yield to the hand of the Heavenly Potter, and be transformed by the renewing of our minds. There is no such thing as a truly "self-made man." Every man is molded and shaped to some extent by his personal experiences, by others around him, and by God if he yields to the hands of the Heavenly Potter.

When I was an art student at Illinois State University, I took three semesters of ceramics. Learning to be a potter helped me to understand a little bit about how God labors as the Heavenly Potter. The various steps from preparation of the clay to the final firing of the finished piece reveal how God works on us.

To prepare the clay, all foreign objects must be removed from the lump of clay. Even a very small chip of wood or a tiny pebble can ruin the vessel at some point in the process if it is not removed at the very beginning. The foreign object that exists in man is sin, and it must be removed by the Potter. If sin is not removed, it will eventually destroy us. We will be a vessel that is not fit for the Potter's

use. Sin is removed by the Potter through the sacrifice of His Son Yeshua, Jesus of Nazareth. Allowing the Potter to take away our sin is the prerequisite to being shaped into a vessel for His use.

The clay is further prepared by kneading. It is very important to get every air bubble out, because an air bubble inside the wall of the vessel can cause it to crack or explode during the firing. My pottery teacher taught us to knead the clay somewhat violently, occasionally throwing it down hard onto the table and punching it repeatedly. Sometimes the Heavenly Potter has to treat us that way in order to prepare us for His handiwork.

A potter has to continue kneading until the particle distribution is homogeneous. The texture of the clay must be consistent throughout. Our Potter kneads us until we have balance and consistency of character. Then we are ready to be put on the Potter's wheel.

When a lump of clay is put on the potter's wheel, it has to be centered. The potter does this by applying pressure to the outside of the lump as it goes round and round in circles. The Heavenly Potter likewise gets us

into the center of His will by applying pressure. Sometimes He uses circumstances to push us in a direction that we do not want to go. We feel like we are just going in circles - and we are! It is necessary, though, if we want Him to mold us and shape us.

Once the clay is centered on the wheel, the potter uses one of his hands to invade the inside of the clay from the top of the lump. This creates what will be the opening of the vessel. With one hand on the inside and one hand on the outside, pressure is slowly but steadily applied to both the inside and the outside of the lump. All this time, the wheel continues to turn. The amount of internal and external pressure must be carefully balanced to maintain a uniform thickness so that the vessel will not crack or rip apart. As this internal and external pressure is applied, the potter is able to raise up the wall of the vessel. All this time, water must occasionally be poured on the clay to keep it wet.

Our Heavenly Potter does the same to us. After using external circumstances to get us in the center of His will, He then invades us internally from above. He puts His finger inside our soul and writes His Law on the tablets of our heart, giving us an internal desire to obey His commandments. This creates an "opening," so that our mouth can later pour out words that will bless God and bless others. The Potter keeps us going in circles as He steadily applies pressure to us both internally and externally, being careful to not let us crack up mentally or be ripped apart emotionally. Then like a potter raising up the wall of a vessel, our Potter raises us up to experience heavenly realities such as dreams, visions, prophetic words, and revelations. All this time, the Potter occasionally pours out the water of His Holy Spirit upon us to keep us wet with "the dew of Hermon" (Ps. 133:3).

After the potter has brought the vessel to the shape he desires, he carefully removes it from the wheel and puts it on a shelf to dry. The pot must stay there until it is completely dry. Sometimes we feel like the Heavenly Potter has quit working in

our life and has "put us on the shelf." We feel like we are drying up spiritually. If you feel like you have been put on the shelf, don't be discouraged. Maybe the Potter just has you drying out so that you will develop a true, deep thirst for Him. A classic example of someone who spent a long time drying out on the shelf was Moses. He had to stay in the dry desert of Midian for forty years before he was ready to be used by God.

Pottery that has been dried is called greenware. We might think that the process is finished when the Potter finally takes us off the shelf, but in reality, we are still green. Greenware has to go into the fire. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you" (1 Pet. 4:12). Greenware is very brittle and easily broken. The fire of the kiln makes the vessel firm and solid. Without fiery trials, we have no internal strength and stability. Without the fire, we will easily crumble and fall apart in shaky situations.

After we endure some fiery trials, we are no longer green. However, the Potter is not yet finished. The final step is to apply color glazes to the vessel and put it into the kiln for one more firing. This final firing causes the glaze to stick to the surface of the pot so that the beauty and the glory of the finished glaze become a permanent

part of the vessel. I like to think of this final firing as taking place on the day the Apostle Paul wrote about in 1 Corinthians 3:13-15:

"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

This final firing will once and forever permanently bond to our eternal soul the glazes of God's grace which He pours upon us throughout our lifetime. And just as the final firing brings out the true colors and the shining glory which are hidden in the dull, unfired glazes, so this final firing will reveal the hidden beauty and glory which God bestows upon us by His amazing grace. □

"The word which came to Jeremiah from Yahweh, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of Yahweh came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith Yahweh. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel." -Jeremiah 18:1-6

# SOME UNIQUE THINGS ABOUT THE SABBATH COMMANDMENT

Daniel Botkin

With all the talk in the news about the Supreme Court's ruling on the public display of the Ten Commandments, it seems appropriate to consider the one commandment of the Ten which is neglected by most Christians. Here are a few interesting facts about the Sabbath to demonstrate the uniqueness of the Sabbath Commandment.

1. It is the only one of the Ten Commandments that God specifically said to remember. "Remember the Sabbath day..." (Ex. 20:8). The implication is that of all the Ten Commandments, this is the one which is the most likely to be forgotten.
2. It is the only one of the Ten Commandments that God specifically said to keep. "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy" (Ex. 20:8). To "keep" means to guard or protect. The implication is that of all the Ten Commandments, this is the one which is the most likely to be lost if it is not guarded and protected.
3. It is the only one of the Ten Commandments that God said to sanctify. "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy" (Ex. 20:8). The implication is that of all the Ten Commandments, this is the one which is the most likely to lose its holy character and become unimportant in the eyes of God's people.
4. It is the only one of the Ten Commandments which, if kept, reminds people that God is the Creator of the universe. Thus it is the only commandment which, if kept, proclaims on a weekly basis that the theory of evolution is false.
5. It is the only one of the Ten Commandments that God calls "a sign" between Himself and His people forever (Ex. 31:13-17; Ezk. 20:12, 20). If God's people do not keep the Sabbath, they do not bear the eternal sign of His covenant - much like a bride who casts away the wedding ring her husband gave her.
6. It is the only one of the Ten Commandments that deals with both the "vertical" relationship (man to God) and the "horizontal" relationship (man to man). The Commandments listed before the Sabbath Commandment tell us how to honor God; the Commandments listed after the Sabbath Commandment tell us how to treat our fellow man. The Sabbath Commandment deals with both. It is "a sabbath unto the Lord thy God" and honors Him as the Creator. It affects human relationships by providing rest for children, servants, and strangers.

## CHAPTER XX.

AND God spake all these words, saying,  
2 I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

6 And shewing mercy unto thousand generations of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

7 Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy

9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

10 But the seventh day is a sabbath unto the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:

11 For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

12 Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

13 Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

14 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה  
לְאַמֵּר: ס אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ  
אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדָיו:  
לֹא־יִהְיֶה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים עֲלֵי־פָנֶי:  
לֹא־תַעֲשֶׂה לְךָ פֶסֶל וְכָל־תְּצַמֵּנָה אֲשֶׁר  
בַּשָּׁמַיִם: כִּמְעַל וְאֲשֶׁר בָּאָרֶץ מִתְּהַת וְאֲשֶׁר  
בַּמַּיִם מִתְּהַת לָאָרֶץ: לֹא־תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לָהֶם  
וְלֹא תַעֲבֹדֵם כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֵל  
קָדָם פֶּלֶךְ עֵץ אֲבָת עֲרֻבִים עֲרֻשִׁימוֹת  
תַּעֲבֹדֻם לְשֹׁנָי: תַּעֲשֶׂה חֶסֶד לְאֻלָּמִים  
לֹא־הֲבִי וְלִשְׁמֵרִי מִצְוֹתִי: ס לֹא  
תִשָּׂא אֶת־שְׁמִי־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשׁוֹן כִּי  
לֹא יִנָּקֶה יְהוָה אֶת אֲשֶׁר־יִשָּׂא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ  
לְשׁוֹן: פ

