

BEGETTING OF OUR FIRST GRANDCHILD

Our daughter Betsy, who married Andy last September, has conceived and is now with child. The baby is due at the end of July. We are looking forward to the arrival of this blessing.

TEACHING CDs POSTPONED

We were hoping to have CDs of my teachings available by now. Unfortunately, we are not quite ready, due to technical difficulties and lack of time. Hopefully we'll be ready by next issue.

DAVID GIPSON COMING TO GOE

David Gipson is scheduled to speak at our congregation the morning of February 4. David is on the Advisory Council of the Messianic Israel Alliance, the organization with whom our congregation is affiliated. David lives in Colorado and travels throughout the West, teaching at Messianic congregations and conferences, and encouraging fledgling Messianic groups. If you live nearby, come and hear David.

ARAMAIC LANGUAGE COURSE

I have signed up to take an Aramaic class this semester at Lincoln Christian College. Part of the Tenach (Old Testament) is written in Aramaic, as is the Talmud and the Peshitta text (the New Testament used by churches of the East). The course is only occasionally offered by the school, and then only if enough students sign up. Since proficiency in Hebrew is a prerequisite, not many students take the course, so this is a rare opportunity.

NEW HOURS (AGAIN) AT CENTER

Seth has finished his internship with GOE, so he is no longer available to staff our Center as he was during his internship. I am now normally there weekdays 11 a.m.-3 p.m., except Thursdays, when my Aramaic class meets. There are other additional times I may be there, but these are our official posted hours.

SATURDAY NIGHTS AT CENTER

Saturday night Hebrew class (5 p.m.) and Torah study (6:30 p.m.) continue to be well attended. Join us if you can.

PHARAOH MAKING YOU WORK ON SABBATH?

Some employees let their employers pressure them into working on the Sabbath against their convictions. Seven years ago I wrote an article, "Keeping the Sabbath & Keeping Your Job". The article discusses in some detail the legal rights of employees and the legal obligations of employers to allow expressions of faith such as Sabbath-keeping, dress, beards, etc. If your employer is refusing to accommodate your request to keep

the Sabbath, I suggest you read my article. (It is posted on a few web sites, or you can write and request a copy.) You might also want to consider having the leader of your local congregation write a letter to your employer. Below is a sample of the letter I use. Every time that I have sent this letter for people in my congregation, the employer has cooperated. The letter can be used as a model and modified to suit your particular need.

(date)

To Whom It May Concern:

I am the (pastor/leader) at (congregation name), and I am writing to you on behalf of (employee's name), one of your employees. Our congregation believes in keeping the 7th-day Sabbath as one of God's Ten Commandments. This means that we cannot in good conscience work at our jobs during the hours of the Sabbath, which begins at sunset Fridays and ends at sunset on Saturdays. The Biblical calendar also has seven annual sabbaths which we honor. These annual sabbaths (3 in the spring and 4 in the fall) can fall on any day of the week.

I am writing to respectfully request that you respect (employee)'s faith and not pressure (him/her) to work on a sabbath and thereby violate (his/her) religious convictions.

I realize you have a business to run, and I know that employees sometimes make unreasonable requests of their employers. Please realize that (employee) is not asking for time off for selfish reasons. (He/She) needs these times off so (he/she) can honor God by obeying His commandment to keep His sabbaths.

Federal law requires employers to accommodate employee requests such as these unless the employer can prove that accommodating the employee would result in "undue hardship" on the conducting of the business. (See Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended [section 701 (j), 703 and 717] and Part XII Equal Employment Commission Guidelines on Discrimination Because of Religion.)

We appreciate your cooperation. If you have any questions, feel free to call me.

Respectfully,

(Writer's signature)

(Writer's name typed), (Pastor/Leader)

(Name of congregation)

CROSSING OVER, PART 6

Daniel Botkin

After Joshua took the Israelites over the Jordan River, all the males who had been born in the wilderness had to be circumcised. This was done to rectify the negligence of their fathers during the forty wilderness years. When Yeshua/Jesus, our Joshua, takes us out of a dry, boring wilderness existence and leads us over into our spiritual Promised Land, He circumcises the fleshly foreskin of our heart. The old sinful nature must be cut off so that we can walk in holiness and eat "the old corn of the land." This is what the Israelites did after Joshua's mass circumcision. They celebrated Passover, then "they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the selfsame day. And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna anymore; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year" (Josh. 5:11f).

After we cross over and start eating the fruit of Canaan, the manna ceases. What does this teach us in regards to our spiritual experience? Consider some of the differences between manna and the produce of Canaan. One obvious difference is variety. The produce of Canaan consists of several kinds of foods: figs, dates, wheat, barley, olives, grapes, pomegranates, etc. This diet surpasses the monotony of manna every day. Manna was a blessing from the heavenly Father; it was angels' food and tasted like honey wafers and fresh oil. Still, it was the same old same old, every day. Which is a better description of your spiritual experience? The variety of the fruit of Canaan or the monotony of manna? Does the Lord delight your spiritual tastebuds with a wide variety of spiritual experiences, or is your devotional life and your walk with the Lord dull and monotonous, the same thing every day? After we begin feasting on the various fruits of

Canaan, the monotony ceases, or at least it should.

We have to be careful not to complain about the monotony of manna while we are still in the wilderness mode. (See Numbers 11.) But after we cross over and have our heart circumcised, we should expect something more than manna to sustain us.

After you cross over, don't expect the Lord to just rain your spiritual nourishment down on you as He did in the past. This is a second difference between manna and the fruit of Canaan. The manna fell down from the sky; the fruit of Canaan requires men to plow, plant, cultivate, water, and weed the crops before they can be harvested and eaten. Don't expect the Lord to nurse you with a milk bottle or spoon-feed you from a baby food jar labeled "Mashed Manna." He does this for babes on the wilderness side, but he doesn't do that for people after they grow up and cross over.

If you are new in the faith, it's okay to be sustained on manna. It is like the milk that sustains a babe in his infancy. But there comes a time in your walk with the Lord when it's time to quit being bottle-fed and spoon-fed by others, and start feeding yourself. Paul wrote these words to the Corinthians: "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able" (1 Cor. 3:1-3).

Hebrews 5:12ff also contrasts milk and meat: "For when the time ye

ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

So here is a third difference between the manna and the fruit of Canaan. Manna is like the milk of the word, and the fruit of Canaan is like the meat of the word. Now we have to consider what we mean by "the meat of the word." Some people think the meat of the word consists of the so-called "deeper truths" - esoteric teachings based on kaballah, sod-level mysticism, gematria, or the "Bible codes." For others, the meat of the word means topics concerning end-time prophecy, the mark of the beast, the identity of the anti-christ, etc. For yet others, the meat of the word means uncovering secret conspiracies that are being hatched by small groups of powerful, influential men who meet in dark rooms to bring about the New World Order. (And it must be true, because you can read about it on the Internet.)

For me, the meat of the word is none of these things. For me, the meat of the word is summarized in the words of Yeshua in John 4:31-34: "In the meanwhile His disciples prayed Him, saying, 'Master, eat.' But He said unto them, 'I have meat to eat that ye know not of.' Therefore said the disciples one to another, 'Hath any man brought Him ought to eat?' Yeshua saith unto them, 'My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work.'"

The meat of the word is simply doing the will of your Father in heaven, and finishing the work He gave you to do. This is the meat which those who

still wander in the wilderness know not of. After you cross over and get your heart circumcised, it's time to quit depending on manna, the milk of the word. It's time to throw away your pacifiers and baby bottles, and start eating the produce of Canaan, the meat of the word. It's time to quit just talking about doing the will of the Father, and actually start doing it. The Enemy doesn't care if you just dream about doing exploits for the Lord, and just talk about fulfilling the dreams and visions God has given you. But if you start eating the meat which most disciples know not of, namely, doing the will of the Father with the intention of finishing the work He gave you to do, then you will be a threat to the Enemy.

If you cross over and start doing the will of the Father with the intention of finishing the work He gave you to do, the Father has a vision for you to prepare and strengthen you for the battles that lie ahead. The Lord gave Joshua such a vision to prepare and strengthen him before the Israelites went up against Jericho:

"And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, 'Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?' And he said, 'Nay; but as captain of the host of Yahweh am I now come.' And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, 'What saith my lord unto his servant?' And the captain of Yahweh's host said unto Joshua, 'Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy.' And Joshua did so" (Josh. 5:13ff).

As you approach your Jerichos, lift up your eyes and look, as Joshua did. You might see a fresh revelation of the Captain of Yahweh's host, a vision which will help you realize that the battle is not yours, the battle is the Lord's. This will give you the extra faith and courage you need to face the Enemy.

Shortly before a major battle (and

potential victory) in the life of a disciple, the Lord sometimes gives the disciple a revelation of Yeshua which is so different that it may startle the disciple. It is the same Jesus who first saved the disciple, but now He looks so different. His sword is drawn. He looks rather menacing, and the disciple wonders, as Joshua did, "Is he for us, or for our adversaries? Is this revelation really of God, or am I being deceived? This seems so different from the Jesus I thought I knew. Is this really Him, or am I being tricked into following 'another Jesus,' a counterfeit Christ?"

When it is truly the Lord, the disciple eventually realizes that it is indeed the same Jesus who first saved him. The disciple also realizes that the sword is not drawn to harm him. It is drawn to destroy the Enemy.

Yeshua is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He does not change. But our perception of Him changes as we grow. Even the natural maturing process brings changes in the way we perceive Him. One time during the Christmas season, my nephew (who was about 3 or 4 years old at the time) was worried and scared about something. His mother said, "We'll pray and ask Jesus to help us." My nephew looked up at her with a puzzled expression and said, "How can Jesus help us? He's just a little baby."

We may begin our pilgrimage as children who perceive Him as just a holy but powerless babe of Bethlehem. As we grow up and mature, our perception of Him changes. We eventually see Him as the Son of God crucified for our sins and raised for our justification, the Prophet like unto Moses who took us out of Egypt. Eventually we see Him as our Sanctifier, the Joshua who leads us out of the wilderness and into the Promised Land. And there in the Promised Land, we meet Him as the Captain of Yahweh's host, with His sword drawn, ready to go before us into battle. Then, like Joshua, we say, "What saith my Lord unto His servant?" What He says prepares us for Jericho.

Next issue: Jericho

THE FOUNDATION OF OUR FAITH: PAUL OR JESUS?

Of all the articles, pamphlets, and booklets I have written, *The Ghost of Marcion* is probably the most widely-read item. The article first appeared in *Petah Tikvah* in two parts in 1992. Some years later, I made it into a small booklet (still available from GOE, suggested donation \$3). In *The Ghost of Marcion*, I stated that in the Christian world, Paul's epistles (which make up only about 5% of the Bible) receive an undue amount of emphasis (as compared to the other 95% of the Bible), and that some Christians seem more intent on being disciples of Paul than disciples of Jesus.

If a man is truly following Jesus, he will also follow Paul's teachings, because Jesus authorized Paul. And if a man is truly following Paul, he will also follow Jesus, because Paul told people to follow Jesus. Nonetheless, Christians sometimes seem to forget who is built upon whom. Paul's teachings build upon the foundation of Jesus; Jesus' teachings are not built upon the foundation of Paul. Paul's teachings should not be viewed as the foundation of our faith. Unfortunately, Paul's teachings are often viewed that way. I was recently reminded of this fact when I was reading a Christian magazine. In the magazine, the editor makes this statement:

"Paul's writings form the foundation of Christianity."

This brief remark reveals the foundational problem that exists in many good Christians' minds. They base their theology more on Paul's writings than on Jesus' teachings.

Paul's writings are inspired Scripture, and are precious when properly understood. But Paul's writings are not the foundation of the faith. Jesus Christ, not Paul, is the true foundation, as Paul himself said: "For other foundation can no man lay than that [which] is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11).

Following in the Footsteps of Our Father Abraham

Daniel Botkin

"Now Yahweh had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee" (Gen. 12:1).

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Heb. 11:8).

"Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him" (Isa. 51:2)

Abraham was called to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's house, and go to a place which was foreign to him. Regardless of physical genealogy, all those who believe in Yeshua HaMashiach (Jesus the Christ) are counted as Abraham's seed. "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed" (Gal. 3:29). What Abraham was called to do in a physical, geographical sense, we are called to do in a spiritual sense, because we are children of Abraham and we must follow in his footsteps. If you believe in the Messiah who came from Abraham's seed, you are also called by God to "Get thee out."

The phrase translated "Get thee out" in Genesis 12:1 consists of two Hebrew words which are both spelled with the same two letters, but pronounced differently because of different vowel marks: לך לך, *lech l'cha*. The first לך, *lech*, is the masculine singular second person ("you") imperative (command) form of the verb "go." The second לך, *l'cha*, literally means "to you" (spoken to a male). The *l'*-prefix (ל-) means "to" and the *-cha* suffix (ך-) is used for the objective "you" when referring to a male as the object of a preposition.

Bible translators have rendered *lech l'cha* in a variety of ways: "Get thee out" (KJV), "Go forth" (NASB),



"Leave... and go" (NIV). The Stone Tanach's "Go for yourself" is the closest I have seen to a literal translation. (The *l*-prefix sometimes means "for," but more often means "to.") I am not aware of any English translation that translates it literally as "Go to you" or "Go to yourself." Such a statement does not make sense in English. However, if you consider what happens to "you" when you leave your old life behind in order to follow the Messiah, then "going to yourself" takes on meaning. You leave the old "you," your old self, and go to a new life in the place where the Lord leads you. In that place in the Spirit, you "find yourself," i.e., the new self that God is calling you to become. "Go to yourself" does not sound strange or foreign to a man who has experienced a radical transformation and has indeed "gone to [find] himself." Richard Wurmbrand, in his book *Victorious Faith* (Harper & Row, 1974, page 17f), describes his vision of the final judgment of the wicked, who did not "go to themselves":

God will sit on a white throne,

behind Him a curtain, before Him in one line those who have to be judged. God will lift His right hand, and at this sign beings of unspeakable splendour, radiant in all colours, will appear from behind the curtain and will stand before each of those to be judged. Then the wicked will ask God, "Who is this beautiful being before me?" And God will answer, "This is you as you would have become if you had believed in Jesus." Then, in despair over what they have lost, the wicked will flee to hell, unable to endure the picture of what they could have become.

Abraham's journey from Ur to Canaan transformed his life and altered the course of history. The Lord calls us to go from our Ur to our Canaan, and to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. "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. And be not conformed to the world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what

is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:1f).