יָזְכֹּר אֶת־יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ: שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים  
תַּעֲבֹד וְשֶׁבֶת כָּל־מַלְאֲכֶיךָ: וְיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת  
שְׁבֶת: לִיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא־תַעֲשֶׂה כָל־  
מְלָאכָה אִתָּה וְכֹנֶן וְכֹלֵךְ עֲבָדֶיךָ וְאִתָּךְ  
וְכַמֶּכֶת וְתָרֵךְ אֲשֶׁר בַּשְּׂעִירֶיךָ: כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת  
יָמִים עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ  
אֶת־הַיָּם וְאֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־בָּם וַיָּנַח כַּיּוֹם  
הַשְּׁבִיעִי עֲלֵיכֶם בָּרַךְ יְהוָה אֶת־יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת  
לְקַדְּשׁוֹ: ס כִּבְדֹּר אֶת־אָבִיךָ  
וְאֶת־אִמְךָ לְמַעַן יָאָרְכֶם יְמֵיךְ עַל הָאָרֶץ  
אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נֹתֵן לְךָ: ס  
לֹא תִרְצַח ס לֹא תִנָּאֵף ס  
לֹא תַגְנוֹב ס לֹא־תַעֲשֶׂה נִדְבָר  
עַד שֹׁקֶר: ס לֹא תַחַמֵּד בֵּית  
רֵעֶךָ ס לֹא־תַחַמֵּד אִשְׁתּוֹ רֵעֶךָ  
וְעַבְדּוֹ וְאִמְתּוֹ וְשׁוֹר וַחֲמֹר וְכָל אֲשֶׁר  
לִרְעֶיךָ: פ שְׁבִיעִי

7. Although it is only one of the Ten Commandments, the Sabbath Commandment does not take up just one-tenth of the text of the Ten Commandments. It takes up about one-third of the entire text, more than any of the other nine. (See above.)
8. The Sabbath is the very first thing that God declared holy. (Gen. 2:3, "sanctified")
9. God called the Sabbath His "law" and one of His "commandments" even before the Ten Commandments were given at Mount Sinai. (Ex. 16:4, 28:30).
10. The Sabbath will be kept in the new earth. (Isa. 66:23)
11. God promises to bless the non-Jewish "stranger" (i.e., Gentile foreigner) who keeps His Sabbath. (Isa. 56:1-8)
12. God's promise to "cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob" is dependent on your keeping of the Sabbath. (Isa. 58:13f)
13. Through the Prophet Jeremiah, God told His people that they could avoid the destruction of Jerusalem if they

would only keep the Sabbath. But if they continued to treat it as any other day, the city would be destroyed. (Jer. 17:19ff)

14. Sabbath-breaking was one of the sins which led to the Babylonian Captivity of the Jews. (Ezk. 20:13, 20f; 22:8, 26)

15. The Sabbath is mentioned over 100 times in the Bible.

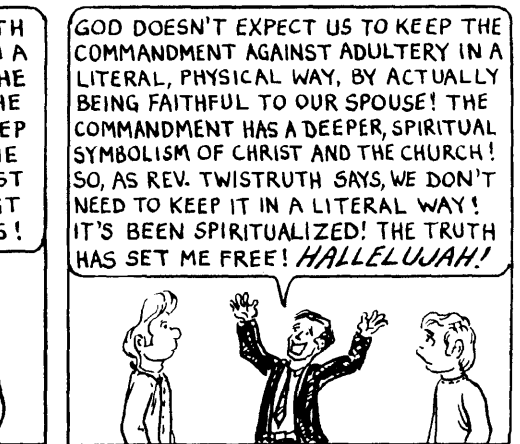
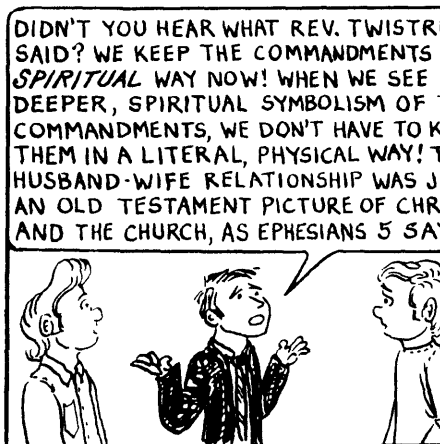
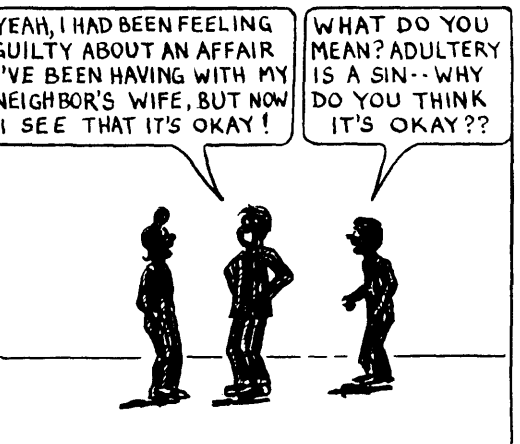
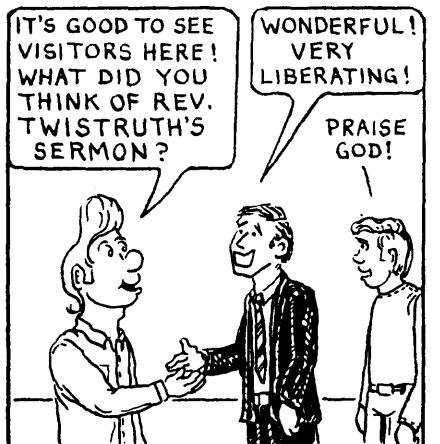
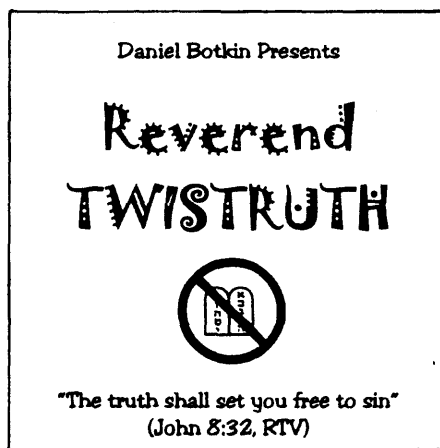
16. The Bible says that the Sabbath is the seventh day of the week, and the seventh day of the week is the Sabbath.

17. Since the time of Moses, there has never been a time in history when the seven-day weekly cycle has been forgotten. Even when the majority of the Jewish people broke the Sabbath, they always knew which day of the week it was. And there has always been a remnant, a significant number of Jewish people, who have faithfully kept the Sabbath and preserved the seven-day weekly cycle.

18. The Bible says nothing whatsoever about the Sabbath being changed from Saturday, the seventh day of the week, to Sunday, the first day of the week. Those who teach a Sunday Sabbath have to go to sources outside the Scriptures to argue their case.

19. The few Bible verses that mention the first day of the week do not say or even suggest that Sunday had replaced Saturday as the Sabbath. To read this idea into the text is blatant eisegesis.

20. Jesus declared Himself Lord of the Sabbath, thus testifying that the seventh day is the true "Lord's Day."



# CROSSING OVER, PART 5

Daniel Botkin

Yahweh cut off the waters of the Jordan River so the Israelites could cross over and enter the Promised Land. After the Israelites crossed over, there was something they had to do before the waters of the Jordan returned and covered up the riverbed: "And it came to pass, when all the people were clean passed over Jordan, that Yahweh spake unto Joshua, saying, Take you twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man, and command ye them, saying, Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve stones, and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging place, where ye shall lodge this night" (Josh. 4:1-3). These twelve stones were to be set up in the Promised Land as a memorial, a reminder to future generations of this miraculous event in Israel's history.

Joshua then took twelve other stones and placed them in the bottom of the riverbed, and left them there to be covered by the returning waters. Then the river flowed again and buried those twelve stones under water, "and they are there unto this day" (Josh. 4:9). Joshua permanently buried twelve dead stones under the waters of the Jordan. Our Joshua, Yeshua of Nazareth, permanently buries our "old man" - our old self that is "dead to sin" (Rom. 6:2) - under the waters of baptism. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Yeshua the Messiah were baptized into His death?" (Rom. 6:3).

Joshua brought twelve stones up out of the riverbed and set them up in the Promised Land to serve as a testimony of God's power, "that all the people of the earth might know the hand of Yahweh, that it is mighty" (Josh. 4:24). Our Joshua brings us up as "living stones" (1 Pet. 2:5) out of the baptismal waters and raises us up into our spiritual Promised Land, the "heavenly places" (Eph. 1:3 & 2:6) and assembles us together so that we can serve as His witnesses and be a testimony of God's saving power.

Thus this burial of twelve stones under the water and the assembling of twelve other stones into a memorial in the Promised Land serve as a picture of baptism: "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Messiah was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). Those twelve buried stones that are "there unto this day" represent our old sinful life that remains under the baptismal waters. The twelve stones that were brought up out of the riverbed and set up in the Promised Land represent our new life in the Messiah.

When the wicked Canaanites in the Land heard what had happened, "their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel" (Josh. 5:1). This tells us how the demonic powers are affected when we cross over and start doing those exploits which God brought us into the world to do. Once we have crossed



over and invaded the Enemy's turf, the demons' hearts melt (if demons have hearts) even more than they did earlier, when they first saw us getting ready to cross over. (See Joshua chapter 2.) They lose their fighting spirit. When they see the twelve tribes assembled together as living stones in the Promised Land, they know that their time is short.

The twelve-stone memorial is just a pile of rocks to some people, but it serves as a reminder to the Canaanites that Israel is here to stay. The Hebrew nation is not just here for a brief visit. The setting up of the twelve stones is similar to the custom of an explorer planting his nation's flag on newly discovered territory to claim it for his king. When we cross over and enter our spiritual Promised Land, we make a declaration to the Enemy that we intend to stay and establish God's authority and rule in this territory.

Crossing over does not mean that we are now infallible. We can still make mistakes even in the Promised Land, as Joshua and the Israelites did. We still have a lot to learn (and unlearn) in the Promised Land, as Joshua and the Israelites did. As a matter of fact, after erecting the twelve-stone memorial, Joshua's very first act in the Land was an act to rectify a very serious mistake. The mistake concerned the Israelites' negligence of circumcision. All the Israelite males who came out of Egypt had been circumcised, but the baby boys born in the wilderness were not circumcised. The reason for this forty years of communal negligence is not stated in the Bible. Regardless of the



reason, this negligence had to be rectified before they could move forward and possess the Land. So the Lord told Joshua to make sharp knives and circumcise all the males. The pain of circumcision is minimal to an eight-day-old infant, but can be excruciatingly painful for an adult male. Thus an entire generation of Israelites had to suffer a painful cutting away of flesh because of the negligence of their forefathers.

While the Israelites were still in the wilderness, God tolerated their neglect, and even allowed them to enter the Promised Land in their uncircumcised state. But after they crossed over, the first item on God's agenda was to reveal to them their need to correct the errors of their forefathers. This had to be done before they conquered Jericho. Merely dwelling in the Land is one thing; driving out the Enemy and possessing the Land is something else. When we cross over, there are often things which have to be rectified before we can move forward and possess our Promised Land. And these things which need to be rectified are often due to the negligence of our spiritual forefathers. Christians have to deal with their forefathers' negligence of the Torah and the Scriptural passages that clearly point to the Torah as a way of life for followers of Jesus. Jews have to deal with their forefathers' negligence of Yeshua and the Scriptural passages that clearly point to Him as the promised Messiah.

Those of us living under the new covenant are supposed to experience a spiritual "circumcision made without hands" (Col. 2:11), i.e., the inward circumcision of the heart. As with physical circumcision, the circumcision of the heart involves the cutting away of excess flesh. If we enter the Land with an uncircumcised heart (as most believers do), we have to let the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, cut away the excess flesh in our life. It can be a very painful experience as the Lord cuts away bad habits that we enjoy, or human relationships which are harmful to us, or pagan-derived religious traditions that we cherish.

The place where Joshua's mass

circumcision took place was named Gilgal: "And Yahweh said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away (*galoti*) the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day" (Josh. 5:9). *Gilgal* (גלגל) means "a rolling away." It is the doubling of the word *gal* (גל), which means "a wave [of the sea]," because waves roll toward the shore. During the mass circumcision, the foreskins were rolled away and the reproach of Egypt was thereby rolled away. For an Israelite, the reproach of Egypt was being in an uncircumcised state like an Egyptian, with the flesh of the foreskin still intact. If your fleshly, carnal nature is still intact and still operating in your life, you need to experience an inward circumcision of the heart so that you will no longer bear the reproach of looking like one of today's worldly "Egyptians."

When and where does your circumcision of the heart take place? Where is your Gilgal? It is at Golgotha, "the place of the skull," another place whose name is derived from *gal* and related to the word *gilgal*. (The Hebrew word for skull is *gulgoleth*.) When the Lord was crucified at Golgotha, our "old man" - our sinful, carnal nature, that which the Apostle Paul calls "the flesh" - was crucified with Him: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified [Greek 'was crucified,' and so in other translations] with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom. 6:6).

The "old man" is the foreskin of the human heart. By an act of God, this excess flesh, along with its lusts, was cut off at Golgotha. From God's perspective (and from ours too if we will believe it), our old man was crucified with the Messiah and died with Him. Dead men need to be buried and left in the ground, like a foreskin after circumcision. What do you suppose the Israelites did with their foreskins after the mass circumcision at Gilgal? Do you suppose they kept them as souvenirs? Or do you think they said, "I'd better keep this in case I want to put it back on someday"? Of course not! Once the

foreskin was cut off, it could not be re-attached; the flow of life was gone from it. So it is with our fleshly, sinful nature. Once the heart is circumcised and the old man is cut off, the old man cannot live again. We can still make mistakes and may even occasionally stumble in moments of weakness or during extreme trials, but we cannot return to a life of sin if we are truly born of God: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John 3:9).

It is not enough to just see that Yeshua died at Golgotha; we also need to see that we too died at Golgotha. When we see that He died for our sins, this revelation is what gets us out of Egypt so that we can escape the plagues and wrath which God pours out on the Egyptians. Our revelation that He died for our sins gets us across the Red Sea and cuts us off from Egypt. But it is our revelation that *we died in Him* (and therefore died to sin) that cuts us off from the power of sin and frees us from the errors of our spiritual forefathers. This revelation circumcises our heart so that we can go forward and possess the Land. This circumcision of the heart is our Gilgal/Golgotha experience.

Think of all humanity as one body. At Golgotha the Messiah was cut off from the rest of mankind and cast away as if He were the foreskin of all humanity. He was despised and rejected by men (Isa. 53:3). We are in Him, "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (Eph. 5:30). If He was rejected by the world, we can expect to be rejected, too. Therefore, as Hebrews 13:13 urges us, "Let us go forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach."

*To be continued....*

# Anointed Ones

Daniel Botkin

When the Biblically-illiterate hear the name "Jesus Christ," some of them think that "Christ" was Jesus' surname, that His parents were Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Christ. The Biblically-literate know that "Christ" was His Messianic title, not His last name. Many Bible students also know that *Christ* is the English form of the word *Christos* (χριστος), which is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word *mashiach* (מָשִׁיחַ), the source of our English word *Messiah*. Therefore *Christ* is the Greek-derived English word that identifies Yeshua of Nazareth as the Messiah of Israel.

Most Messianic believers prefer to use the word *Messiah* rather than *Christ*. *Christ* is not a dirty word, but the word *Messiah* has at least three advantages that *Christ* does not have. First, it is closer to the Hebrew word *mashiach* and therefore helps to remind us of the Hebraic origins and character of our faith. Second, it reminds us that Yeshua was the embodiment and fulfillment of the Messianic hope of Israel. Third, it is easier for Jewish people to consider the Messianic claims of Yeshua if He is referred to as "the Messiah" rather than "Christ," a word which alienates most Jews (and offends many Jews, because Christian anti-Semites have called Jews "Christ-killers" for so many centuries).

For the above reasons, many of us prefer to use the terms *Messiah* and *Messianic* rather than *Christ* and *Christian*. Yet even among those who use the terms *Messiah* and *Messianic*, there are some people who miss the significance and implications of Yeshua's Messianic title *Mashiach*. The word *mashiach* in its generic form simply means "anointed." It is derived from a verb which means to pour or rub a substance (usually oil) on someone. In the Bible, people were anointed with oil to serve as prophets, priests, or kings. Yeshua was anointed with the Holy Spirit to be the

Prophet like unto Moses (Deut. 18:15-19), and our High Priest after the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 5:6-10), and the King of kings (Rev. 19:16). Yeshua is *the* Messiah with a capital "M." However, other men in the Bible are also called *mashiach*, but with a small "m" as it were (Hebrew does not have upper and lower case letters).

If you are a disciple of Jesus Christ, you need to understand something. You need to understand that you, too, are supposed to be a *mashiach*, a little "anointed one," if you follow Yeshua, the big Anointed One. Whether you prefer to call yourself a Christian or a Messianic, if you do not experience the anointing of the Holy Spirit in your life, your claim to be a Christian or a Messianic is a sham, because a Christian is a "little christ (anointed one)," and a Messianic is a "little messiah (anointed one)." A disciple of the Anointed One is also an anointed one, that is, someone who receives and experiences the anointing of the same Holy Spirit that anointed Yeshua (though in a smaller measure, for Yeshua was anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows, Heb. 1:9).