Abraham was not transformed by focusing on himself. He was transformed by leaving his old self behind in Ur. Like our Father Abraham, we have to leave behind our country, our kindred, and our father's house, at least in a spiritual sense if not in a physical, geographical sense. In other words, we must let our thinking and our theology be shaped by God rather than by our country, our kindred, and our father's house.

You may still live in America and be a good American citizen. The Lord might even allow you to have a political career if you think you can be a successful politician and still maintain your honesty and integrity. (Believe it or not, it *is* possible! Joseph in Egypt and Daniel in Babylon are examples of godly men who were political leaders.) However, you must remember that your first loyalty is to the Kingdom of God. Anytime there is a conflict between the demands of your earthly country and the demands of your heavenly country, you must "get thee out" by forsaking the demands of your earthly country and obeying the demands of your heavenly country.

The same principle applies to your kindred. You may be Italian-American, Irish-American, African-American, or Native American. It is not a sin to celebrate your ethnicity, but it must be celebrated in ways that are compatible with the Kingdom. You also need to guard against focusing too much on your cultural and ethnic identity. Your primary culture should be the culture of God's Kingdom. Your eternal ethnic identity is wrapped up in your relationship to God through His Son. All other cultural and ethnic identities are of secondary importance.

Abraham was called to leave his father's house. Your earthly father's house may still be the place you call home. Family ties are important, but they must not hinder your call to be transformed into your new self. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me

is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10:37).

Abraham's country and kindred were idolatrous. Even Abraham's father served other gods: "...Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor: and they served other gods" (Josh. 24:2). Abraham did not let these things prevent him from being transformed into the man God wanted him to become. He literally left his country, his kindred, and his father's house. He crossed over from Ur to Canaan and became the first person in the Bible to be called a "Hebrew" - an *'ivri*, literally, one who crosses over. Abraham's crossing over was not only in a physical, geographical sense, though. He also crossed over from polytheism to monotheism and became the friend of God.

Abraham was made righteous because he believed a promise that God made to him. God called Abraham outside one starry night and said, "Look now toward heaven, and tell [count] the stars, if thou be able to number them... So shall they seed be." The next verse says, "And he believed in Yahweh; and He counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:5f).

Abraham "against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken, 'So shall thy seed be.' And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. And being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:18-22).

In effect God was saying this to Abraham: "Look at the stars. That will give you some indication of how many descendants you will have through the son I'm going to give you. We both know that it's humanly impossible, but I'm going to give you a son. Will you believe in this son whom you cannot yet see?"

Abraham said, "Yes," and became righteous in the eyes of God.

God says something similar to us. Instead of telling us to look at the stars, He tells us to look at His Son. "Look at My Son, Yeshua of Nazareth. That will give you some indication of what a son of God should be like. We both know that it's humanly impossible for you to be like Him, but I'm going to transform you into a son like Him. Will you believe this, even though you can't yet see how it can happen?"

When we say, "Yes," we become righteous in the eyes of God.

Abraham did not see the actual appearance of his son for several years, yet he knew that the promised son would one day appear. We may not see ourselves totally transformed into sons like Yeshua for many years, yet we know it will one day happen when He appears. This is what John was talking about when he wrote:

"Beloved, now we are the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John 3:2f).

Abraham looked at the stars in anticipation of his promised son. That starry night was a turning point in Abraham's life. After that night, Abraham probably never looked at the stars again without thinking of the son who was on his way.

As children of Abraham, we look to the heavens in anticipation of the appearance of the Son of God. If we are as eager for the arrival of this Son as Abraham was for the arrival of his son, then we should never look at the heavens again without thinking of this Son who is on His way. *Maranatha!*

FORBIDDEN HONEY

Daniel Botkin

King Saul made some pretty stupid decisions during his reign. One such decision is recorded in 1 Samuel 14. The Lord had just saved Israel from the Philistines. However, the men in Saul's army were feeling faint that day, because Saul had put them under oath, saying, "Cursed be the man that eateth any food before evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies." As the hungry soldiers marched on, they came into a wooded area with honey all over the ground. Jonathan, Saul's son, had not been in camp when Saul pronounced his curse on anyone who ate before evening. Being totally unaware of the ban on eating, Jonathan dipped the end of his staff into a honeycomb, ate some honey, "and his eyes were enlightened."

One of Jonathan's fellow soldiers told him about Saul's oath and curse. Jonathan replied, "My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey. How much more, if haply the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies which they found? For had there not been now a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?"

Like Saul, some people in positions of leadership make selfish, stupid decisions which are of no benefit to anyone, and cause the Lord's people to suffer needlessly. Some leaders exploit, abuse, and manipulate their followers for selfish reasons. Saul's concern was not for the glory of the Lord or for the well-being of God's people. He simply wanted to deprive his soldiers of food until *he* could be avenged on *his* enemies. Saul didn't even think of the Philistines as God's enemies and the vengeance upon them as God's vengeance. Saul's obsession was "that I may be avenged on *mine* enemies."

Spiritual leaders sometimes make bad decisions that deprive God's

people of honey which enlightens the eyes. You may be wondering, "What does the 'honey that enlightens the eyes' represent in this story?" Let me answer that question with a question. What, according to the Scriptures, is "sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb" and "enlightens the eyes"? The answer is in Psalm 19:7-10:

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb."

The honey which enlightens the eyes is God's Torah, with its statutes, commandments, and judgments. Sometimes a Christian innocently does what Jonathan did. He dips his staff into the honey of God's Torah, tastes its sweetness, and his eyes light up. Then along comes another Christian who says, "Hey! That Old Testament stuff isn't for us! Didn't you hear the order? We're not allowed to taste the sweetness of the Sabbath, the Feast Days, and things like that. You can *study* about those things, but you aren't supposed to *do* them. You can look at the sweet honey drippings all over the ground, but don't touch or taste the honey. Cursed be the man that tasteth the honey of the Torah. That's what our leaders said."

Sorry, but it's too late to tell us that now. We have already tasted the forbidden honey of the Torah, and our eyes have been enlightened. And we have the testimony of the Scriptures that the Torah is a blessing, not a curse. "Blessed is the man... [whose] delight is in the law of the Lord" (Ps. 1:1f). We have read Yeshua's testi-

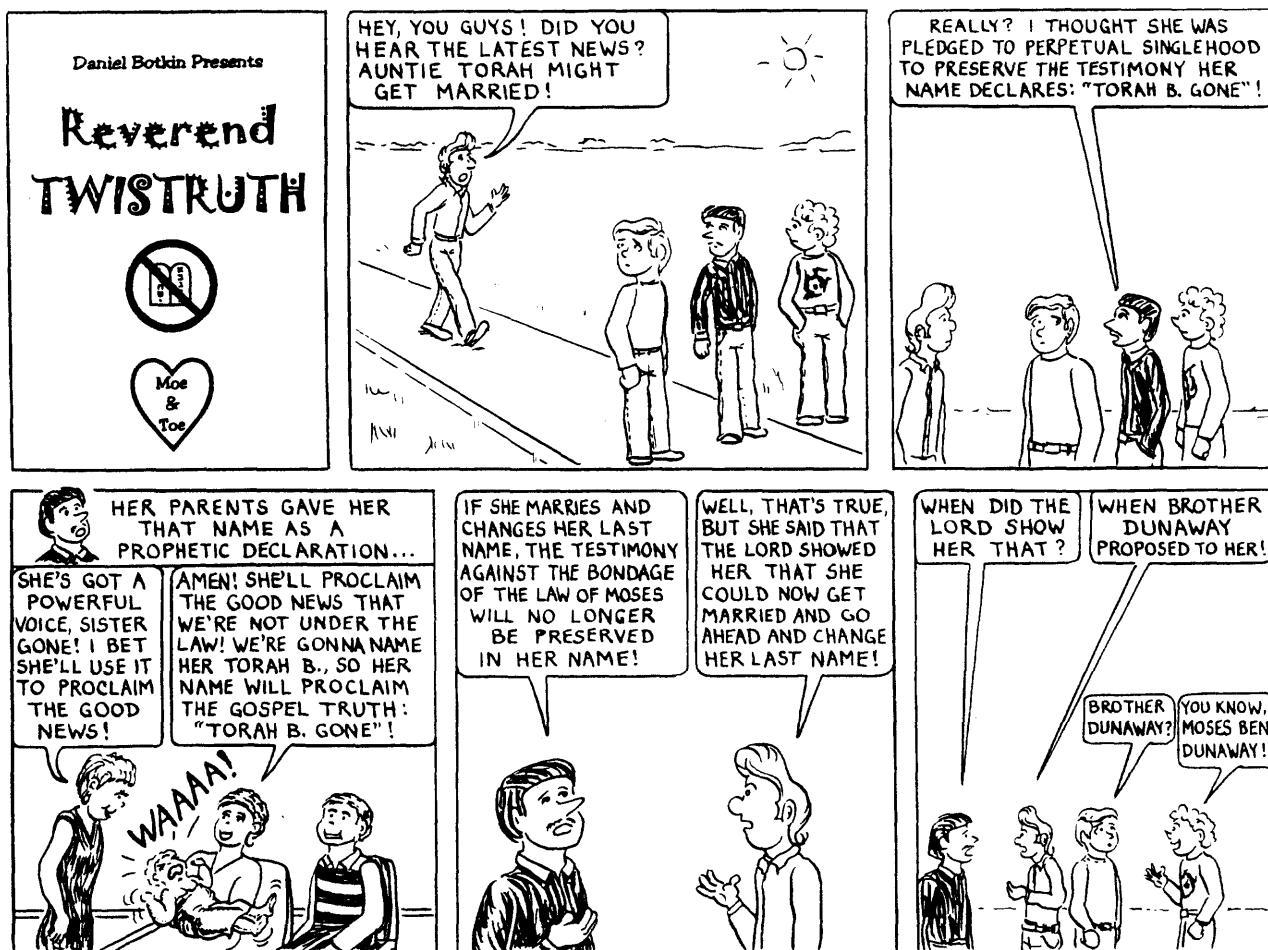
mony about the Torah in Matthew 5:17-19. We know from the Scriptures as well as from personal experience that the Torah is a sweet blessing, not a bitter curse.

The way that some Christian leaders view the Torah reminds me of Archie Bunker in the 1970s sit-com *All in the Family*. In one episode (which I did not see, but heard about), Archie was at the funeral of a Jewish man. He stood up to say a few words about the deceased, and said something like this: "There's nuttin' wrong with bein' a Jew. As a matter of fact, Christ was a Jew. Until his Father said, 'Hey! No more of *that!*'"

Christians who have not yet been indoctrinated with the "you can't do that" theology are more likely to experience the sweet honey of God's blessings than are those who have been told that the honey is not for them. This is true not only of the honey of the Torah, but of other blessings, too. Sometimes uneducated, untrained preachers can reach people who were considered unreachable by the preachers whose educators and trainers told them that those people were unreachable.

Sometimes people who haven't yet heard the news that "God stopped doing miracles" pray for miracles and receive them. Years ago I read a book by a former Jehovah's Witness. His baby daughter was born crippled. Some Christians prayed for her and she was supernaturally healed. When the happy father told his cohorts at the local Kingdom Hall what had happened, their response was, "But we don't believe in faith healing." Needless to say, he left the Jehovah's Witnesses Club.

People who have not yet been indoctrinated against speaking in tongues usually receive and experience this phenomenon easier than people who have been warned against it. I personally know two people who experienced praying in tongues as



new believers before they had even read or heard of the phenomenon. They were just praying intently and the tongues spontaneously poured out. They did not even know what they had experienced until after they told Christian friends about it. If they had been in a church which taught that praying in tongues is not for today, they might never have experienced it.

Sometimes the impossible task gets done by people who haven't been told that it's impossible. I once heard about a college student who missed the final exam of his advanced mathematics class, and had to make up the exam. The teacher handed him the test (it was a take-home final), but forgot to tell him that the last equation on the test was "just for fun." It was an equation that expert mathematicians had been unable to solve. The student stayed up half the night and solved it. He didn't hear that it was unsolvable because he had been isolated from the rest of the class, just like Jonathan didn't hear that the

honey was forbidden, because he was isolated from the rest of the camp.

And by the way, where was Jonathan when Saul declared the ban on eating? He was away from the main camp fighting against the Philistines, while Saul was sitting in the shade under a pomegranate tree doing nothing! This is how it often is today. Many Christian leaders sit in the shaded ivory towers of Mainstream Christianity, and do little more than criticize the common, grassroots believers who are outside the Mainstream Camp fighting the battles of the Lord.

Having said that, let me also say that it's important for us to remember that Jonathan and Saul were still on the same side. So it is with us and our born-again brothers in Mainstream Christianity. We don't want to fight against our brothers. We just want to persuade them to taste the forbidden honey of our Father's Torah, because our Father is not the one who has forbidden it. It is only misguided men

who forbid it. So if you have never tasted it, do like Jonathan did. Put forth your staff, dip it into the honey of God's Torah, taste and see - begin doing it - and your eyes will be enlightened.

Once you have tasted it, you will know that it is right. You will realize, like Jonathan did, that the reason so many of God's people are faint is because they have been deprived of this honey by the anti-Torah teachings of misguided leaders. And you will also realize, like Jonathan did, that there would be "a much greater slaughter" of the Lord's enemies in the spiritual realm if all of the Lord's soldiers could feast on the honey of the Torah.

And by the way, it is also important to mention that Saul wanted to kill Jonathan for eating the forbidden honey. So don't be surprised if you experience some opposition and persecution from honey-haters for feasting on the eye-opening honey of the Torah. □

SMITING AMALEK

Daniel Botkin

Through the Prophet Samuel, Yahweh told King Saul to "smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass" (1 Sam. 15:3).

In a spiritual sense, the commandment to smite Amalek is a commandment for all disciples. Saul was a king and ruled a kingdom. You are a little king (or queen) and rule over your own "kingdom," i.e., your personal life. God gives you free will and you decide what choices to make for your life. You can choose to obey God's commandments and do things His way, or you can choose to disobey His commandments and do things your own way. Concerning Amalek, God's commandment is to smite him, to utterly destroy him, and to show him no mercy. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood," Paul wrote, but there is a spiritual Amalek that we must smite and utterly destroy.

What does Amalek represent in the spiritual realm? Amalek was a descendant of Esau, the carnal man who sold his birthright for a bowl of lentil soup. Esau is a picture of the man who values his fleshly appetites more than he values the things of the spirit. Amalek was the fruit of Esau; therefore our Amalek is the "old man," the sinful, fleshly nature that places more importance on the things of the flesh than on the things of the spirit. Amalek represents the flesh in the ongoing internal struggle between the flesh and the spirit.