John writes about "the anointing which ye have received of Him," and says that "the same anointing teacheth you of all things" (1 John 2:27). This is one reason the anointing of the Spirit is so important. It is the anointing that teaches you. Without the anointing in your life, you will not learn spiritual truth, even if you are listening to a heavily-anointed teacher. It is the anointing in your life that teaches you; it is not the man who is speaking or writing the words that you hear or read. The human teacher speaks or writes the words, but the Divine Teacher, the Holy Spirit, has to cause those words to sink into your heart and become a part of you. Without the anointing, this will not happen. You will only learn facts and figures, mere surface information, but nothing with any real spiritual substance.

Some people do not even know what the anointing is, because they have never experienced it. They have never had the Holy Spirit come upon them in such a way that can be felt. They have never experienced the joyous moving of the Holy Spirit deep within their being, and the blessed release the Spirit brings. They do not know what it is like to be so powerfully touched by the Spirit that external manifestations occur - manifestations such as trembling, weeping, prophesying, or praying in tongues.

If you have never experienced the anointing of the Holy Spirit, if you do not experience the anointing on a regular basis, if you do not even know what it is, I urge you to seek our Heavenly Father for the anointing with all your heart. Without the anointing you will not learn anything of eternal value, because it is the anointing that teaches you.

People call themselves Christians because they follow Christ, or Messianic because they follow the Messiah. Regardless of what you call yourself, you cannot divorce the anointing from the words *Christian* and *Messianic*. Being Christian is much more than living an upright, moral life and being active in church. Being Messianic is much more than shofars and Shabbat, menorahs and mezuzuahs, tzitzit and Torah study. All of these things are important, but if you have all of these things without the anointing of God's Spirit, all these other things are of very little value in light of eternity. So if you do not have the anointing of the Spirit, seek the Father until He pours the anointing upon you. Seek Him in fervent prayer until you are so saturated with the oil of the Holy Spirit that you are like an overloaded sponge, oozing and dripping because it can contain no more. Don't be afraid of external manifestations of the Holy Spirit. External manifestations are the normal evidence and result of the anointing which comes to teach you. □

# ONE-EYED RELIGIONS

Dr. Daniel Botkin



After Saul was anointed by the Prophet Samuel to be Israel's first king, Saul "went home to Gibeah" (1 Sam. 10:26). Without a royal palace to house all the lords and ladies, courtiers, musicians and jesters, there's not much for a new king to do. So Saul just went back to his farm. He was soon to find out, though, that the Lord had a job for him to do. When the Lord had earlier told Samuel to anoint Saul, He said that the purpose of the anointing was so "that he may save My people out of the hand of the Philistines" (1 Sam. 9:16).

One of the blessings of the new covenant is that the anointing of the Holy Spirit is not just for prophets, priests, and kings. Yeshua told His disciples to "wait for the promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4). When the promise came on the day of Shavuot (Pentecost), "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). Peter told the onlookers that this was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, a prophecy about a time when God would pour out His Spirit on *all* flesh: sons and daughters, young and old, servants and handmaids. The anointing of God's Spirit is now available to all of God's children. "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39).

When the Father anoints us with the Spirit, He does so for a reason, just as He did with Saul. The purpose of the anointing is not just so you can get your emotions all a-twitter, speak in tongues, and feel the glory-bumps running up and down your spine. These external manifestations are normal, and should certainly be expected and experienced. But if that is all that the anointing means to you, you have not yet really fulfilled the purpose for which God has anointed you. King Saul was anointed so that he could save God's people out of the

hand of the enemy. We are anointed for the same purpose, to save people out of the hand of the enemy. Our Messiah said that He was anointed for the same purpose: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18f).

When the anointing of the Spirit is poured out in an especially powerful way, whether on an individual, on a local congregation, or on a large segment of the Body, it is often in preparation for spiritual battle. The anointing stirs up the enemy. The demons were never so astir as they were when Yeshua walked this earth in the anointing of the Spirit.

Even imperfect people can scare the enemy if they get the anointing. King Saul, even with his moral weaknesses and character flaws, stirred up the enemy. Immediately after Saul was anointed and went home, the very next thing we read is that the Ammonites came up to make war against Jabesh-gilead, an Israelite town. The people of Jabesh-gilead knew they were outnumbered and outmatched, so they told the Ammonites that they didn't want to fight. What would they have to do to avoid a battle? "On this condition will I make a covenant with you," the Ammonite leader said, "that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay it for a reproach upon all Israel" (1 Sam. 11:2).

Satan uses this same tactic in the spiritual realm. He sees that you have been anointed, so he comes up against you. You feel weak and

inadequate. The only solution you see is to make some sort of compromise and thereby avoid a spiritual battle. But by taking this defensive attitude, you give Satan the upper hand. Now he gets to set the conditions for peace. And what are his conditions? The same as the Ammonites': "Let me thrust out one of your spiritual eyes. Let me rob you of just half your vision, then I'll leave you alone. I won't make you totally blind. You can still be saved and go to church; you'll just be half blind."

When Saul, the Lord's anointed, heard the enemy's proposal, the Holy Spirit came upon him "and his anger was kindled greatly" (1 Sam. 11:6). He gathered an army and defeated the enemy.

The anointing is not for those who are willing to compromise with the Enemy and let him take away half of their spiritual vision. It is not for those who take a defensive attitude toward the Devil. The anointing is for those who are willing to go on the offensive, defeat the Enemy, and deliver God's people. If you are a sinner and just now in the process of being saved, a defensive attitude is acceptable. But if you are saved, get the anointing, go on the offensive, and refuse to accept any eye-gouging proposal that the Enemy offers you as a compromise.

Unfortunately, the history of Christianity has been marked by many compromises. Early in its history, the Church let the Enemy take away one of its eyes, leaving the Church half blind. John 1:17 says that "the law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." This verse does *not* say that the Grace and Truth of Jesus *replaced* the Law of Moses. (The contrasting word "but" which appears in the KJV is not in the Greek text; it was added by translators who imagined a contrast between New Testament Grace and Old Testament Law.) Grace and Truth do not replace the Law; Grace and Truth inspire and

enable us to "walk orderly, and keep the law," like Paul did (Acts 21:24). The Law of Moses and the Grace and Truth of Jesus Christ are the two spiritual eyes we need to give us a balanced vision and a balanced walk.

Try an experiment sometime. Walk around for 15 or 20 minutes with one of your eyes closed or covered for the entire time. Then open your closed eye and see what a difference it makes in your vision. What a panoramic view! *That* is what it is like when a Christian opens his eye to the Law of Moses. He sees that the Law, when properly understood, does not oppose or threaten the Grace and Truth that came by Jesus Christ; he sees that the Law was the matrix from which the Grace and Truth of Jesus emerged. And that is also what it is like when a Jew opens his eye to the Grace and Truth of Jesus Christ. He sees that the Grace and Truth of Jesus, when properly understood, does not cancel the Law of Moses; he sees that the Grace and Truth of Jesus complements and completes the Torah, for "Christ is the end [*telos*, 'goal'] of the law" (Rom. 10:4). Or, as Stern's Jewish New Testament translates it, "For the goal at which the *Torah* aims is the Messiah."

Christianity without Torah is incomplete and imbalanced. It's a one-eyed religion. So is Judaism without the Messiah Yeshua, because He is the only true Messiah anyone is going to get.

King Saul, a man with moral weaknesses and character flaws, had his anger kindled greatly when he heard about the enemy's proposal that God's people surrender one of their two eyes. What about us? Are we going to accept the half-blind condition of Jews without Yeshua, and Christians without the Torah, as normal? This dichotomous arrangement of Judaism without Yeshua and Christianity without Torah is *not* "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). The original Messianic faith had two eyes: the Law of Moses and the Grace and Truth that came by Yeshua the Messiah. That original Messianic faith is re-emerging as we approach the end times. The end-time faithful "remnant" in Revelation 12:17 is described as a people who "keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Revelation 14:12 describes end-time "saints" as "they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." After it's all over, those who get the victory over the beast "sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb" (Rev. 15:3).

The first-century disciples had two spiritual eyes, the Law of Moses and the Grace and Truth that came by the Messiah Yeshua. And that first generation of disciples kept both of their eyes open. We would do well to follow their example. □

# The Red Dragon

Richard Wurmbrand

Used by Permission The Voice of the Martyrs  
www.persecution.com

"Behold, a great, fiery red dragon" (Revelation 12:3). Why is this dragon, whose intent is to devour the Christ child, colored red?

Sin is also associated with red. It would seem that to speak about the color of sin would have as much sense as speaking about the melody of a fruit, but God says, "Let us reason together... Though [your sins] are red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18). So sin is red and righteousness is white.

It was no accident that Communism and Nazism, the two great anti-Christian movements of our age, both chose red flags. Not only did they fulfill a prophecy, but the choice also derived from a source deep within the experience of mankind.

The French psychologist Alfred Binet related an experiment with a hysterical woman whose body was paralyzed on one side. When a dynamometer was placed in her right hand, she could squeeze it to register only 12 kg. If she was shown a red disk, the pressure of her squeeze was immediately doubled ("Researches about the alterations of conscience with hysterical persons," *Philosophical Magazine*, vol. 17, 1889, France).

Goethe, who developed a theory of light, also attributed dynamic character to the color red, which he distinguished as being an active color.

Every color is a suffering of light, because colors are produced by light breaking through a prism. Red is its greatest suffering.

Animals can be driven mad by showing them a piece of red cloth. Toreadors make use of this fact in bullfighting. All primitive people have a predilection for red, and so do little children.

White is not actually a color, but the fullness of light, light which has not passed through a prism. The righteous will stand before Christ, the Lamb of God, clothed in white (Revelation 7:9). In contrast to the color of the dragon, white is the color of quietness, of contemplation, the good part chosen by Mary of Bethany (Luke 10:42).

The servants of the red dragon delight in the sight of blood. Persecutors have shed rivers of martyrs' blood. The righteous, on the other hand, are givers of life.

In a world dominated or terrorized by the red dragon, in a world where love is scarce and relationships are icy, the righteous bring the warmth of love.

No scientist can explain how it is that a stream of warm water, the Gulf Stream, flows between the cold waters of the ocean, which form its walls - how that moving hot stream exists within the motionless cold. So the righteous, clothed in white, journey toward heaven through a world inhabited by passionate red monsters, a world which, in contrast with the radiant love of the righteous, is icy and cold. □

# **Extra-Biblical Traditions & Historical Writings**

## ***How Should They Affect Our Understanding of the Scriptures and the Practice of Our Faith?***

**Dr. Daniel Botkin**

The title of this article includes a question which will probably raise more questions than it answers. However, these questions need to be prayerfully considered and discussed, even if they cannot be immediately resolved.

First, let me define the term "extra-Biblical." This term refers to any sources other than the Bible. Extra-Biblical traditions would be traditions which are not clearly prescribed or clearly stated in the Bible. Extra-Biblical historical writings would be any historical writings other than the Bible. What effect should these extra-Biblical sources have on our understanding of the Scriptures and, by extension, on the practice of our faith?

At one extreme are people who say that extra-Biblical traditions and writings must *dictate* or *prescribe* how we understand the Bible. If a practice mentioned in the Bible is now practiced according to some long-held traditional interpretation, then the tradition is assumed to be right and the meaning of the Bible must conform to what the long-held tradition prescribes. An example of this would be "the assembling of ourselves together" (mentioned in Hebrews 10:25) on Sunday mornings instead of on the seventh day Sabbath, because Sunday morning is a long-held Christian tradition.

Probably the best examples of people who hold this prescriptive view of extra-Biblical traditions and historical writings are Roman Catholics and Orthodox Jews. Both Roman Catholicism and Orthodox Judaism teach that the meaning of the Scriptures must be determined by the traditions instituted by official ecclesiastical authority, and not by laymen. For Roman Catholics, the meaning of the Scriptures is determined by the ecclesiastical authorities of the Roman Catholic Church and expressed in official statements from the Vatican. For Orthodox Jews, the meaning of the Scriptures is determined by the ecclesiastical authority of

the rabbis and expressed in the so-called "Oral Torah."

At the opposite extreme are people who could be called anti-traditionalists or Biblical purists. These are people who say that extra-Biblical traditions and writings should have no bearing whatsoever on our understanding of the Scriptures. According to this view, long-held traditions and decisions made by past ecclesiastical authorities do not need to be taken into consideration when attempting to understand the Bible. The Bible is read in a vacuum, as if the extra-Biblical sources did not even exist. According to this view, the Bible will speak for itself, and the reader needs no help from any outside sources. Thus the extra-Biblical sources are not just viewed as uninspired and non-authoritative; they are viewed as unnecessary and useless at best and as dangerous at worst.

By my referring to the traditionalists' "prescriptive view" and the anti-traditionalists' "Biblical purist view" as the two "extremes," it should be obvious to readers that I do not hold to either of these two positions. I believe that the position which will give us the clearest view of Scriptural truth lies somewhere between these two views, because both of these extremes can easily lead to either a misunderstanding or to no understanding at all of many Biblical passages and topics.

First, let's consider the traditionalists' prescriptive view, the view that extra-Biblical sources must dictate how we understand the Bible. The biggest problem with this view is the fact that extra-Biblical sources are just that: extra-Biblical. Because these sources are not a part of the Bible, they are not inspired, not infallible, and not authoritative, at least not in the same sense as the Bible itself. It is true that Roman Catholic and Orthodox Jewish ecclesiastical leaders declare their decrees to be just as authoritative and binding as the written Scriptures (indeed, even

more authoritative). However, those who follow Yeshua/Jesus know that He placed the authority of the written Scriptures far above the traditions of men. He even went so far as to harshly condemn some of the rabbis' extra-Biblical traditions when those traditions made void the written commandments or neglected or obscured the spirit of the Law.

Protestant Christians who reject the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, and Karaite Jews who reject the authority of the rabbis, usually see the pitfalls of the traditionalists' prescriptive view. Not all Protestants and Karaites are extreme anti-traditional Biblical purists, but some are. So are some Messianic believers. Let's consider the pitfalls of the anti-traditionalists' Biblical purist view, the view that extra-Biblical sources should have no bearing on our understanding of the Scriptures or on the practice of our faith.

The main problem with this view is that it often leads to hyper-independence of individual believers, which makes congregational unity and congregational progress next to impossible. It creates an "every man for himself" mentality. It fosters suspicion and defiance against human ecclesiastical authority, and thereby undermines and weakens the authority of spiritual leaders, even good ones. It leads to the same attitude that was prevalent in the days of the Judges, when "every man did that which was right in his own eyes." With the opposite extreme (the traditionalists' prescriptive view), there is a forced, contrived unity; with this anti-traditionalist view, there is usually disunity. This fact can be seen in the strong unity of the one Roman Catholic Church, and in the disunity that exists among the innumerable sects and denominations that exist in the Protestant world.

It would probably be impossible to count all the Protestant sects, denomi-

## THE RABBIS' CHALLENGE

How To Get Lemon Into Tea  
Without Breaking The Sabbath



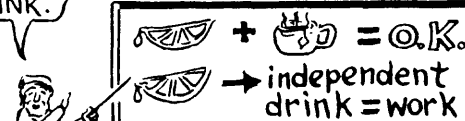
Artwork by Daniel Botkin. Text taken  
verbatim from "Squeezing Lemons on  
Shabbat," Jewish Press, 7/7/00, page 64

THE AUTHOR OF THE *SHULCHAN ARUCH*  
R. YOSEF CARO, STATES UNEQUIVOCALLY:

IT IS PERMITTED  
TO SQUEEZE LEMONS...



...SINCE LEMON JUICE IS NOT CONSUMED BY  
ITSELF, AND *SECHITA* [SQUEEZING] IS ONLY  
CONSIDERED A *MELACHA* [FORBIDDEN WORK]  
IF THE RESULT IS A "SIGNIFICANT DRINK,"  
THAT IS, IF A LIQUID IS EXTRACTED FOR  
THE PURPOSE OF MAKING AN INDEPENDENT  
DRINK.



ON THE OTHER HAND, THE *TAZ*  
SEEMS TO ADOPT A STRICTER  
VIEW ON THIS MATTER:

IT IS PERMISSIBLE TO SQUEEZE  
A LEMON *ONLY* IF THE JUICE IS  
INTENDED TO BE USED TO ADD  
FLAVOR TO A *FOOD* AND NOT  
TO BE CONSUMED AS A DRINK.



THE *MISHNA BERURA* SEEMS TO ADOPT  
A MIDDLE POSITION:

LEMON JUICE IS NOT REGARDED AS A  
"SIGNIFICANT DRINK" UNLESS THE NORMAL  
PROCEDURE OF MAKING LEMONADE CONSISTS  
IN SQUEEZING THE JUICE INTO A CONTAINER  
THAT ALREADY HAS A LIQUID IN IT. IN THAT  
SITUATION, LEMON JUICE HAS NOT BEEN  
ELEVATED TO  
THE STATUS OF A  
"SIGNIFICANT DRINK."



HOWEVER, IN OUR CULTURE THE  
PROCEDURE FOR MAKING LEMONADE IS  
TO FIRST SQUEEZE LEMON JUICE INTO  
A CONTAINER AND SUBSEQUENTLY ADD  
WATER; THUS THE STATUS OF LEMON  
JUICE IS ELEVATED TO A "SIGNIFICANT  
DRINK" AND IS THEREFORE RABBINICALLY



FORBIDDEN EVEN  
IF THE LEMON  
IS SQUEEZED  
INTO A LIQUID.