This conflict goes all the way back to the womb of Rebecca, where Esau, the forefather of Amalek, and Jacob, the forefather of Israel, "struggled together within her" (Gen. 25:22). What Rebecca experienced in a

physical sense, we experience in a spiritual sense. Our desire to sin and our desire to do good play tug-of-war inside us. Galatians 5:17 describes it this way: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

Our carnal desire to sin is very strong and very persistent. Amalek tugs at our heart constantly, using whatever means he can to tempt us. What should we do about the Amalek who lives inside us? Reform him? Educate him? Try to improve his self esteem? No, none of these things, because Amalek cannot be changed; he is incorrigible. The only way to deal with Amalek is to smite him and utterly destroy him. God's solution for the problem of the old sinful nature is to kill it, not reform it. In New Testament terminology, "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24).

To provide some context for the above verse, Paul first contrasts the works of the flesh to the fruit of the Spirit: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murder, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:19-24).

This contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit describes the difference between "Amalek," the old sinful desires of the flesh, and "Israel," the new holy desires of the spirit. The only way to end the struggle between Amalek and Israel is to smite Amalek. Those who truly belong to the Messiah do this very thing, for "they that are Christ's

have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." If you have not yet crucified your flesh with its illicit affections and lusts, then you do not really belong to the Messiah. You only think you do, because "they that belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." *The degree to which you have crucified your flesh reveals the degree to which you belong to the Messiah.*

The Lord's commandment to King Saul was to utterly destroy Amalek and spare nothing. The Lord's commandment to us is to utterly destroy the Amalek who lives inside us, for he is the one who produces the sinful works of the flesh. Notice that the Lord does not just deal with only the external manifestations of the flesh. He doesn't just list the sinful works of the flesh and then say, "Try really hard to stop doing those things." Instead, He tells us that true disciples will crucify the flesh with its illicit affections and lusts. Then those sinful actions will cease, because the desire to do them is gone. Amalek is dead.

Some people neglect the root of the problem, and try to get rid of the works of the flesh by their own will power. Instead of crucifying Amalek, they just subdue him and keep him on a leash. This is what King Saul did. He captured Agag, king of the Amalekites, and spared him. He also spared "the best" of the sheep and oxen, "but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly." This is what some believers do. They just kill off the "big sins," the sins that they consider "vile and refuse," but they spare the "little sins," the things that look cute and seem harmless. Worst of all, they spare Agag, the king of Amalek. They keep him subdued and on a leash, but still alive. As a result, their fleshly, sinful nature survives.

Agag may be subdued and on a leash, but he can still cause big problems later on. Haman, the man who almost succeeded in annihilating all the Jews of Persia about 500 years after King Saul's reign, was an Agagite. According to Jewish tradition, Agag was allowed to be with his

wife during his brief captivity, and during that time he begat a child who became the ancestor of Haman. If you refuse to smite Amalek today, he may spawn something that will bring a major tragedy later on in your life.

It was bad enough that King Saul spared Agag and the best of the sheep and oxen. To make matters worse, he tried to justify his actions. When Samuel asked him why he had not obeyed the commandment of the Lord, Saul insisted that he *had* obeyed the commandment of the Lord.

"What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" Samuel asked.

There are some people who claim to be Spirit-filled and Spirit-led, yet they consistently produce an abundance of the works of the flesh. When such people insist that they are filled with the Spirit, led by the Spirit, and walking in the Spirit, I can't help but wonder: What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? What meaneth these fleshly manifestations of gossip and backbiting; of hatred and rage and heated arguments over things of minor importance; of envy, strife, and division; of anger, resentment, bitterness, and unforgiveness? "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). If you are walking in the Spirit, why are you fulfilling the lust of the flesh? "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24). If you belong to Messiah, why is your fleshly, carnal nature so alive?

The manifestations of the works of the flesh in your life are like the sheep and oxen that Samuel heard. The works of the flesh are living, breathing, walking testimonies that loudly proclaim the fact that you, like King Saul, have not obeyed the commandment of the Lord to utterly destroy the little Amalek who lives inside you. Each sin you commit is a walking advertisement, a bleating sheep that bellows, "*Gossip! Anger! Envy!*" Each sin is like a lowing ox that moos, "*Immoral-*

ity! Immodesty!"

If the works of the flesh are manifest in your life, admit it. Don't be like King Saul, who denied his disobedience, then tried to shift the blame to others. "The people spared the best of the sheep and oxen," he said. Don't try to justify your sins with statements like "He provoked me!" or "I've had a hard life; I deserve a little illicit pleasure." And don't try to excuse your sinful actions by cloaking them in religious garb, like Saul did when he told Samuel that they spared the best of the sheep and oxen "to sacrifice unto Yahweh thy God."

Some people rationalize their sins and convince themselves that they are actually committing the sin for a noble cause, as a "sacrifice to the Lord." A woman desperate to get married says, "I know the Bible says not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers, but I'm going to marry him in order to win him to the Lord." A businessman says, "I know this is a shady deal and illegal, but I'm going to give half of the profits to the work of the Lord." A woman who doesn't want to dress modestly says, "I know the Bible says women are to dress modestly, but I can't dress that way if I want to evangelize harlots and the immoral. An old-fashioned modest dress like that is going to alienate them." A worker who doesn't want to take the Sabbath off says, "I'm going to keep working every Saturday, even though I could get Saturdays off. That way I'll have more money to give to the Lord. This will be my sacrifice to the Lord."

When Saul tried to justify his disobedience by saying its purpose was "to sacrifice unto the Lord," Samuel's reply was a reply that is appropriate for any similar attempt to justify disobedience: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken that the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king" (1 Sam. 15:22f).

Witchcraft and iniquity and idolatry are sins of action; rebellion and stubbornness are sins of attitude. Saul's rebellious, stubborn attitude caused him to lose his position as king, because rebellion and stubbornness are like witchcraft, iniquity, and idolatry in the eyes of God. If we are rebellious and stubborn, we can lose our position in the Body of Messiah. We can miss out on fulfilling God's plan for us.

What was the evidence of Saul's rebellion and stubbornness? It was his refusal to utterly destroy Amalek. He spared Agag and kept him on a leash instead of smiting him. What is the evidence of a professing believer's rebellion and stubbornness? It is the same thing. It is his refusal to crucify the flesh and its illicit affections and lusts. It is just subduing the fleshly nature and keeping it under control, on a leash, instead of crucifying it.

When Agag was brought to Samuel, Samuel took a sword and "hewed Agag in pieces" (1 Sam. 15:33). If your sinful nature is merely subdued and on a leash instead of slain, know that there is a Prophet greater than Samuel, and He has a sword that is sharper than Samuel's. That Prophet can hew Agag in pieces with the sword of the Spirit. Bring the Agag who lives inside you to Yeshua, and let Him smite Agag, so that Amalek will never again rise up in you.

One of the commandments of the Torah is in Deuteronomy 25:17f: "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God."

This is a commandment to remember what Amalek did. When you remember what Amalek did to Israel, also remember what Samuel did to Amalek's king, Agag. He hewed Agag in pieces. And also remember that this is what Yeshua can do to the Agag who lives inside you. Then you will have fulfilled the commandment to "blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven" (Deut. 25:19). □

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Waging War in the Arena of Ideas

Dr. Daniel Botkin

Some Christians think that spiritual warfare consists of praying real loud and shouting at demonic powers in a demanding tone of voice, maybe with some foot-stomping and fist-shaking thrown in for good measure, to let 'em know we really mean business.

There is certainly a time and a place for praying and praising the Lord with a loud voice. The book of Psalms makes that pretty clear. And there is a time and a place to speak against demonic powers. However, much of the spiritual warfare that we wage is in the arena of *ideas*. Consider what the Apostle Paul said about our warfare:

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds); casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself above the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

These things we war against could be summarized by the word *ideas* - people's thoughts, viewpoints, attitudes, values, opinions, assumptions, presumptions, etc. Notice that Paul mentions three categories of ideas: *strongholds*, *imaginings*, and *high things that exalt themselves above the knowledge of God*. Let's consider each of these.

STRONGHOLDS

A stronghold is like a fort or fortress, i.e., an enclosed area protected by a strong outer wall. People build protective walls around false beliefs that they cherish. A person can believe a false idea that is not precious to him - just a piece of misinformation that is, for the most part, irrelevant to his life. A person feels no need to build a stronghold to protect this sort of belief. However, if a deceived man has a false idea that he cherishes, and that idea is challenged, then the deceived man will build a stronghold around his false idea. In his mind, he will erect a protective barrier around the erroneous belief to shield it from the truth that would expose it.

A cherished idea is often one to

which the person has given some thought. He has reasoned things in his mind, formulated his position, and arrived at his conclusion. Because this false idea is precious to him, the deceived person builds a stronghold around it, hoping that no information will penetrate the walls and destroy it. The stronghold is a support system that "walls in" the false idea. The walls of the fortress are built with materials from a source which is "authoritative" in the deceived person's mind. The source might be the Koran or the Book of Mormon. It may be a pseudo-scientific, evolutionary world view. It may be a world view based on Greek philosophy or Buddhist philosophy. It may even be the Scriptures. Many Jews cherish the false idea that Jesus could not have been the Messiah. They build a stronghold around that idea by misinterpreting and misapplying the Scriptures. Many Christians cherish the false idea that the Torah is not for them. They build a stronghold around that idea by misinterpreting and misapplying the Scriptures.

When we war against strongholds, we do not directly attack the false idea itself, nor do we attack the person who believes the false idea. It is the protective outer wall of the stronghold that we attack. We do this by showing the person that his "authoritative" source is not really authoritative or reliable for matters of faith. Once the wall of the stronghold is destroyed, the false idea is exposed for what it is, i.e., false. Then the person can decide whether to renounce and abandon that idea, or look for some other materials he can use to build another stronghold around the idea.

Often we have to systematically dismantle the support system that the deceived person has used. Notice that Paul wrote about "the pulling down" of strongholds. Often it is like disassembling a wall one stone at a time. Occasionally the Lord supernaturally brings down the walls in one sudden Divine act, like He did at Jericho. However, this seems to be the exception rather than the rule. The deceived person built his stronghold one stone at a time, and we may have to disassemble it one stone at

a time. When possible, though, it's best to start with the stones closest to the foundation, because smaller lies are usually built upon bigger lies. If a big stone near the foundation can be pulled out, then all the stones built upon that lie will fall with it.

IMAGINATIONS

Imaginations are false ideas that are based on mere human speculation. Unlike strongholds, imaginations are not normally derived from some perceived "authoritative" source outside of the deceived person. When it comes to imagining things, the only authority the deceived person usually recognizes is himself. The source of imaginations is the carnal imagination of the person.

People old enough to remember John Lennon's extremely popular song *Imagine* may recall some of the things Lennon asked us to imagine: a universe with no heaven, no hell, "and no religion, too." Lennon wrote some beautiful melodies, but his lyrics were laced with poison. Lennon had another song (on the same album, if I remember correctly) in which he sang about all the things in which he did not believe. The things in which he did not believe included Bible, Jesus, Buddha, Elvis, Zimmerman [aka Bob Dylan], and Beatles. "I just believe in me," Lennon sang. "Yoko and me. And that's reality." Unfortunately for Lennon, his imagined reality suddenly ended when he was violently gunned down by a deranged fan.

Not every dreamer who just believes in himself imagines the same reality that John Lennon imagined. There is a very wide range of types of imaginations, because every individual is unique. Every person has a unique set of experiences in his life which have influenced his thinking. If a person's experiences have influenced him to think of God as a smiling, feeble old grandfather who would never punish his children for their misbehavior, then this is how he will imagine God to be. If his experiences have influenced him to think of God as a frowning, mean-spirited tyrant who sits with an armful of lightning bolts, just waiting for the opportunity to smite

someone, then this is how he will imagine God to be. The raw material for building *strongholds* usually comes from some perceived "authoritative" source outside the person; the raw material for *imaginations* usually comes from the person's background and experiences.

Even Bible-believers can imagine some very foolish ideas. This happens most often with believers who do not know the Scriptures very well. If they knew the Scriptures, they would know that the ideas they have imagined are contrary to what the Bible teaches, and therefore cannot be true. Imaginations must be "cast down." The most effective way to cast down imaginations which infest and infect the minds of Bible-believers is to present those passages of Scripture which most clearly show that the imagined idea cannot be true.

A different tactic may be needed to cast down false imaginations that dwell in the mind of someone who rejects the authority of the Scriptures. Before such a person will even consider the Bible as a possible authoritative source, he must first see the inadequacy of whatever "authoritative" source he now trusts. In the case of imaginations, his only "authoritative" source is usually just himself. Sometimes it helps to ask questions:

Why do you believe this? On what do you base your idea? Do you have any solid, tangible proof that this is true, or are you just basing your belief on your own personal desires and feelings? If you believe this only because it "feels right" or "seems true" to you, then what about all the people in the world who don't feel the same way about your idea? Why do you believe that you are right and they are all wrong? How do you know that it's not the other way around? What if they are right and you are wrong? Also, Jesus taught things that clearly contradict your beliefs. Are you saying that you know more about spiritual truth than He did, and that I should believe you instead of Him?

Questions like these can cause a humble seeker to question the truth of his imagined ideas, and to realize the need for a truly reliable and authoritative source from which to determine truth. At this point, the Scriptures can be offered as the God-ordained authority, and then used to cast down the vain imaginations, in the same way that they would be used with a believer.

HIGH THINGS WHICH EXALT THEMSELVES ABOVE THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Imaginations can arise in either proud minds or humble minds. High things which exalt themselves above the knowledge of God are ideas which arise only in proud minds. These are false ideas spawned by human pride and arrogance. They are not passive, like some imaginations are; they deliberately set themselves against God and defy Him. They "exalt themselves above the knowledge of God." They are inspired by the spirit of Lucifer, who boasted, "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" (Isa. 14:13f).

These are the people who say, "I know better than God how things ought to be done. If I were in charge of the universe, I'd show the world how to run things right. It's a pity I'm not on the throne, instead of God."

This same proud, defiant spirit can exalt itself against God by defying the human authorities whom God has put in place. David's son Absalom did this very thing. When the Israelites came to King David to settle controversies, Absalom would afterwards take them aside and tell them that they had a good case, and it was a pity that King David didn't judge in their favor. "Oh that I were made judge in the land," Absalom said, "that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!" (2 Sam. 15:4).

Absalom thought that he could do a better job as king than his father was doing, so he tried to de-throne David and enthrone himself. Absalom's attempted coup failed, and he was left hanging dead in a tree, with three spears through his heart.