THE *MISHNA BERURA* THEN OFFERS A  
SIMPLE SOLUTION TO SQUEEZING LEMON  
INTO TEA WITHOUT VIOLATING THE  
*SECHITA* PROHIBITION:

IT IS BY FIRST SQUEEZ-  
ING THE JUICE ONTO  
SUGAR (SINCE JUICE  
MAY BE SQUEEZED ONTO  
A *FOOD*  
BUT NOT A  
LIQUID)...



THEN, AFTER THE SUGAR  
ABSORBS THE JUICE, THE  
SUGAR IS PUT INTO  
THE TEA.



THE *CHAZON ISH* FIRMLY OBJECTS TO THIS:

SINCE ONE'S INTENTION AND OBJECTIVE IS TO  
SQUEEZE LEMON JUICE INTO TEA, IT IS CON-  
SIDERED AS IF ONE IS SQUEEZING THE LEMON  
DIRECTLY INTO THE TEA. THE ONLY SOLUTION  
IS TO SQUEEZE THE LEMON BEFORE SHABBAT,  
OR TO PUT  
THE ENTIRE  
LEMON  
DIRECTLY  
IN THE TEA.



ACCORDING TO RAV SOLOV-  
EITCHIK, IT IS PERMITTED  
TO SQUEEZE LEMONS  
DIRECTLY INTO A LIQUID.

WE NEED NOT BE MORE  
STRINGENT IN THIS MATTER.



nations, and independent churches that exist. And more continue to spring up all the time. Every time a Protestant leader (or even a non-leader) gets a new understanding of some Biblical topic, behold, he breaks away and starts yet another sect. Unfortunately, the same thing often happens with Messianic believers, who are, for all practical intents and purposes, Protestants (albeit, Protestants who happen to take the original Protestant Reformers' view of "*sola scriptura*" to its logical conclusion in regards to the Sabbath and Torah.)

I certainly do not advocate embracing the Roman Catholic view or the Orthodox Jewish view. I will admit, though, that there are times when I think to myself, "Wouldn't it be convenient if all Messianic believers would just embrace the Orthodox Jewish view of the Torah, and do the commandments the way the rabbis prescribe? It

would eliminate much of the arguing, accusation, and division that goes on in Messianic circles. We wouldn't have to try to figure out how God wants us to obey His commandments; we would just let the rabbis tell us." But then I ask myself, "Would I really want to put myself under the lordship of rabbis who prescribe the procedure I must use if I want to put lemon in my tea on the Sabbath?" (The above cartoon is neither a parody nor an exaggeration. The entire text was taken verbatim from a serious article in the *Orthodox Jewish Press*.) And then I remember that I have an ever-living Rabbi in heaven, Yeshua of Nazareth, and I realize I don't need to submit myself to the lordship of dead rabbis, whether they are physically dead or spiritually dead.

We do not need to embrace and follow all the extra-Biblical traditions of rabbis and church leaders. However,

without a knowledge of some extra-Biblical traditions and historical writings, many things in the Scriptures will be misunderstood or not understood at all. Even the most extreme anti-traditionalist needs tradition to tell him some things if he expects to understand the Bible. The anti-traditional Biblical purist who scorns extra-Biblical sources needs extra-Biblical sources like lexicons and Bible dictionaries to tell him the meanings of the words and phrases that make up the Bible. He needs extra-Biblical historical information about life in Biblical times to give him a clear understanding of what he reads in the Holy Scriptures.

If all extra-Biblical tradition and history is disregarded, then every individual person can decide for himself not only what the Bible means; he can go even further, and decide for himself which writings are inspired, and canonize non-canonical books, or de-



canonize canonical books. Thus confusion and disunity result.

The confusion and disunity that exist among 7th-day Sabbath keepers is an example of what happens when extra-Biblical sources are disregarded. The Bible says that the Sabbath is the seventh day of the week. Tradition and history correctly tell us that the seventh day of the week is the day commonly called Saturday. Tradition and history also tell us that the Sabbath begins at sunset on the sixth day (Friday evening) and ends at sunset on Saturday evening. The Biblical basis for this is Genesis chapter 1 (where each day of the week consists of "the evening and the morning," i.e., evening followed by morning) and Leviticus 23:32 ("from even unto even shall ye celebrate your sabbath [on Yom Kippur]"). This is a long-held tradition which is strongly affirmed by reliable historical sources. Furthermore, it is obvious from the Gospels that Yeshua kept the Sabbath at the same time as the rest of the Jews. He sometimes disagreed with the Jewish leaders about which activities are permissible on the Sabbath, but there is no indication that He ever once disagreed with them about which day the Sabbath was supposed to be kept.

In view of all this, you would think that all seventh-day Sabbath keepers who follow Yeshua would keep the Sabbath from Friday evening to Saturday evening. However, such is not the case. Some hyper-independent, hyper-literalist, anti-traditional Biblical purists have decided that the seventh-day Sabbath is *not* from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. Those who disagree with the traditional Friday-sunset-to-Saturday-sunset Sabbath also disagree among themselves, for they come up with at least three different alternative views of which I am aware.

One alternative view is that the Sabbath is only during the daylight hours on Saturday. The "proof" for this is a simple three-step process:

1. The Sabbath is called "the sabbath day" (Ex. 20:8).
2. A "day" is defined as the time when there is light, because "God called the light Day" (Gen. 1:5).
3. "The darkness He called Night,"

so no part of the Sabbath *day* can be dark, the argument goes. 3. Finally, Jesus said, "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" (John 11:9).

A second alternative view is the so-called lunar Sabbath. According to this view, "the seventh day" means the seventh day of each lunar month. If the new moon happens to appear on a Wednesday, then the Sabbath will be on the following Tuesday and every Tuesday thereafter that month, until the new moon appears again (even though the Bible says nothing about the Sabbath being on the 14th, the 21st, and the 28th days). Thus the day of the week for Sabbath is determined each month by the moon, and the day can change from month to month.

A third alternative view is that the Sabbath is from noon Friday til noon Saturday. The person who came up with this idea based his conclusion on his view that Friday "evening" begins as soon as the sun moves from its high noon position and begins heading toward the western horizon. Saturday "morning" is over at noon, so there you have 24 hours consisting of "the 'evening' and the morning," with the Sabbath day ending at noon, when the morning ends.

I do not have the space to address the many flaws in these three alternative views of the Sabbath, but there is one major flaw that they all have in common. They disregard long-held tradition which is strongly affirmed by reliable historical sources. Even more significant, they disregard the fact that Yeshua kept the Sabbath at the same time as the rest of the Jewish people. These alternative views (and any others that may exist) have something else in common. They cause disunity and make congregational life and congregational progress next to impossible.

Some of God's commandments are worded in such a way that every individual must decide for himself exactly how to obey. For example, there is a commandment which says, "Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land" (Deut. 15:11). Each individual has to decide for himself what amount of charity constitutes

generosity. The amount will differ according to one's income and ability to give. Commandments such as these are carried out on an individual basis, but some commandments must be carried out on a corporate basis, i.e., in the context of a congregation or community. Commandments which must be carried out in the context of a congregation include commandments about God's appointed times.

God's appointed times are listed in Leviticus 23. "These are the feasts [*moadim*, 'appointed times'] of the Lord, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons" (vs. 4 KJV). This brief statement serves as a preface or introduction to the annual calendar. There is one very important thing to note in this statement. They are appointed times which "ye shall proclaim." Someone (whoever "ye" is) must declare when these appointed times have arrived. We can argue about which "ye" has Divine authority to proclaim the arrival of the *moadim*, but one thing is certain. Someone has to proclaim them. Somebody in a position of authority has to announce the arrival of the *moadim* so the community can celebrate them *together*, not at different times and apart from the rest of the community.

Calendar concerns are often an explosive topic among Messianic disciples. If we believe in keeping God's appointed times, we want to assemble together for worship at the appointed times that He recognizes. How do we know when His appointed times have arrived? We are given some instructions in the Scriptures to help us determine His appointed times. Unfortunately, the text is sometimes so ambiguous that even Hebrew-speaking, God-fearing Jews who lived 2,000 years closer to the time of Moses than we do could not agree with one another about the exact meaning of the text. This leaves a person wondering: Which times does God recognize as His appointed times? I do not have an answer that will satisfy everyone, but I find the wording and the order of the Hebrew text in Leviticus 23:4 quite revealing. It says: "*moadei YHWH asher tikr'u otam mikra'ei kodesh eleh hem moadai*." A simple translation:

*moadei YHWH* = "the appointed times of YHWH"

*asher tikr'u otam* = "which you (pl.) shall proclaim them"

*mikra'ei kodesh* = "holy convocations"

*eleh hem moadai* = "these are My appointed times"

This could be loosely paraphrased as "Whichever appointed times of YHWH that you guys proclaim as holy convocations, *these* are the appointed times that I will recognize as My own." This idea is also suggested in the Stone Tanach translation: "HaShem's appointed festivals that you are to designate as holy convocations - these are My appointed festivals." They are His appointed times, but He gives spiritual leaders authority to proclaim them, to declare to the community when the appointed times have arrived. And when the leaders declare them, God says, "*Eleh hem moadai*. These are My appointed times."