Some believers may think that only unbelievers can try to exalt themselves above the knowledge of God, but this is not the case. Sometimes Absalom-like rebellions takes place in churches. A man in the congregation thinks he could do a better job than the current pastor is doing, so he tries to have the pastor removed so that he can fill the position. He may not end up dead like Absalom, but God will eventually bring him down. "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be

abased" (Lk. 14:11).

Believers can also exalt themselves above the knowledge of God by questioning the wisdom of God's commandments. "Why would God tell us not to do that? I don't see how it could harm anyone. It looks to me like God is just depriving us of some well-deserved, innocent fun."

This kind of thinking is inspired by Satan, for it is an echo of his first lie: "Ye shall not surely die. For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

It is permissible to *wonder* out of *curiosity* why God commanded certain things. But when a person questions the wisdom of God's commandments and begins to entertain doubts about God's motives, that person is in danger of exalting himself above the knowledge of God.

Those who exalt themselves above the knowledge of God will eventually be cast down. Absalom's hopes of reigning as king were cast down. Even Satan is cast down. "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Lk. 10:18). Ideas that exalt themselves above the knowledge of God are very dangerous. If we see these ideas arising in our own minds, we need to immediately cast them down by reminding ourselves of their Satanic origin, and by remembering what happens to those who exalt themselves. If we see these ideas arising in the minds of others, we can pray that they will humble themselves and repent. If they are open to correction, we can try to show them the Satanic origin of their thoughts, and warn them of the certain doom that awaits those who exalt themselves above the knowledge of God.

CONCLUSION

The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, Paul said. In another place he said that we wrestle not against flesh and blood. Our battle is not in the physical realm; it is in the arena of ideas and thoughts. As we pull down strongholds, cast down imaginations, and cast down every high thing that exalteth itself above the knowledge of God, we work toward the final goal that Paul states at the end of 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, namely, "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Messiah." □

THE 2300 DAYS OF DANIEL

Daniel Botkin

In one of Daniel's visions, it was revealed to him that "the sanctuary and the host" would be "trodden under foot" for a period of 2300 "days," and "then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (Dan. 8:13f).

This is the passage of Scripture that led to "The Great Disappointment" of 1844. In the early 1800s, there was a renewed interest in Bible prophecy about the Second Coming of Christ. Based on Daniel's prophecy, many Christians were convinced that Jesus was going to return in either 1843 or 1844. William Miller is generally credited with calculating this date. However, Miller was only one of many Bible students and teachers who, independently of each other, came to the conclusion that Daniel's 2300 "days" would end in or around 1844, and that Jesus would then return during the Jews' fall feasts that year.

Using the "one prophetic day equals one year" principle, the 1844 (or 1843) date was reached by assuming that the 2300 prophetic "days" (i.e., 2300 years) began when the "seventy weeks" of Daniel 9:24 began, namely, the year that Ezra and the Jewish remnant left Babylon and returned to the Land of Israel. This took place approximately 457-456 B.C. A simple mathematical calculation brought the 19th century Bible students to the year 1843 or 1844:

457 BC years	456 BC years
+1843 AD years	+1844 AD years
2300 years	2300 years

As most people know, Jesus did not show up in either 1843 or 1844. A lot of Christians were deeply disappointed - especially those who had not bothered to harvest their potato fields that fall. (Jesus was coming, so what was the point of harvesting potatoes?) Hence The Great Disappointment of 1844.

Many Christians have heard about The Great Disappointment which

came about as the result of calculations based on Daniel 8:14. I was just recently made aware of the fact that at least one Jewish commentator also based some end-time calculations on Daniel 8:14. This Jewish commentator, the Ibn Yachya (Yosef Ben David Ibn Yachya) lived from 1494 to 1534, a few centuries before the 1844 Great Disappointment. According to the Ibn Yachya, Daniel's 2300 days would end sometime around 1940, plus or minus a few years. At this time, he said, the exile of the Jews would end and they would return to Israel and "sit securely on their land." As most students of history know, the events of the 1940s paved the way for the 1948 rebirth of the State of Israel.

Since 1948 the Jewish people have had a state, and many Jews have returned to Israel. However, many Jews are still in exile, some by choice and some against their will. Furthermore, even those Jews who are living in Israel do not yet "sit securely on their land," as the recent disengagement sadly demonstrates. If the Ibn Yachya's calculations were correct, why is this so?

The Ibn Yachya taught that the end of the exile will happen whenever a generation merits it. According to his view, even the return of Ezra and the Jewish remnant was an "incomplete" end to the Babylonian exile, because most of the Jews preferred to stay in Babylon. And to make matters worse, the Ibn Yachya taught, those Jews who did leave Babylon to return to Israel were the *reikim*, i.e., those "empty" of Torah and learning, those who were not well instructed in Torah. The great majority of the Torah scholars and teachers stayed in Babylon. Therefore Ezra's generation did not merit a complete and final end to exile, he said.

What makes all this especially interesting is a recent front-page article in the *Jewish Press* (12/2/05, page 1). The writer of the article,

Bezalel Fixler, suggests that the Ibn Yachya's prediction is not so much a prediction of something that *must* happen, regardless of anything that people do. Rather, Fixler sees it as a prediction of what *can* happen if Jews (especially Torah-observant Jews) will take the opportunity to return to the Land of Israel. Fixler suggests that the Ibn Yachya's view of Ezra's incomplete end to exile serves as a warning to Jews today: "Let us not repeat the same mistake the Jews committed during the time of Ezra! Let us not have a repetition of only '*reikim*' going up to *Eretz Yisrael* and the '*gedolim*' [the 'great' Torah scholars and teachers] remaining behind."

Was God really behind the rebirth of the nation of Israel in 1948? Was the formation of the modern-day State of Israel really the fulfillment of prophecy, as the Ibn Yachya's prediction suggests? Both Jews and Christians have differing opinions on this question. Those who know the history of the late 19th century and early 20th century Zionist movement know that most of the Jews who first returned to reclaim and rebuild the Land were "*reikim*." They were "empty" of Torah. Most were secular; many were agnostics or atheists, as are many of the Jews who immigrate to Israel today. The Prophets predicted a restored Israel populated by holy people who are righteous and faithful to God, not a secular nation inhabited by Jews who are agnostics and atheists. For this reason, some people conclude that the 1948 rebirth of Israel was *not* a fulfillment of prophecy.

I do believe that God was behind the 1948 rebirth of Israel. However, that does not mean that God is obligated to preserve the modern, mainly secular, State of Israel until the Messiah returns. As far as I can tell, the Scriptures give no iron-clad guarantee that today's modern State of Israel will not come to an end, either

through war and terrorism, or through economic collapse, or through a combination of tragedies. Some Orthodox rabbis have warned that there is no guarantee that the Jews will not suffer another exile. I have read the rabbis' words in the *Jewish Press*. It has been suggested by at least one widely-known prophetic teacher (a Jewish believer) that the modern State of Israel will indeed collapse, and that this horrific event will be the final tragedy which will finally bring the Jewish people to true repentance and to a revelation of their Messiah Yeshua.

I do not know (and do not even want to guess) whether or not this is the way end-time events will unfold. I sincerely hope that the Jews in Israel will come to repentance and faith without having to suffer another exile from their Land. But perhaps it must happen this way. Or, perhaps the Ibn Yachya was on to something. Perhaps the way that end-time events will unfold will be determined by the actions of the people. God makes prophetic promises, but He reserves the right to change His mind and to alter His plans if people's actions (or inactions) warrant a change. This truth is stated in Jeremiah 18:7-10:

"At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in My sight, that it obey not My voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them."

God is the One who raises up a nation or destroys a nation. Yet from the above passage it is clear that a nation's destiny depends on whether the people as a whole do good or evil. If they do good, God will exalt the nation. If they do evil, God will destroy the nation. "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34). Both Israel and America need to remember this. □

Q & A

Q: Does God still expect us to tithe? If so, to whom?

A: Tithing (giving 10% of one's earned income to the work of the Lord) is a subject that generates a lot of questions, and sometimes controversy. When there was a functioning Levitical priesthood with a Tabernacle or Temple, there was no question of whether or not God expected His people to tithe, nor was there any question about who was to receive the tithes. Because there is no longer a functioning Levitical priesthood to support, nor a Temple to maintain, some people think there is no need for new covenant believers to tithe.

While a person may have difficulty finding a New Testament verse that specifically commands tithing for new covenant believers (Matthew 23:23 was spoken before the institution of the new covenant), the New Testament certainly teaches that believers should give to the work of the Lord. However, it does not mention a specific percentage. So what percentage should a believer give? If we look at the Scriptures for guidance, we see that tithing was practiced as far back as Abraham and Jacob (Gen. 14:20 & 28:22). Ten percent was the norm before the Torah was given, and it was the amount that God ordained for the Levitical priesthood. Therefore 10% would seem to be the logical minimum amount to give under normal circumstances.

Even though there is no longer a functioning Levitical priesthood, there are now new covenant ministers who need support. The New Testament teaches that financial support should be given to people in ministry, "especially they who labour in the word and teaching." See 1 Timothy 5:17f & 1 Corinthians 9:6-14. In 1 Corinthians 9:13, Paul reminds the Corinthians that the priests who ministered at the Temple got their livelihood from the tithes and offerings which were brought to the Temple. According to Paul, this fact teaches us that ministers of the new covenant should likewise receive financial support, for in the very next verse he says, "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (NASB, "get their living from the gospel").

Although this is the norm, there are

certainly exceptions to the rule. Some preachers (though very few) are independently wealthy and do not need financial support. Other preachers work a full-time job to support themselves. This is noble for as long as it is necessary, but it is not the ideal. The ideal is that "which the Lord ordained," namely, "that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

Paul made tents to support himself when he had to. He reminded the Corinthians that when he was in Corinth, he did not exercise his right to receive support from them, so as not to be a financial burden to them. But later on, Paul actually apologized to the Corinthians for *not* taking support from them: "For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? Forgive me this wrong" (2 Cor. 12:13).

Paul actually admitted that he had wronged the Corinthians by not receiving financial support from them, because it resulted in their being "inferior to other churches." "I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service," he wrote (2 Cor. 11:8).

From the above verses we can conclude that a minister's support should normally come primarily from those to whom he ministers. Nowadays, with so many "ministers" competing for people's tithes and offerings, it is sometimes difficult for a disciple to determine who should receive his tithes and offerings. If you are in a local congregation (as you should be if at all possible), then your local congregational leader(s) should be your first priority for support. Many believers make it a practice to give 10% to their local congregation before giving additional offerings to other ministries.

Years ago I heard a preacher say that most of your tithes and offerings should be given to the minister who feeds you the most, and lesser amounts to those who feed you less. "If you get your food from McDonald's, you pay McDonald's," the preacher said. "You don't get your food from McDonald's, and then go down the street to Hardee's and give the money to them."

Under the Levitical priesthood, there were also tithes set aside for celebrating the pilgrimage feasts, and (every third year) for the poor. We should still do our best to be sure we have sufficient funds to celebrate God's appointed times. And we should still do what we can to help the poor, for they are always among us. -DB

Q & A

Q: Is it a sin for a believer to take a brother to court?

A: Based on 1 Corinthians 6, some people say it is wrong. However, Paul was rebuking them mainly for not having some alternative system in place so they could settle their disputes outside the secular courtroom. In a perfect world, there would never be any legal disputes between believers. In the real world, though, believers sometimes get ripped off by other believers. A few years ago I found out that a brother was publishing one of my books without my permission and selling it (for over twice the price I charged). He had also altered the text to conform to his particular doctrinal view, making it appear that I held that doctrinal view, which I do not. I wrote him a cordial letter telling him I was happy that he wanted to make my teaching available to others, but that altering the text and selling my work without my knowledge was technically illegal. I told him he could go ahead and sell the copies he still had, but that any future printings he did should retain the text as I originally wrote it, without his editorial changes. I also told him he could keep half of the profits for his ministry.

He shot back an angry email accusing me of being greedy of filthy lucre for wanting half of the profits to go to Gates of Eden - even though he was the one who had pirated my work, altered the text, and was illegally publishing and selling it for over twice the amount I charged. I told him that since he didn't want to accept my proposal, it looked like we needed to think of a few brothers whom we could ask to be arbiters to resolve this issue. He said there was nothing to resolve. Since he did not want to resolve this with the help of impartial brothers, I had to threaten him with a lawsuit to get him to stop.

God is a God of justice. Our court system, though imperfect, exists for the sake of justice. If a brother refuses to settle a dispute outside the courtroom with the help of other brothers, I do not believe it is necessarily wrong in that case to take him to court. -DB

CROSSING OVER, PART 7: JERICO

Daniel Botkin

In this series of articles we have been looking at the children of Israel's crossing of the Jordan River, and what this event teaches us about spiritual experience. "Crossing over" describes in a nutshell what we are supposed to do after God saves us from our sins. There is an "out of Egypt" aspect of our faith, and there is an "into Canaan" aspect of our faith. These two aspects can be seen in Deuteronomy 6:23: "And He brought us out from thence [from Egypt], that He might bring us in [to Canaan], to give us the land which He swore unto our fathers."

Yahweh's purpose for taking Israel out of Egypt was to bring them into Canaan; His purpose for taking us out of sin is to bring us into our spiritual Canaan, the "heavenly places" mentioned in Ephesians 1:3 & 2:6. Crossing over is what takes us into Canaan after we have left Egypt. Just as the Israelites of Joshua's generation had to cross over to reach their Promised Land, so we have to cross over if we want to enter the heavenly places in our walk with the Lord.

Our spiritual experience in the heavenly places is not all joy and bliss. While we are blessed with "all spiritual blessings" and we "sit together" with Yeshua in the heavenly places, the heavenly places are also a place of spiritual warfare. Demons as well as angels operate in the heavenly places. "And there was war in heaven," John said (Rev. 12:7). That war in the heavenly places continues until the Lord returns. Our purpose on this earth is to cross over, defeat the enemy, and establish God's authority in the universe.

The first battle that Joshua and the children of Israel faced after crossing over and entering Canaan was Jericho. The battle of Jericho gives us a good picture of the initial battle that we face after crossing over. After we quit wandering aimlessly in the wilderness, step into the waters that separate us from the Promised Land,



circumcise the fleshly foreskin of our heart, start eating the fruit of Canaan, and receive a revelation of the Captain of Yahweh's host, then we are ready to face and defeat our Jericho. We are ready to get the victory over "the sin which doth so easily beset us" (Heb. 12:1). We are ready to overcome that one obvious moral weakness that stands as a Jericho-like stronghold in our life, blocking our spiritual progress.