This does not solve the problem of determining who has the authority to proclaim the *moadim*, but it is obvious that *somebody* has to do it. In order for there to be a holy convocation, someone has to convoke it, i.e., to announce when the assembly for community worship will be held. One could even argue from the Hebrew text that in order for Yahweh's appointed times to arrive, they must first be proclaimed; they will not arrive until after men proclaim them.

Extra-Biblical traditions and writings can be wrong. However, it is unwise to immediately dismiss and totally disregard long-held traditions which have stood the test of time, provided they do not contradict what the Bible teaches. This does not mean that every ancient extra-Biblical source is reliable as long as it is Biblically-compatible. It does mean that extra-Biblical sources are often helpful and sometimes necessary to correctly understand the Bible. Therefore if a long-held tradition has stood the test of time and is Biblically-compatible, we should give it serious consideration and try to determine how reliable it is. Then we can embrace it or reject it accordingly. Or, if we are not sure, we can put it on the shelf until we get more information. □

Daniel Botkin Presents

## Messianic Assembly of the Hyper-Independent

Anti-Traditional - Hyper-Literalist

OUR MOTTO:  
"Every man does what's  
right in his own eyes"

THIS WILL BE MY FIRST  
YEAR TO OBSERVE THE  
DAY OF ATONEMENT!  
HOW DO WE "AFFLICT  
OUR SOULS"?

IN PSALM 35:13, DAVID  
SAID, "I AFFLICTED  
MY SOUL WITH FASTING,"  
SO I'M GONNA FAST,  
LIKE THE JEWS DO!



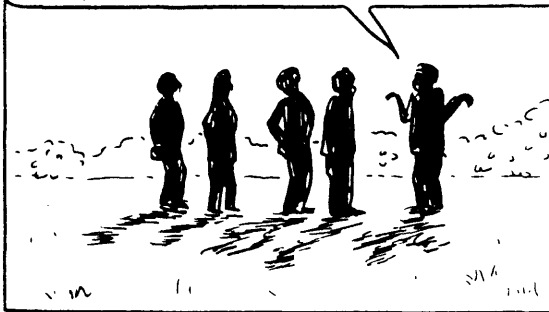
BUT SOME PEOPLE IN THE BIBLE  
ALSO WORE SACKCLOTH AND PUT  
ASHES AND DIRT ON THEIR HEADS TO  
AFFLICT THEIR SOULS! LET'S DO THAT!



I DON'T THINK WE SHOULD FAST; I THINK  
WE SHOULD EAT UNLEAVENED BREAD TO  
AFFLICT OUR SOULS, BECAUSE IT'S CALLED  
"THE BREAD OF AFFLICTION" -- DEUT. 16:3!



THOSE ARE ALL EXAMLES OF THINGS YOU  
CAN DO, BUT THE BIBLE DOESN'T SAY THAT  
YOU GOTTA DO THOSE SPECIFIC THINGS ON  
YOM KIPPUR! IT JUST SAYS "AFFLICT YOUR  
SOULS," SO WE CAN DO IT HOWEVER WE WANT!



WELL, IN THAT CASE, I'M GONNA  
AFFLICT MY SOUL BY EATING  
BLAND FOOD -- JUST THREE  
BOWLS OF PLAIN OATMEAL,  
WITH NOTHING ON IT!



I'M GONNA AFFLICT MY SOUL BY LISTENING  
TO THE BLUES AND FEELING SORRY FOR  
MYSELF! I MIGHT EVEN DRINK A FEW  
BEERS TO PUT ME IN A MELANCHOLY MOOD!



OKAY THEN, HERE'S A LIST OF  
SUPPLIES WE'LL NEED FOR OUR  
YOM KIPPUR SERVICE: SACK-  
CLOTH, ASHES, DIRT, MATZA,  
OATS, BEER, AND SOME CDs  
WITH BLUES MUSIC...



# RE-ASSEMBLING & RE-ERECTING DAGON

Daniel Botkin

During the days of Samuel the Prophet and Eli the High Priest, the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant. The Philistines carried their trophy to Ashdod, took it into the temple of their fish-god, Dagon, and placed it at the feet of their idol - presumably to show that Dagon, the god of the Philistines, was greater than Yahweh, the God of Israel.

Yahweh decided to supernaturally cast down their vain imagination right away. Early the next morning when the Philistines entered the temple of Dagon, behold, Dagon was down on his face before the Ark of Yahweh. The fish-god had fallen in homage to worship Yahweh.

The Philistines stood Dagon back up so he towered over the Ark again. So Yahweh had to show them again who was greater. The next morning, Dagon was once again down on his face before the Ark. This time, though, Dagon was broken into pieces. His head and hands were broken off, and only the stump remained.

This story is a simple yet vivid illustration of what happens when we come into the presence of the One who dwelt on the Ark. In His presence, all "false gods" must fall. All of our personal opinions, pet doctrines, and ideas based on mere human reasoning and speculation must bow and yield to Him.

It usually happens this way. As we read, pray, study, and meditate on the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit enlightens and quickens something in the Scriptures to show us the folly and error of some idea which we believe to be true. Thus our vain imagination is cast down. Then what do we do? Often we do like the Philistines did with Dagon. We set Dagon back up. We see our cherished belief cast down, and we say to ourselves, "Surely I couldn't be mistaken about that!" We don't want to humble ourselves and admit the sad truth that

we have been in error, perhaps for most of our life. So we look for some way to raise Dagon back up to his former position.

We see that our view is proven wrong by the Scriptures, but we look for some way to re-establish it in our mind. We try to find a preacher or a church that agrees with the error that we want to hold onto. Or, we search for a Bible verse to support our erroneous belief. If we look long enough and hard enough, we will find a statement somewhere in the Bible that can be used to re-establish our erroneous thinking. The only problem is that the Bible verse has to be divorced from its immediate context and isolated from the rest of the Bible in order for us to read into it our own erroneous idea. The real meaning of the verse has to be twisted to fit our dearly-beloved personal opinion. We ignore what the rest of the Bible says about the topic, and focus only on one or two verses which we have isolated and twisted. Thus the error is re-established in our mind. Dagon is set back up in his place of honor again. We feel relieved because we think our belief is now secure.

However, error cannot exist forever in the presence of the Ark. If we continue to stay in the presence of the Lord, our erroneous idea will eventually be cast down again. This time it will be shattered to pieces like Dagon was.

The Philistines continued to serve Dagon even after he was broken in pieces. "How stupid of them," we think. But were the Philistines any stupider than Christians and Jews who continue to serve false doctrines even after those doctrines have been exposed and shattered to pieces by

the Lord? If the Lord shatters your personal opinions, pet doctrines, and speculations, don't pick up the broken pieces and try to glue Dagon back together. The Philistines in Ashdod continued to serve error while still holding onto the Ark, and God sent a plague. He smote them with tumors which the KJV calls "emerods," the old English word for hemorrhoids. The New Jerusalem Bible says, "The tumors were probably hemorrhoids, which is well in keeping with the rather wry humor of the story."

The Philistines of Ashdod realized that the God of Israel was smiting them with emerods because of the presence of the Ark, so they decided to send the Ark to Gath, another Philistine city. Apparently their thinking was, "We thought this thing was supposed to bring us good luck, but all it's brought us is the shattering of our god and a bad case of hemorrhoids. Send it away!"

This part of the story has its parallel in the way some people deal with the shattering of their errors. If people continue holding on to error even after the Lord has exposed it to them, then His presence will bring them curses instead of blessings. Unfortunately, many people do like the Philistines did when they were smitten with emerods. They send away the presence of the Lord so that they can continue serving their erroneous beliefs. They love their personal opinions, their pet doctrines, and their vain speculations more than they love the presence of the Lord. They grieve and quench the Holy Spirit by holding onto their re-assembled and re-erected Dagon, and the presence of the Lord departs from them. The wonderful love, joy, and peace which were formerly experienced soon fade away, and the former lovers of God are left with nothing but their erroneous ideas re-established in their heads, and "emerods in their secret parts" (1 Sam. 5:9). □

# Q & A

**Q:** Will unsaved people in the second resurrection (Rev. 20) have an opportunity to repent and receive eternal life after they are resurrected?