Jericho is different things for different people. For some people, their Jericho is some lust of the flesh such as sexual immorality, drugs, or drunkenness. For others it is the love of money and material goods. For yet others it is the desire for worldly power over other people.

Whatever your Jericho is, it has to be defeated before you can go forward. The Israelites could not go up to Jerusalem until they first overcame Jericho. In the same way, we cannot make any spiritual progress until we overcome the Jericho-like weakness which blocks our path to the mountain of the Lord in Jerusalem.

Before the children of Israel crossed the Jordan, they had been challenged by the elements. Now they were challenged by the enemy. Jericho was a major fortress in Canaan, a walled city, "straitly shut up because of the children of Israel" (Josh. 6:1).

When the ruins of Jericho were excavated in 1929-1936, archeologists learned that the wall around Jericho was a thirty-foot high double wall. The outer wall was six feet thick, and the

inner wall twelve feet thick, with a fifteen-foot space separating the two walls. The two walls were joined together at the top, with houses built across the top. (See *Halley's Bible Handbook*.) How could the Hebrews, a band of desert nomads, children of former slaves, hope to overcome a mighty stronghold like Jericho?

The key to overcoming Jericho did not lie in the mere military ingenuity of man. Rather, it lay in "the foolishness of God [which] is wiser than men" (1 Cor. 1:25). God's instruction to Joshua was to just march around the city, fully armed, and then return to camp. This was to be done in total silence, except for the blowing of seven shofars, six days in a row. Then on the seventh day, the army was to march around the city seven times. At Joshua's signal everyone was to shout. Then the walls of Jericho would fall down flat, God said.

God's plan sounds foolish to the natural man, but it worked. The Israelites did not trust in worldly wisdom and might to overcome Jericho. Even so, we must not trust in worldly wisdom and might to overcome our Jerichos. We will have very limited and only temporary victories if we trust in secular psycho-babble or worldly education or social programs that leave God out of the picture. To overcome our Jericho, we have to trust in the seeming foolishness of God rather than in the wisdom of the world. Why? "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men" (1 Cor. 1:25).

The first chapter of 1 Corinthians explains why God has chosen to use seemingly foolish things to bring about His will. Puny, sinful man, with his limited knowledge, thinks of himself as being quite a bigshot, and imagines himself to be wiser than God. So God decided to bring proud, sinful man down with things and with people that are weak, base, and despised by the high and mighty, "that no flesh should

glory in His presence" (1 Cor. 1:29).

There is a specific battle plan for every Jericho, and for every Ai, and for every other battle that we face. God did not give the Israelites a "one-plan-fits-all-battles" package. Victory at each battle depended on hearing God's specific plan for that particular battle. Therefore the Israelites had to be in a right relationship with the Lord, so that they could hear His voice.

So it is with us. Methods which brought us victory in past battles may not bring us victory in our present battles. This is the reason that methods of evangelism and disciple-making change throughout history. Certain methods that were very successful in past centuries may bring very little or no fruit nowadays. (See the Charles G. Finney excerpts on pages 8 & 9.)

The content of the basic message of the gospel does not change, nor do God's eternal commandments. But the *manner of communicating* God's unchanging message often changes. The most obvious changes are those brought about by new inventions and technology - things like the printing press, the microphone and amplified sound, radio and television, and now the computer. Other things that can affect and change the manner of communicating God's unchanging message are things like the general spiritual climate and the resultant changes in the culture. The basic content of God's message and God's morals do not change, but we need to walk close to the Lord in order to know how He wants us to communicate His message to this generation in this place at this time of history. He did not give Joshua a "one-plan-fits-all-battles" plan, nor does He give us such a plan. The Jericho plan was only for Jericho. For each battle there was a specific plan which had to be revealed to Joshua. For each battle we face, there is a specific plan which has to be revealed to us.

Even though each spiritual battle has its own specific plan, the revelation and the success of the specific plan hinges on a general, foundational truth which must first be *seen and*

believed before the specific plan will be revealed. This general, foundational truth which must be seen and believed is hinted at in Joshua 6:2. Before Yahweh told Joshua "ye shall compass the city," He first told him, "See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour." This declaration served as an introduction to the Jericho plan, and was the foundation for Joshua's believing that the plan would work. Before Joshua could trust in God's foolish plan to simply compass the city, he first had to see that Jericho, its king, and its mighty men of valour had all been given into his hand.

In the same way, we must see and believe that the Heavenly Father has given our Jericho, its king, and its mighty men of valour into the hand of our Joshua, Yeshua of Nazareth. "All power [authority] is given unto Me in heaven and in earth," our Joshua said. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:18ff).

Each time we face a spiritual battle, the Lord has a specific plan that can bring us victory. Often believers do not get the victory because they cannot see the specific details of God's battle plan clearly enough to put the plan into action. Sometimes they do not see the plan at all, and forfeit the victory to the Enemy. This inability to see God's specific plan for a specific situation is often (perhaps always) due to the inability to see the general foundational truth of Yeshua's authority.

Yahweh told Joshua that He had given him Jericho, its king, and its mighty men of valour. Yeshua has been given all authority in heaven and in earth. Our Joshua has been given authority over the world, its Devil, and its mighty demons of valour. There is no place in the universe where Yeshua will not someday establish the Father's authority through His dis-

ciples. We go forth because He has the authority to command us to go, and because His authority stands behind us. When He said, "Go ye therefore," He said "therefore" because we can only go forth in the revelation and understanding that He has been given all authority in heaven and in earth. Just as Joshua first had to hear God say, "See, I have given into thine hand Jericho," we have to hear Him say, "See, I have given into Yeshua's hand all authority in heaven and in earth."

If we truly see and believe and meditate on the fact that our Joshua has been given all authority in heaven and in earth, then the details of God's specific plans should eventually be revealed to us for each battle, as they were to Joshua. Then, no matter how foolish those plans may seem, we will have the vision and the faith to implement those plans and bring down the walls of our Jericho. To the world we may look like fools, but we will be victorious fools.

Next issue: The Battle of Ai

Joshua Fit de Battle of Jericho



Joshua fit de battle of Jericho,
Jericho, Jericho.

Joshua fit de battle of Jericho,
and de walls came a-tumblin' down,
down, down, down.

You may talk about your man of Gideon,
You may talk about your man of Saul,
But there's none like good ol' Joshua
at de battle of Jericho.

Now de Lord commanded Joshua,
"I command you and obey you must,
Just march up to those city walls,
and those walls will turn to dust."

Right up to the walls of Jericho
He marched with spear in hand.
"Go blow them ram horns," Joshua cried,
"For the battle is in my hand!"





What Methods Should Be Used in the Work of the Ministry?

Chuck Finney's Comments on Measures to Promote Revivals

Editor's note: In many Christian circles today, the term *religion* is used to refer to something that merely makes a person outwardly "religious" rather than bringing him into a living relationship with the Lord. In Finney's day, the word *religion* did not carry this negative connotation. On page 433 of *Revival Lectures*, Finney defines what he means by religion. "What is religion? Obedience to God." Keep Finney's definition in mind when you notice him use the word *religion*. -DB

In his classic book *Revival Lectures*, Charles G. Finney devoted one entire chapter to "Measures to Promote Revivals." Finney believed very strongly in the unchanging Word of God, but he believed that the methods (or "measures") used to proclaim the Word of God must change from time to time in order to be effective and fruitful:

"Without new measures it is impossible that the Church should succeed in gaining the attention of the world to religion. There are so many

exciting subjects constantly brought before the public mind, such a running to and fro, so many that cry 'Lo here!' and 'Lo there!' that the Church cannot maintain her ground without sufficient novelty in measures, to get the public ear. The measures of politicians, of infidels and heretics, the scrambling after wealth, the increase of luxury, and the ten thousand exciting and counteracting influences that bear upon the Church and upon the world, will gain men's attention, and turn them away from the sanctuary and from the altars of the Lord, unless we increase in wisdom and piety, and wisely adopt such new measures as are calculated to get the attention of men to the Gospel of Christ."

In Finney's day, as now, many Christians got quite upset whenever new methods of evangelism were employed, or different forms of worship were introduced. But Finney points out that the Bible does not prescribe exactly what measures should be used to spread the faith.

"We are left in the dark as to the measures pursued by the apostles and primitive preachers, except so far as we can gather from occasional hints in the Book of Acts. We do not know how many times they sang, how many times they prayed in public worship, nor even whether they sang or prayed at all in their ordinary meetings for preaching ... Their commission was: 'Go and preach the Gospel, and disciple all nations.' It did not prescribe any forms ... Do it - the best way you can; ask wisdom from God; use the faculties He has given you; seek the direction of the Holy Ghost; go forward and do it. This was their commission. And their object was to make known the Gospel in the *most effectual way*, to make the truth stand out strikingly, so as to obtain the attention and secure the obedience of the greatest number possible."

The Lord said to preach and teach and make disciples. But since He did not prescribe any detailed methods or forms or styles of preaching and teaching, "it was left to the discretion of the Church to determine, from time to time, what *measures* should be

adopted, and what *forms* pursued," Finney said.

As for Christians' opposition to new measures, Finney said that these Christians do not realize that "every step of the Church's advance from the gross darkness of Popery has been through the introduction of one new measure after another." The present forms of worship and methods of evangelism came about gradually, Finney points out. "Our present forms of public worship, and everything so far as *measures* are concerned, have been arrived at *by degrees*, and by a *succession of new measures*."

Finney gives several examples of things which had changed in the Church during his own lifetime, and tells about Christians' fierce opposition to these changes. It is rather amusing (yet somewhat sad, too) to see how Christians of the past were so addicted to their own particular forms and methods that they bitterly opposed any innovative efforts to make the work of the ministry more effectual.

One change that Finney discusses is the custom of ministers dressing in a particular way. Ministers were expected to wear a cocked hat, bands, "small clothes" (knee-length pants), and a wig. "No matter how much hair a man had on his head, he must cut it off and wear a wig," Finney wrote. "And he must wear a gown. All these

things were customary, and every clergyman was held bound to wear them, and it was not considered proper for him to officiate without them."

Regarding the wearing of "small clothes" (knee-length pants) rather than "pantaloon" (full-length pants), Finney relates a story: "I have been told that some years ago in New England, a certain elderly clergyman was so opposed to the 'new measure' of a minister's wearing pantaloons that he would on no account allow them in his pulpit. A young man who was going to preach for him had no small clothes, and the old minister would not let him officiate in pantaloons, but said, 'My people would think I had brought a fop into the pulpit if they saw a man there with pantaloons on, and it would produce an excitement among them.' And so, finally, the young man was obliged to borrow a pair of the old gentleman's clothes, and they were too short for him, and he made a ridiculous figure enough. But anything was better than such a terrible innovation as preaching in pantaloons!"

By Finney's time many churches had altered some of these sorts of expectations. "And in regard to each of these alterations the Church complained as much as if it had been a Divine institution given up," Finney wrote. "It was denounced as an *innovation*. When ministers began to lay aside their cocked hats, and wear headgear like other men's, it grieved the elderly people very much; it looked so 'undignified,' they said, for a minister to wear a round hat."

"Now, how came people to suppose a minister must have a gown or a wig, in order to preach with effect?" Finney asks. "Why was it that every clergyman was held obliged to use these things?"

Changes in church music also upset many Christians in Finney's day. At first, only Psalms from the Bible were sung in churches. When some of the Psalms were paraphrased so that the words would rhyme, "the people displayed violent opposition," Finney said. When brand new hymns were written, this too was violently

opposed. Eventually they were accepted, though.

The acceptance of extra-Biblical hymns did not end contention over hymn-singing, though. Before the easy availability of multiple copies of hymn books, the church deacon would stand up front and "line" the hymns. He would solemnly read one or two lines of the hymn, and then the congregation would sing the hymn. "By and by, they began to introduce books, and let everyone sing from his own book," Finney writes. "And what an innovation! Alas, what confusion and disorder it made! How could the good people worship God in singing without having the deacon to 'line' the hymn in a 'holy' tone?"

Another controversial musical innovation was the use of pitchpipes to help the songleader start on key. Finney writes: "Formerly, when the lines were given out by the deacon or clerk, he would strike off into the tune, and the rest would follow as well as they could. But when the leaders of choirs began to use pitchpipes for the purpose of pitching all their voices on precisely the same key, what vast confusion it made! I heard a clergyman say that an elder in the town where he used to live would get up and leave the service whenever he heard the choir leader blow his pipe. 'Away with your whistle,' said he. 'What, whistle in the house of God?!' He thought it a profanation."

Certain musical instruments were also considered profane by some:

"When the bass viol was first introduced, it made a great commotion. People insisted they might just as well have a *fiddle* in the house of God. 'Why, it is a fiddle, it is made just like a fiddle, only a little larger; and who can worship where there is a fiddle? By and by you will want to dance in the meeting-house.'"

The organ was also considered profane: "In a synod in the Presbyterian Church, it was seriously talked of by some, as a matter worthy of discipline in a certain church, that 'they had an organ in the house of God.' This was only a few years ago. And there are many churches now that would not tolerate an organ. They would not be half so much excited on being reminded that sinners are going to hell, as on hearing that 'there is going to be an organ in the meeting-house.'"

Some other innovations that were opposed were: preachers preaching without notes (instead of reading verbatim a pre-written sermon), kneeling in prayer ("a man or woman would be ashamed to be seen kneeling at a prayer-meeting, for fear of being taken for a Methodist"), public prayers offered by laymen ("it infringed upon the rights of the clergy"), and women's prayer meetings ("Set women to pray? Why, the next thing, I suppose, will be to set them to preach!").

Finney believed in innovation, but he also urged caution: "I have already said that novelties should be introduced no faster than they are really called for; they should be introduced with the greatest wisdom, and caution, and prayerfulness, and in a manner calculated to excite as little opposition as possible. But new measures we must have. And may God prevent the Church from settling down in any set of forms, or getting the present or any other edition of her measures *stereotyped*."

In doing the work of the Lord, we can take a lesson from Finney's wisdom. We can be cautiously innovative by thinking outside the box, but not transgressing the boundaries of the Bible. □

LESSONS FROM THE EXODUS

Three Things That Make Life Difficult

Daniel Botkin

As we enter the Passover season, we remember the Exodus. The Hebrews had been in Egypt 400 years when Moses approached the burning bush and received God's call to bring the people out of Egypt. When Moses asked what name he should use to refer to God, God answered, "I AM THAT I AM... Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you" (Ex. 3:14).

It's good to know that God is the great I AM, and not the great I USED TO BE. He is "a very present help in trouble" (Ps. 46:1). We need to know Him as the God who is presently active in our lives, and not just as the God who used to do stuff in past centuries and will someday do stuff again in the future. He is the God of the present as well as of the past and future. This knowledge that God is the ever-present I AM is comforting. But this knowledge can make life difficult when God's timing makes the great I AM seem more like the great I MIGHT BE.

DIFFICULTY #1:

WAITING FOR GOD'S TIMING

Sometimes we find ourselves stuck in a difficult situation. We need the Lord to get us out of it. We need an Exodus, a way out. We pray, but the Lord does not move soon enough to meet our expectations. We wonder why God doesn't do something to get us out of the mess we are in. We pray and trust and wait and hope, but it seems like the Lord is in no hurry to move on our behalf.

Why does the Lord so often wait so long to deliver us from our suffering and misery? That's a very good question, and one for which I have no answer. The reason for God's timing is God's secret. I sometimes wonder why He waited about 400 years before He sent Moses to save the Hebrews from Egypt. I also wonder why He waited about 4,000 years before He sent His Son to save us from our sins.

I have no answer to these "Why?" questions. I only know that the reasons for the delay have something to do with God's timing. Galatians 4:4 says that "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son." The Apostle Paul gives no information to help us understand how God determined when the fulness of time had arrived; he simply states that God's Son came when the fulness of the time was come.

Waiting for God to bring about an Exodus from suffering can be very difficult, whether the suffering is physical, mental, or emotional. It can be very difficult to trust God and wait, but who else or what else can be trusted? We have to continue to trust not only in Him, but also in His timing. Moses had a vision of himself as Israel's deliverer. The vision was of God, but it came to pass forty years later than Moses expected it to. (See Acts 7:25.) We may have a genuine vision from God, but we have to wait until God's appointed time for the vision to be fulfilled.

The Prophet Habakkuk speaks

about God's appointed time for the fulfillment of a vision: "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Hab. 2:3).

DIFFICULTY #2:

ENDURING GOD'S TESTING

Another difficulty in life is getting our hopes up that things are finally going to improve, only to experience the bitter disappointment of seeing the situation go from bad to worse. The Lord builds up our hopes, and we expect things to get better. But instead of getting better, they actually get worse. It seems like the Lord lifts us up with hope, only to let us be thrown down with disappointment.

This does not seem fair, but it is exactly what the Hebrews experienced in Egypt. Moses returned to Egypt with the wonderful news that the Lord was finally going to rescue them from their slavery. Moses and Aaron performed the miraculous signs for the people so that they would know that the Lord had truly spoken to Moses and authorized him to lead the people out of Egypt. The people believed and rejoiced. But when Moses and Aaron told Pharaoh that Yahweh said to let the Hebrews go, Pharaoh refused to cooperate. He just said, "Who is Yahweh, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not Yahweh, neither will I let Israel go."

Then to make matters worse, Pharaoh decided that the Hebrew slaves would no longer be provided with the straw they needed for their brick-making. They would now have to go out and collect their own straw, but they were still expected to meet the same daily quota of bricks as before. When they failed to meet the quota, they were beaten by the cruel taskmasters.

It is very disappointing when the Lord gives us hope, and then things get worse instead of better. When this

happens, we need to remind ourselves that this may just be the Devil's one last desperate attempt to hold onto the ground which he is about to lose.

This "one last desperate attempt" principle is stated in Revelation 12:12: "the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." This principle can also be seen in the accounts of Yeshua casting out demons. The demons would sometimes cause their victims to excessively thrash about and foam at the mouth. Yeshua's presence initially seemed to make the situation worse instead of better. But the reason for the demons' rage was because they knew that their time was short.

When Satan knows he is about to suffer a defeat, he turns up the heat. So if the Lord has given you hope of deliverance, and the Devil is turning up the heat, this might be a sign that your deliverance is nearer than you think. Moses prayed to the Lord about Pharaoh's actions, and the Lord said to Moses, "Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh" (Ex. 6:1). If we continue to pray and trust and wait, we will eventually see what God will do to Satan.

DIFFICULTY #3:

TRUSTING IN GOD'S TOOLS

Another difficulty is learning to trust in God's tools rather than in the world's toys. As a prince of Egypt, Moses had worldly power, worldly wealth, and worldly wisdom. He was "learned in all the ways of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds" (Acts 7:22). Moses may have been an eloquent speaker when he was "full forty years old" in Egypt, but sometime between then and the time of his encounter with the burning bush, the Lord apparently took away Moses' natural eloquence. At the burning bush Moses said, "I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since Thou hast spoken unto Thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (Ex. 4:10).

God stripped Moses of his natural eloquence and of all his worldly power and wealth. These were not the tools

Moses would use to deliver the Hebrews. The Lord was going to choose something else, something that would seem foolish compared to the worldly glory and power of Egypt.

"What is that in thine hand?" the Lord asked Moses.

"A rod," Moses replied.

A shepherd's staff, a stick of dead wood. That would be the tool Moses would use. Later, in Exodus 4:20, this same rod is called "the rod of God." The rod of Moses was transformed into the rod of God. But before this could happen, Moses had to cast it down to the ground. When it hit the ground, it became a serpent. Moses naturally fled from it. The Lord told Moses to take it by the tail. Moses feared the snake, but he feared God even more, so he did as he was told. And behold, the serpent became a rod again.

A rod represents whatever it is that you lean on, whatever you hold onto for security. What do you lean on? What do you hold onto for security? In the case of Moses, the rod represented his profession. Some career people trust more in their jobs than they do in the Lord. Some rich folks depend on their big bank accounts for their security. Some survivalists trust in their survivalist skills and their stockpiles of food, guns, and ammunition. Naturally-gifted people sometimes lean on their natural abilities to solve problems. Some insecure people find their security by being control freaks. If you are leaning on anything other than the Lord, you need to cast that rod down. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding" (Prov. 3:5).

What is the significance of Moses' rod becoming a serpent? Perhaps this is to teach us that anything we knowingly withhold from the Lord has within it the nature of the Serpent. If we knowingly refuse to surrender something to the Lord, our refusal provides the Serpent a place to set up headquarters in our life. If the Lord tells us to surrender something and we refuse to do so, we are in effect setting out the welcome mat for the Serpent.

Moses fled in horror when he saw the serpent that had been "hidden" in his rod. We too want to flee in horror when the sinful nature of our heart is exposed, when "the works of the flesh are manifest" (Gal. 5:19) by sinful words that come out of our mouths or by sinful deeds that are done by our hands. We want to run away from the situation rather than face up to it and turn it over to the Lord and let Him deal with it.

The moral problem of fallen man's sinful heart is also pictured in Moses' encounter at the burning bush. After Moses' rod was de-snaked, the Lord told Moses, "Put now thine hand into thy bosom." Moses did so, and when he took his hand out, it was leprous.

"Put thine hand into thy bosom again," God said. Moses did it again, and his hand came out with the leprosy gone.

This is a beautiful picture of God taking away the old sinful heart, which defiles even the hand that touches it, and giving a man a new heart. First God de-snaked Moses' rod, then He de-snaked Moses' heart.

"Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me" (Ps. 23:4). If you are leaning on any rod other than the Lord's, if there is anything you are knowingly withholding from the Lord, if there is any area of your life that you knowingly refuse to surrender to the Lord's will, cast down that rod. Surrender it to the Lord. Let Him de-snake it and give you a new heart. □

HEZEKIAH'S PASSOVER REVIVAL

Daniel Botkin

King Hezekiah was one of the few righteous kings who "did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done" (2 Chron. 29:2). In the first year of his reign, he reopened the doors of the Temple and instructed the Levites to sanctify themselves and the Temple, and to "carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place" (2 Chron. 29:5). King Hezekiah told them that the nation's woes were the result of sin, and he called for a return to the Lord. "And the priests went into the inner part of the house of the Lord, to cleanse it, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the Lord into the court of the house of the Lord. And the Levites took it, to carry it out abroad into the brook Kidron" (2 Chron. 29:16).

This episode provides a miniature picture of the beginnings of personal revival in the life of an individual. If your faith and zeal and joy have waned, and you feel a need for spiritual renewal, perhaps you need to do what these priests and Levites did. First, sanctify yourself. Set yourself apart from the world's corrupting influences, and dedicate yourself anew to the Lord. Carry forth any filthiness that exists in the holy place. Cleanse your mind of any filthy thoughts. Go deep into the inner part of the temple of the Holy Spirit and bring out any uncleanness that is there. Ask the Lord to search your heart and show you any sin you may have. Then get rid of it by confession and repentance.

This sort of spiritual exercise is appropriate at any time of the year, but it is especially relevant at Passover time, when we are commanded to get the leaven out of our houses - and, by extension, to purge our hearts of "the leaven of malice and wickedness" (1 Cor. 5:6-8). This is a prerequisite to celebrating Passover.

King Hezekiah called for a Passover celebration that first year of his reign. He invited not only his fellow Jews, he sent invitations to the ten northern tribes of Israel as well. He urged all the tribes of Israel to come, telling them that God would bless them. "So the posts passed from city to city through the country of

Ephraim and Manasseh even unto Zebulun: but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them" (2 Chron. 30:10).

Those of us who are returning to the celebration of the Lord's appointed times can relate to the above verse. As we go to our Christian brethren and urge them to return to the Lord's appointed times - the Sabbath, Passover, and all the other appointed times of celebration - they sometimes laugh us to scorn, and mock us.

"Nevertheless, divers [some] of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem," the next verse continues. We see this happen, too. A diverse assortment of Baptists and Methodists and Pentecostals and Catholics do humble themselves, and come to the Lord's appointed times. They start honoring those elements of the Torah which most Christians ignore. And as they do this, they gradually abandon those elements of church tradition which are contrary to Scripture.

Returning to God's ways is a gradual process. It takes time to learn, and mistakes are often made during the learning process. Thankfully, our Heavenly Father is patient and merciful and understanding. Even in King Hezekiah's Passover Revival, some mistakes were made in the details. Because of some matters of ritual purity, some of the celebrants at Jerusalem were technically disqualified from participating, "yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it was written" (2 Chron. 30:18). According to the strict letter of the law, these celebrants were disqualified from eating the passover. But because they were in transition, still learning, and had only recently started returning to the ways of the Lord, an exception was made. They ate the passover, even though this was technically forbidden. "But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, 'The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary'" (2 Chron. 30:18). The Lord hearkened to Hezekiah's prayer, and blessed the

people with "great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem" (vs. 26).

When I see Christians taking steps in the right direction, I rejoice even if they are doing it "otherwise than it is written." I have heard some Messianic disciples criticize and mock Christians for having a "mere Passover demonstration" at their church instead of a "real Passover." A real Passover - a real seder, on the real date, and without any leavened food - is certainly preferable. But a Passover demonstration in a church is better than nothing. (It's certainly better than Easter bunnies and colored eggs!) For many Christians, a Passover demonstration is a start. It can stir up a desire for the real thing. Rather than criticize Christians for their faltering steps, we should rejoice that they are stumbling along in the right direction - as most of us did and still do, by the way. And we should pray for them, as King Hezekiah prayed, "The good Lord pardon every one."

If people are faithfully walking in the light they have, God will give them more light. I know a brother in Australia who has an unusual testimony. He was born and raised as a Sikh in Malaysia. (Sikhism is a monotheistic religion that grew out of Hinduism under the influence of Islam.) He first heard the gospel of Jesus Christ from Roman Catholics. He believed in Jesus and was baptized into the Roman Catholic Church. Sometime later he met some Jehovah's Witnesses. They used the Scriptures to show him the errors of Roman Catholicism, so he left the Catholic Church and was baptized as a Jehovah's Witness. Soon after that, he met some Pentecostals, and they showed him the errors in Jehovah's Witness doctrine. He left the Jehovah's Witnesses and was baptized by the Pentecostals. Next he encountered some Seventh Day Adventists, who showed him the truth about the Sabbath. He left the Sunday-keeping Pentecostal church, and was baptized in the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Finally, he met some Messianic believers who showed him some of the errors that exist in Seventh Day Adventist teachings. So he

left the Seventh Day Adventist Church and is now a Pentecostal, Sabbath-keeping, Messianic witness for Jehovah.

The steps of our personal pilgrimage are often gradual and very slow. However, this does not mean that God always does everything slowly and gradually. Sometimes revival breaks out quickly and suddenly. This was the case in King Hezekiah's Passover Revival. The Bible says that "Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for the thing was done suddenly" (2 Chron. 29:36). "God had prepared the people," but the revival itself broke out "suddenly." The unseen preparatory work in people's hearts can be slow and gradual, but once that work is done, revival can break out suddenly.

Revival often comes suddenly, but it does not come without a cause. For every effect there is a cause. When revival breaks out, you can be sure that some individual or group, somewhere, unseen and unknown, has been laying the foundation for the revival by intense prayer.

God is sovereign. He can do whatever He wants, whenever and however He wants. But at some point He apparently decided that he will move primarily (perhaps solely) in response to the prayers and faith of His people. Leonard Ravenhill once said that the only reason we don't have revival is because we are content to live without it.

King Hezekiah's Passover Revival happened suddenly, but it was in response to Hezekiah's devotion and the people's positive response to his call to repentance. The Bible does not mention any specific individuals who had been praying for revival prior to Hezekiah's reforms, but the Lord has always had a righteous remnant who refused to bow the knee to Baal, and who sighed and cried over the abominations in the land. So we can be fairly certain that there were people whose prayers prepared the way for Hezekiah's revival.

There was a revival called The Great Awakening in 18th-century America. Preacher Jonathan Edwards described the spiritual climate right before The Great Awakening as "a time of extraordinary dullness in religion." Edwards noted that it was a time when "licentiousness [sexual immorality] prevailed among the youth." Another historian wrote that "the state of society and morals was becom-

ing more and more corrupt. For a time it appeared as if God had forsaken New England."

Jonathan Edwards had inherited his grandfather's congregation, a church so spiritually dead that Edwards referred to it as "Dry Bones." Sunday after Sunday Edwards would read his pre-written sermons in a monotone, hunched over the pulpit with his face up against his paper due to his poor eyesight, with no apparent effect on the people.

Then one Sunday, July 8, 1741, it happened. Edwards went to the pulpit and announced that his sermon text would be Deuteronomy 32:35. "To Me belongeth vengeance and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste." Then Edwards read his now-famous sermon *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*. Edwards told the people that if they were not right with God, they were like a spider dangling over the fires of hell. The only thing preventing them from immediately falling into everlasting fire was the mercy and good pleasure of God. God has innumerable ways of taking people out of this world, Edwards said, so the possibility of falling into hell at any moment is an ever-present threat for the unconverted.