**A:** I can't say that the Bible absolutely rules out this possibility for some people. However, neither can I say that the Bible supports this teaching, because it says nothing about these resurrected people getting any opportunity to repent. The Bible just says that they will be resurrected, judged, and "whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." That's all it says, not a word in the entire chapter about post-mortem evangelism. If God wants to give these people an opportunity for salvation at this time, that's His business, and it will be fine with me if He does. But I don't believe we have any Scriptural evidence (and therefore no authority) to teach that this will happen at the second resurrection. People who believe and teach this are reading the idea into the text, because the text itself says nothing about these people having an opportunity for salvation. This idea is mere speculation. It is a theory that might possibly be true, but because the Bible does not teach it, we can't count on it happening. If we teach it as doctrine and it doesn't happen, then we will be guilty of having given sinners false hope of a post-resurrection opportunity to be saved, and their blood will be on our hands. The Scriptures urge man, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near" (Isa. 55:6). As Paul put it, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). *Now*, not sometime after the resurrection.

**Q:** Some Christian friends tell us that they are planning on being cremated after they die. For some reason, this "goes against our grain." Is there any foundation for our feeling, or is it just the way we have been taught?

**A:** Like you, I am not at all comfortable with the practice. I realize that God can resurrect someone from ashes as easily as from dust, but that is not the issue. For me, it's an issue of dignity and respect for the body. Although I suppose some might think it's more dignified to reduce the flesh to ashes by fire, and get it over with quickly, rather than let the body slowly decompose. I think my main reason for being uncomfortable with cremation is because burial, though not specifically commanded in the Bible, is the norm presented in the Bible. Several places in the Bible it speaks of wicked individuals as "not being buried," and it is spoken of as a shame and reproach and judgment of God. For these reasons, I don't recommend cremation. However, I don't condemn those who choose it; I just don't think it's a Biblical choice.

**Q:** My son wants to get a tattoo. What does the Bible say?

**A:** The only verse that specifically mentions tattoos is Leviticus 19:28. "Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the Lord." When I was young, about the only people who got tattoos were sailors, bikers, and carnival workers. Tattooed people were often viewed as unfortunate saps who made a big mistake (often while in a drunken state), and they were either pitied or scorned by un-tattooed people. Nowadays it is common to see even Christians sporting tattoos. Some Christians feel free to disregard the prohibition in Leviticus 19:28 because they mistakenly believe that Christ has freed them from the "bondage" of laws like those found in Leviticus. (Interesting, though, that some of these same Christians will use verses from Leviticus to condemn homosexuality, witchcraft, and other sins.) Other Christians justify tattooing by interpreting the verse to mean that the only forbidden tattoos are those which are printed "for the dead." That is stretching it a bit, I think. The phrase "for the dead" is in the verse, but it is attached to the prohibition

against cutting oneself. The commandment might very well mean (and probably does mean) that *all* tattoos are prohibited, so why take a chance? Even if tattoos were permissible, it's not a good idea to get them. They are permanent, unless one has a lot of money to pay for their removal. On July 29, 2004, Paul Harvey reported a story about a man with a tattoo on his leg. The man's leg was seriously injured near the tattoo, and doctors had to repair the injury. Part of the tattoo was eliminated by the surgery. The tattoo had originally said "I Love Women." Unfortunately, the "Wo" of "Women" was eliminated by the surgery. The man sued the doctors because he could no longer wear shorts in public.

**Q:** Do you know anything about the word "abracadabra"? Does it come from Hebrew, or is it just a nonsense word that amateur magicians use?

**A:** Some people have suggested a Hebrew and/or Aramaic origin for the word. The root of the Hebrew word for "create" is ברא (B-R-A). An *alef* (א) prefix added onto a verb makes the verb first-person future tense ("I will"), so *abra* could be from the Hebrew word אברא, "I will create" (although it would actually be pronounced "evra," because the *alef* prefix would take an "e" sound and also change the B to a "V" sound). The rest of the word, *cadabra*, if written in Hebrew letters, shows the D-B-R root ("to speak") and the prefix Ca- ("like, as"). Thus *abra cadabra* sounds like a very garbled version of "I will create as it is spoken."

This is an interesting theory, and one that fits the way that magicians use the word when performing prestidigitation. However, some doubt this origin because the word was used by Gentiles, not Jews. The earliest known appearance of the word in written form is in the second century, in a Latin poem that mentions it as an incantation against disease. In the Middle Ages, people inscribed the word on amulets which they wore to ward off sickness. The amulets were inscribed in such a way that the word

gradually vanished:

ABRACADABRA  
ABRACADABR  
ABRACADAB  
ABRACADA  
ABRACAD  
ABRACA  
ABRAC  
ABRA  
ABR  
AB  
A

It was believed that wearing the gradually-vanishing ABRACADABRA would cause the disease to gradually vanish. This has led some to suggest a pseudo-Aramaic source: *avda k'davra*, "vanished as a pestilence."

Another theory is that early Christians formed an acronym for the Trinity by using the initial Hebrew letters for Father (*Av*), Son (*Ben*), and Holy Spirit (*Ruach haKodesh*). This would account for ABR- (maybe even ABRAC-), but not for the rest of the word.

Philologos, who writes a weekly language column for the *Forward*, believes the most likely source is from Abraxas, the name that Gnostics gave to one of the gods in their belief system. Isaac Mozeson, author of *The Word: The Dictionary That Reveals the Hebrew Source of English*, sees a Hebrew origin, but not the one mentioned above. Mozeson believes the most likely origin is the Hebrew phrase הַבְּרַכָּה דִּבְרָה, *ha-brakha dibra*, "the formula (blessing) is uttered." Whatever its origin, it is obviously a word with a lot of superstition attached to it.

Q: I know Jesus said in Matthew 5:17-18 that He did not come to abolish the Law, but Ephesians 2:15 says that He "abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances." That sounds like He *did* abolish the Law. What did He abolish if not the Old Testament Law?

A: David Stern's explanation of Ephesians 2:15 is in his *Jewish New*

*Testament Commentary*. He fills almost four pages commenting on this verse, and does a very good job of showing that it is not the Law/Torah which is abolished, but rather the *enmity* that the Law indirectly caused, due to man's sinful nature (manifested by things such as Jewish pride at being chosen and Gentile envy and resentment toward the Jews because they were chosen). The Jerusalem Bible (a Catholic translation) says "destroying in his own person the hostility caused by the rules and decrees of the Law." It was not the Law itself that He destroyed, but rather the enmity between Jew and Gentile. In the Messiah, Jew and non-Jew are equal, and both keep the same Torah (or at least they *should* keep the same Torah), so the Torah no longer causes separation and enmity. The rest of the verse (Ephesians 2:15) says that He abolished this enmity so that He might make of the two (Jew and Gentile) one new man. This passage deals with the fact that Gentiles who believe in Israel's Messiah become a part of the commonwealth of Israel. In Messiah, their Gentile status is a thing of the past ("remember that ye being in time past Gentiles," verse 11).

Q: Whenever I mail a donation to Gates of Eden, you normally send me a "thank you" note on a postcard. I've noticed that instead of writing my name and address on the postcard, you cut my return address label off the envelope I sent you, and tape it to the front of the postcard. Some of my friends tell me that you do the same thing when you send them a "thank you" postcard. Why do you re-use our return address labels (instead of writing our name and address)?

A: For a few reasons. It eliminates the possibility of my making a typo error, and so guarantees that the correct address is on the postcard. In the case of lengthy names and addresses, it also saves time. And environmentalists will be happy to know that it reduces the amount of ink used, thereby saving the lives of squids.

## PRAYER AND FERVENCY

E.M. Bounds

Prayers must be red hot. It is the fervent prayer that is effectual and that availeth. Coldness of spirit hinders praying; prayer cannot live in a wintry atmosphere. Chilly surroundings freeze out petitioning and dry up the springs of supplication. It takes fire to make prayers go. Warmth of soul creates an atmosphere favorable to prayer, because it is favorable to fervency. By flame, prayer ascends to heaven. Yet fire is not fuss, nor is heat noise. Heat is intensity - something that glows and burns. Heaven is a mighty poor market for ice.

God wants warmhearted servants. The Holy Spirit comes as a *fire*, to dwell in us; we are to be baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Fervency is warmth of soul. A phlegmatic temperament is abhorrent to vital experience. If our religion does not set us on fire, it is because we have frozen hearts. God dwells in a flame; the Holy Spirit descends in fire. To be absorbed in God's will, to be so greatly earnest about doing it that our whole being takes fire, is the qualifying condition of the man who would engage in effectual prayer.

It is not in our power, perhaps, to create fervency of spirit at will, but we can pray God to implant it. It is ours, then, to nourish it and cherish it, to guard it against extinction, to prevent its abatement or decline. The process of personal salvation is not only to pray, to express our desires to God, but to acquire a fervent spirit and seek by all proper means to cultivate it. It is never out of place to pray God to beget within us, and to keep alive, the spirit of fervent prayer.