"The unconverted are now walking over the pit of hell on a rotten covering," he warned, "and there are innumerable places in this covering so weak that it will not bear their weight, and those places are not seen."

The terror of the Lord fell upon the congregation so much so that Edwards had to appeal for calm and quiet so he could finish his sermon. He concluded by saying, "Let everyone that is out of Christ now awake and fly from the wrath to come. The wrath of Almighty God is now undoubtedly hanging over a great part of this congregation. Let every one flee out of Sodom."

People shook and trembled uncontrollably and cried out in fear, begging God for mercy. Strong men felt like they were literally sliding into hell ("their foot shall slide in due time"). People clutched the pews and posts in abject terror. Their cries were heard all over the village. By the end of that day, 500 people had been soundly converted.

The revival swiftly spread, awakening the nation as one man. The fear of God

fell in other New England towns. Preacher Jonathan Parsons reported the effects in Lyme, Connecticut: "Many had their countenances changed; their thoughts seemed to trouble them, so that their loins were loosed and their knees smote one against the other. Great numbers cried aloud in the anguish of their souls." Benjamin Franklin said of that time that "it seemed as if all the world was growing religious; one could not walk through a town in an evening without hearing psalms sung in different families in every street."

Not every individual in the nation was converted, but the entire nation was awakened to an awareness of God and sin, and of man's responsibility for the choices he makes.

The Great Awakening, like King Hezekiah's Passover Revival, happened suddenly. It did not happen without a cause, though. Jonathan Edwards should certainly be honored for having the boldness to preach *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* that Sunday. But there were some others who also deserve honor for the part they played in bringing about The Great Awakening. Who were they? We do not know their names, but one historian briefly mentions them in an "oh, by the way" comment: "A group of women had spent the previous night praying for revival."

Who were these unknown, unnamed women? What manner of prayers must have poured forth from their hearts on that fateful night! You can be sure that theirs were not timid, half-hearted prayers, nor prayers soaked with skepticism. And I doubt that they were just lazily reading formal high-church prayers from a Book of Common Prayer. They prayed from hearts which were full of faith and ablaze with fiery passion.

The names of these women may have faded from history, but their names will never fade in heaven. For all eternity their names will shine forth like the stars. They will be known as the ones who travailed in prayer and birthed The Great Awakening. Perhaps if we learn to pray as these women did, we will one day see the Lord suddenly bring another Great Awakening to our nation. □

SOURCES: Robert J. Morgan, *On This Day* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997). Winkie Pratney, *Revival* (Lindale, TX: Whitaker House, 1984).

BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD

Daniel Botkin

The Messiah is referred to as a lamb several times in the New Testament Scriptures. Two times John the Baptist says of Yeshua, "Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:29 & 36). Paul writes that "Christ our passover lamb has been sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7). Peter compares Yeshua to "a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:19). But the New Testament book that speaks of Yeshua as the Lamb of God the most is Revelation. In Revelation the Lamb of God is mentioned 29 times.

Curiously, the first time that Revelation refers to Yeshua as the Lamb of God, it is in connection with His identity as the Lion of Judah. In Revelation 5:4 John weeps because no one could be found who was worthy to open the seven-sealed book that was in the hand of the One who sat on the throne. Then one of the elders said to John, "Weep not, for the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof" (Rev. 5:5). John looks to see the Lion of Judah, and behold, he sees "a Lamb as it had been slain" (Rev. 5:6).

This picture of two contrasting (though not contradictory) aspects of the Messiah's identity - as the Lion of Judah, the Root of David on the one hand, and as a slain Lamb on the other hand - is in line with rabbinical Judaism's teaching of two Messiahs, namely, Messiah Son of Joseph who will first come to suffer and die, and Messiah Son of David who will come and establish the Messianic Kingdom. (See "The Two Messiahs in Judaism," GOE 9:6).

When Jews today speak about the Messiah, they normally have in mind Messiah Son of David, the Messiah who will come as the Lion of Judah according to the prophecy in Genesis 49:8-12. The rabbis do not often speak openly about the suffering Messiah, Messiah Son of Joseph, but

they know what their writings say about him. The concept of the Messiah as the Lion of Judah is the better-known of these two Messianic concepts. However, the picture of the Messiah as the slain Lamb of God goes all the way back to Genesis. When by faith Abel offered "the firstlings of his flock" (Gen. 4:4), he was making a prophetic proclamation of the future death of the Messiah as the Lamb of God (even though it is highly unlikely that Abel understood the Messianic implications of his act of faith).

Even before Abel's offering, there was an animal sacrifice which can also be seen as a prophetic foreshadow of the Messiah's death as the Lamb of God. This animal sacrifice was made right after Adam and Eve sinned. The Bible gives no details about this sacrifice, and does not even actually state that the sacrifice was made. However, it can be inferred that a sacrifice was made. Genesis 3:21 says: "Unto Adam also and to his wife did Yahweh God make coats of skins, and clothed them." In order to make coats of skins, animals have to be slain. We are not told whether the slaying was done by God, or by Adam and Eve, or by some other being. We are not told what kind of animals were slain to obtain the skins. But because the need for these coverings was a direct result of Adam and Eve's sin,

my guess would be that the skins were obtained from lambs. Regardless of what species of animal was sacrificed that day, it was the first animal sacrifice in a long line of bloody sacrifices that would be offered over the next four millennia, pointing to and culminating in the one perfect sacrifice of Yeshua as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

John turned to look at the Lion of Judah, and he saw the Lamb of God. Before the Messiah could fulfill His role as the fierce, avenging Lion of Judah (which He will yet do - 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9), He had to first fulfill His role as the innocent, unresisting Lamb of God. The fact that He is called the Lamb of God 29 times in Revelation reminds us that the reason He has the right to rule and reign as the Lion of Judah at His Second Coming is because He yielded His life as the Lamb of God at His First Coming.

Even though Yeshua came the first time as the Lamb of God, He had the heart of a Lion. It takes a fearless lion's heart to surrender like a lamb to the will of God. Lions fear no one. Proverbs 30:30 speaks of "a lion which is strongest among beasts, and turneth not away from any." Even when Yeshua was here as the Lamb of God, He was like a fearless lion. The twelve disciples had seen Him challenge and overcome religious hypocrites, sickness, demons, and even death. That's why the disciples could not understand why He was letting Himself be led away like a lamb to the slaughter. Even though the Lord had spoken to them several times about His upcoming death, they still did not want to accept it.

We can be thankful that we live on this side of the Cross. We can appreciate the Messiah's role as the Lamb of God while we await His Return as the Lion of Judah. May He come speedily in our day. *Maran-atha!*

מָרָאן-אַתָּה



"Limbo" Now Declared To Be Non-Existent By the Roman Catholic Church

After centuries of teaching that the souls of unbaptized dead babies go to a place called Limbo, the Roman Catholic Church has decided that Limbo does not exist anymore - or perhaps never did. (*New York Times*, Dec. 28, 2005)

The doctrine of Limbo originated in the Middle Ages to answer the question of what happens to the souls of babies and ancestors who died before they had the opportunity to be baptized. The Roman Catholic view of baptism as a sacrament required to enter heaven led to the inescapable conclusion that there was no place in heaven for babies or ancestors who died in an unbaptized state. Yet it did not seem fair to think that God would send these unfortunate souls to hell, either. So Catholic theologians invented a shadowy, in-between place for these souls and called it Limbo, from the Latin word *limbus* ("border"). There was *limbo infantum* ("the border of [hell for] infants") and *limbo patrum* ("the border of [hell for] ancestors"). But now the church that invented Limbo has declared it to be non-existent.

A Jewish writer raises an interesting question: "If Limbo once existed and is now being phased out by a kind of theological slum clearance, what will happen to the millions, perhaps billions, of souls in it? And if it was simply a figment of the Catholic imagination to begin with, can we expect one day to be told by the Vatican that so were heaven and hell?" (Philologos, "Is 'Limbo' On Its Way Out?" *The Forward*, 1/6/06, p. 13.)

As this Jewish writer points out, though, Jews are in no position to make fun of Catholics, because Judaism has its own version of Limbo. Many Messianic believers are familiar with the Hebrew terms *olam ha-zeh* and *olam ha-ba*, which mean "this present world" and "the world to come" respectively. A lesser-known *olam* in Jewish teaching is *olam ha-tohu*, "the world of chaos." In Kabbalistic circles this term was understood to refer to a sort of Twilight Zone existence for souls who were neither good enough for heaven nor wicked enough for hell.

The above-quoted Jewish writer suggests that if all those unbaptized souls in Limbo have to leave and go someplace else, perhaps they can relocate to the Jewish *olam ha-tohu*. Whether or not these souls should first be required to convert to Judaism is not stated. □



A Queer Story About The Oscars

I do not have a TV, so I never watch the Oscars. Even if I had a TV, I would not be interested in it. This year, however, I heard something interesting on the radio the day after the Oscars. The host of a conservative radio program told a story about the 1970 Oscars that shows how much Hollywood has changed over the past 36 years.

As most readers probably know, there was a controversial cowboy movie nominated for an Oscar this year. In 1970 there were two cowboy movies nominated, only one of them controversial: the non-controversial *True Grit*, starring John Wayne, and the X-rated *Midnight Cowboy*, which starred Dustin Hoffman and Jon Voight.

When a reporter asked John Wayne what he thought of the movie *Midnight Cowboy*, John Wayne replied in his deep, manly voice, that it was "perverted," and called it "a story about two fags."

The radio host telling this story said, "Could you imagine a Hollywood actor saying that to a reporter today?"

As a result of Wayne's remark, a protester at the Oscar ceremony displayed a sign saying "John Wayne is a racist." (Until I heard this on the radio, I didn't realize that there is a race known as fags.) In spite of Wayne's remark, he received the loudest and longest applause of the night when he accepted his award for Best Actor.

Midnight Cowboy won the award for Best Picture of the year. It was the first and only X-rated film to ever receive an Oscar. The reason for this is probably due to the fact that "perverted films about fags" are now rated R instead of X. Even this year's controversial cowboy movie is only rated R, despite the fact that it contains "a graphic gay sex scene," according to *Christianity Today* (12/16/05).

No other X-rated films since *Midnight Cowboy* have won Oscars simply because nothing with that degree of perversity gets rated X anymore. If you doubt this, consider what *The Motion Picture Guide* says: "Midnight Cowboy was the only 'X'-rated picture to ever win the Oscar as Best Picture of the year. They lowered the rating to an 'R' later and, by today's standards, it's almost a 'PG-13'" [*The Motion Picture Guide* (Chicago: Cinebooks, Inc., 1986), Vol. V]. What does this say about "today's standards"? It says that what was considered X-rated pornography in 1969 is now considered PG-13, acceptable for anyone over 12 years old. □

Q & A

Q: I would be quite interested in your understanding of Galatians 3:23-25. "But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."

A: As Peter says, some things Paul writes are "hard to be understood" (2 Pet. 3:16), and this is especially so in Paul's letter to the Galatians. As do all of Paul's letters, Galatians presupposes a knowledge of Paul's oral teachings in that place prior to his letter, and a knowledge of what was happening in Galatia. The readers in Galatia knew exactly what was going on; we can only make educated guesses based on what can be inferred from the text. We are reading someone else's mail as it were, without the benefit of knowing everything that transpired before the letter was sent. Because we are so far removed from the historical, linguistic, and cultural context, it requires some historical, linguistic, and cultural knowledge to correctly understand the situation that Paul was addressing.

To properly explain Galatians would require a book. Obviously I cannot write a book in this limited space. However, I can address the subject of the "schoolmaster," which is usually the main focus of this passage.

The schoolmaster (*paidagogos*) is defined in lexicons as a "trainer, guide,

custodian, attendant [slave], child-conductor." C.I. Scofield quotes H.A.W. Meyer's definition of the *paidagogos*: "Among the Greeks and Romans, persons, for the most part slaves, who had it in charge to educate and give constant attendance upon boys till they came of age." (A modern version of the pedagogue would be someone like a child's personal tutor or governess or nanny.)

After the boy reached adulthood, he was no longer under the authority of the schoolmaster. Since Paul says that "the law was our schoolmaster" and "we are no longer under a schoolmaster," many Christians conclude that this means we can now ignore all the Old Testament laws. However, this cannot be what Paul means, because in other places he speaks highly of God's law and urges believers to obey it, and scolds them for disobeying it. So what did Paul have in mind when he compared the law to a schoolmaster?

Consider what happens when a governess or nanny is assigned to a child. The nanny teaches the child the basics about hygiene, safety, and manners. The nanny makes sure that the child bathes and brushes his teeth properly, looks both ways before he crosses the street, and says "please" and "thank you." The child is gradually trained to do these things. Eventually the child matures and becomes an adult, and is no longer under the nanny's authority.

Now that he is out from under the nanny's authority, what does the young adult do in regards to hygiene, safety, and manners? Well, if he had the same kind of attitude toward the nanny as

some Christians have toward the Torah, he would disregard everything the nanny taught him. He would quit taking baths and brushing his teeth. He would ignore all the safety rules he had been taught. He would no longer practice courtesy and good manners. But of course a normal young adult does not disregard the things the nanny taught him; he continues to do these things. His outward behavior continues as before. The only difference is that now, as an adult, he does these things naturally, because he wants to. If he does not, something is wrong with him. People will wonder why he doesn't remember the basics which his nanny taught him.

After we are "justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24) and "receive the adoption of sons" (4:5), we are "no more a servant, but a son" (4:7). "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (4:6).

To be "under the law" is to have the law outside you, hanging over your head and breathing down your neck like a schoolmaster. To be a son of the New Covenant is to have your Father's Torah internalized, written on the fleshly tablets of your heart (2 Cor. 3:3). The commandments do not change. We change. We remember the instructions of our schoolmaster, and we appreciate them. We walk in obedience to the commandments of the Torah as mature sons, because it is now our nature to do so. Even C.I. Scofield, who was quite antinomian, wrote this: "The adult 'son' does voluntarily that which formerly he did in fear of the pedagogue." That sums it up quite well. -DB

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

CROSSING OVER, PART 8: AI

Daniel Botkin

Joshua chapter 6 records the Israelites' Battle of Jericho, and chapter 7 tells about the Battle of Ai. The Battle of Jericho was a total victory. Yahweh flattened the walls and the Israelites slew everyone except for Rahab and her family. But at the Battle of Ai, the Israelites were smitten and chased by the army of Ai, and about thirty-six Israelite soldiers were killed - even though Ai was a much smaller city than Jericho.

What made the difference, and what spiritual lessons does this story hold for us? First let's consider what made the difference.

Before the Israelites went up against Jericho, they had received specific, detailed instructions telling them how to fight the battle. March around the city and return to camp, God told Joshua. Do this six days in a row. Then on the seventh day, march around the city seven times, then shout and blow the shofars, and the walls will fall down flat.

The Israelites followed God's instructions at Jericho, and the plan worked. But when they went up against Ai, they had no instructions from the Lord, no battle plan telling them how to conquer that particular city. As far as we can tell from the Scriptures, Joshua did not even pray and ask the Lord what they should do at Ai. The Bible just says that Joshua sent some men to spy out the city. The men returned and suggested to Joshua that he just send two or three thousand soldiers to conquer it, since it was a small city.

So this was the first difference between Jericho and Ai. At Jericho the Lord's instructions were followed. At Ai they had no instructions from the Lord. Instead of asking the Lord for Divine guidance, they decided for themselves how to fight the battle. Furthermore, they based their decision solely on that which they saw with their physical eyes.

It is very easy for us to become

overconfident and presumptuous right after we experience a great Jericho-like victory in our spiritual walk. The Lord shows us how to get through some trial or temptation, and we are thrilled and elated when He gives us the victory. Unfortunately, we soon forget that the reason He gave us the victory was because we did things His way. When we forget this, we begin to put more confidence in our mere human abilities, and less confidence in the wisdom and power of God. As our dependence on the Lord decreases, our dependence on self increases. Instead of saying, like John the Baptist, "He must increase, but I must decrease," (John 3:30), we say, "He must decrease, but I must increase." We don't actually say these words, or even think them, but in effect this is what we are doing. We are decreasing our dependence on Him, and increasing our dependence on self.

Failing to ask the Lord for instructions was only one thing that paved the way for the Israelites' defeat at Ai. The real reason for the Israelites' defeat was the fact that there was sin in the camp. During the Battle of Jericho, the Lord had clearly commanded the people not to take anything as spoils of war. "And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing," Joshua warned, "lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it" (Josh. 6:18). Everything in Jericho was to be burned except for the silver, the gold, the brass, and the iron.

These metals were to be dedicated to

the treasury of Yahweh; everything else in Jericho was devoted to utter destruction.

"But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of Yahweh was kindled against the children of Israel" (Josh. 7:1).

This was the reason Israel was defeated at the next battle. Joshua and the elders fell down before Yahweh and prayed. "Get thee up," God said. "Wherefore liest thou upon thy face? Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled [deceived] also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed thing from among you."

The Lord told Joshua to get up off his face because this was a time to purge, not pray. It was time to purge out the accursed thing that stood in the way of victory. Prayer is necessary and wonderful, but prayer by itself will not guarantee victory if there is sin in the camp. There are times when the Holy Spirit will tell us to quit praying about a problem and command us to take the action which is necessary to solve the problem.

Achan had stolen a Babylonish garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold during the Battle of Jericho, and buried them under the sand in his tent. Achan's secret sin caused Israel's defeat at Ai, and any secret sin in your life will bring failure and defeat into your life.

The bigger lesson of Ai, though, does not concern just the individual believer. The bigger lesson of Ai

concerns the effect of one individual's sin on the entire congregation. Even though only one man sinned, the Lord said, "The children of Israel committed a trespass... Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant..."

Notice that the Lord did not say, "*One of the children of Israel* committed a trespass; *one* Israelite hath sinned, and *he* has transgressed My covenant." This is because the Lord views all of His covenant people as one Body. If one member sins, the entire Body suffers as a result of that one sin. If a judge sends you to jail for stealing, he imprisons your entire body, not just the hand that did the stealing. Sin in the Body of Messiah works the same way.

When the Israelites were smitten at Ai, Joshua wondered why they could not stand before the enemy. Sometimes believers wonder the same thing about God's new covenant people. "Why is the Church so weak? Why are we so often defeated by the Devil? Why are there so few healings, so few miracles, so many unanswered prayers, so many premature deaths? Why do the gates of hell seem to prevail against the Church?"

The reason for the weakness of God's people at Ai is the very same reason for the weakness of God's people today: "There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you" (Josh. 7:13).

What are the accursed things which are hidden in the camp of God's people today? If we look at Achan's sin, we can get some clues. Consider Achan's confession: "When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them" (Josh. 7:21).

All the spoils of Jericho were forbidden, but consider what it was that first caught Achan's eye: a goodly Babylonish garment. Achan did not want to dress and look like a Hebrew, one who had crossed over from the

other side. He wanted to look like a Babylonian.

If you have truly crossed over from the wilderness to the Promised Land, beware of wanting to look and dress like the Babylonians of this world. Whenever the subject of outward appearance comes up, some semi-naked Christians speak up and remind everyone that God is more concerned about the heart than about outward appearance (which is true, of course).

"Outward appearance is not important," they insist.

If that is so, I wonder, then why is it so important for you to look and dress like a Babylonian worldling? Apparently outward appearance is important to you in the same way it was to Achan.

Achan's Babylonish garment also holds a lesson in regards to religious traditions. Babylon was the beginning of organized counterfeit religions and the source of various forms of paganism. Just as we need to beware of clothing our flesh with immodest Babylonian garments, so we need to beware of clothing our faith with pagan Babylonian customs. In Deuteronomy

12:30ff, Jeremiah 10:1-4, and other places, Yahweh says to not pattern your worship after the customs of the heathens. Our faith does not need to be decorated and jazzed up with the tinsel and baubles of Babylon.

The other two items Achan coveted and stole were two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold. There are several passages of Scripture that warn against coveting riches. It is interesting that the shape of the gold was a wedge, because gold can act as a wedge. It wedges its way into a person's mind, moves back and forth, and creates an entrance for the love of money to creep into the heart.

Joshua and the Israelites later returned to Ai and defeated it, but not until after they had first purged the camp of the accursed thing and stoned Achan to death. Sometimes if you are defeated in a spiritual battle, you might be able to later get victory in that area. But if the reason for your defeat is some secret sin, you will not get the victory until you first purge your life of that accursed thing and put the little trouble-making Achan inside you to death. □

DEAD DOVES DON'T FLY

Daniel Botkin

The rabbis tell a story about the dove. One day the dove went to God with a complaint. "These two bulky things that You placed on my back make it difficult for me to get around," the dove said, referring to its wings. "When I try to run away from the animals that chase me, I have to drag these things along with me. They make me awkward and clumsy. Why did You put these things on me?"

God explained to the dove that the two things were wings, and He showed the dove how he could use them to fly.

The rabbis point out that the two Tablets of the Law are like the dove's two wings. Some people view God's Law as nothing more than a heavy burden to be borne, an unnatural appendage that hinders freedom and makes movement through life more difficult. But the truth of the matter, say the rabbis, is that God gave us the two Tablets of the Law to be the two wings that enable us to rise up and soar in the heavens.

This is a very nice story, but I would like to add one important point: Dead doves don't fly. In order to fly, a dove needs more than two wings. It also needs to have the spirit of life.

The present move of God among Messianic believers, a move described in one recent book as "Returning the Torah of God to the Disciples of Jesus," is wonderful. The Torah of God is being returned to the disciples of Jesus, and more and more of the disciples of Jesus are returning to the Torah. This is wonderful, but the disciples of Jesus need to remember that the Torah without the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit is just dead weight. Without the Holy Spirit, the Tablets of the Law will not be two wings that lift you up and cause you to soar in the heavens. Without the Holy Spirit, the Tablets of the Law will just be two dead weights that pull you down and keep you down. This was the point Paul was making in Romans.

Let's consider some things Paul said about the Law in Romans.

When Paul made any negative statements in regards to the Law, he was careful to clarify the fact that it was not the Law itself that he was writing against, but rather sinful man's misunderstanding and misuse of the Law. In the tradition of Yeshua, who clarified His position on the Law with the words "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law," so Paul clarified his position with similar statements in hopes of preventing readers from misinterpreting what he meant. A few examples:

- "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law" (Rom. 3:31).
- "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin [i.e., transgressing the law, 1 Jn. 3:4], that grace may abound? God forbid" (Rom. 6:1f).
- "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid" (Rom. 7:7).
- "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7:12).
- "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under

sin" (Rom. 7:14).

After making all these statements of clarification to affirm the continuing validity and value of God's Law for believers, Paul makes this statement: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:1f).

Notice that there are two pairs of contrasting phrases in the above passage: walking "after the flesh" as opposed to "after the Spirit," and "the law of the Spirit" as opposed to "the law of sin and death." Those who walk after the flesh are following the law of sin and death; those who walk after the Spirit are following the law of the Spirit.

What two "laws" is Paul talking about here? In spite of the fact that Paul makes several clarifying statements to affirm the validity and value of the Law before he writes this, many Christians interpret this passage to mean that Jesus sets us free from the commandments of the Torah. They mistakenly think that "the law of sin and death" is the Old Testament Law of God, and that obeying Old Testament commandments is "walking after the flesh."

To these Christians, "walking after the Spirit" means that we no longer need the commandments of the Torah to guide our steps; we just intuitively follow whatever inward impressions that we think might be from the Holy Spirit. We don't even need the Torah to test our intuitive impulses, they say. To these Christians, following "the law of the Spirit" also means that the Old Testament Law has been replaced by a law called "personal convictions." The only rules we need to follow, they say, are those rules for which we feel a "personal conviction." How many times have you heard Christians say,

"I don't feel convicted to do that," even though "that" is clearly commanded in the Bible?

Paul was certainly contrasting two laws in Romans 8:2. But does the phrase "the law of sin and death" really refer to God's Torah? Not at all. ("God forbid," as Paul would say.) To think this way requires the reader to ignore all the statements that Paul previously made to clarify the validity and value of the Torah for believers. What then is "the law of sin and death"? It is simply the law which says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Or, as Paul words it in Romans 6:23, "The wages of sin is death." It is a law of cause and effect: those who commit sin will die.

The law of sin and death is a law of cause and effect that is built into the universe, like the law of gravity. The law of gravity says that if you release a heavy object from your hand, it will fall to the ground. The force which causes the object to fall is called the law of gravity.

For the sake of illustration (and to get back to the subject of dead doves), let us suppose that the object in your hand is a dead dove. If you release a dead dove, you know with certainty that it will fall to the ground. And if its two wings happen to be the two Tablets of the Law, this will make the dove's fall even more certain.

But let us suppose that in your other hand you are holding a live dove. What happens when you release the live dove? It flies away and rises up into the heavens. Why doesn't it fall to the ground like the dead bird did? Has the law of gravity been abolished? Of course not. (God forbid.) The law of gravity still exists and it still affects the live bird. However, the live bird has a higher law working in its members, a God-given law called the spirit of life, which enables it to overcome the law of gravity.

In the same way, the law of sin and death still exists and still affects us, but we have a higher law working in us, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, and this higher law enables us to overcome the law of sin and death.

Because the Lord sent His Holy Spirit to dwell in us, we do not need to continually cave in to temptation and walk after the flesh. By His grace we can overcome temptation and resist sin by walking in the Spirit.

The Torah by itself cannot impart this overcoming power. Only the Son of God can transform a sinner into a son of God.

The Torah is vital and has its place, but by itself it cannot free us from the law of sin and death. This is the reason Paul's next statement says, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3). This does not mean that the believer does not do the commandments of the Torah and express the righteousness as described in the Law, though. Paul clarifies that in the very next verse: "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:4).

Walking after the Spirit will result in a lifestyle that conforms to the Torah, a life in which the righteousness of the law is fulfilled.

In verse 7 Paul goes on to say that the carnal mind "is not subject to the law of God." We can infer two things from this statement. One, that those who are not subject to the Torah are carnal (for it is the carnal mind that is not subject to the law of God). Two, that the spiritual mind *will* be subject to the law of God. The spiritual man will be subject to the law of God because he is not a dead dove weighed down by the heavy Tablets of the Law. He is a live dove who operates by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. This Spirit of life enables him to rise above the law of sin and death, and he can live a life of joyful obedience to the commandments of God. When the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus empowers a man, then the Tablets of the Law really do function as wings which carry him up into the heavens where he can soar like an eagle.

Yeshua's criticism of the saints in Ephesus was that they had left their

first love. (See Revelation 2:4.) When the Torah of God is returned to the disciples of Jesus, it should cause their love for Jesus to increase, not decrease. It should give the disciple of Jesus greater joy and deeper peace. Yet some disciples of Jesus who return to the Torah seem to lose their first love for Jesus. Their joy and peace is diminished. They turn into cranky people and become critical of others who do not hold to the same standards that they espouse. This is not the fault of the Torah. This happens because these disciples have either forgotten or ignored the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Without this, the Tablets of the Law are just a heavy weight, a burden, an inconvenience.

Think back to when you first found the Lord. Remember the newness, the freshness of your first love for Jesus, when He was the One to whom your thoughts were constantly drawn, when your love for Him gave you joy unspeakable and peace that passes understanding. If your returning to the Torah has caused you to lose that, then something is wrong. And it isn't the Torah, because "the law of the Lord is perfect" (Ps. 19:7). If you have left your first love since coming to the Torah, don't throw away the Torah. Ask God to show you how to be a live dove - not a dead dove - who lives by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Then use those Tablets of the Law as wings, and learn how to fly! □

PRAYER

The Veins and Arteries For the Flow of the Holy Spirit

Daniel Botkin

All of God's people are different. (As the saying goes, "Remember that you are unique, just like everyone else.") Just as each member of the human body has its own specific role, ability, and function, so each member of a local body of believers has his own specific role, ability, and function for the good of the entire Body. The Bible gives examples of many different callings that people had (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, priests, kings, warriors, judges) and many different spiritual gifts (word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues, interpretation of tongues).

There were and there are many different roles and callings in God's Kingdom, but there was and there is one thing necessary to be a successful man or woman of God. All the people who have successfully fulfilled their callings in the Kingdom of God have been men and women of prayer. If we want to succeed in the Kingdom of God, we must be people who pray.

Prayer to the Lord and activity for the Lord are two different things, but they should be intertwined. Activity for the Lord is very important and necessary. The four Gospels are followed by the Book of Acts, so our belief in the gospel should be followed by doing acts for the Lord. However, if we want our spiritual activities to be of eternal value, they must be linked to prayer. Any endeavor that we attempt to do for the Lord should be conceived through prayer, nurtured through prayer, undergirded and saturated with prayer. Our activity for the Lord should begin with a prayerful request for God's guidance, strength, and blessing, and it should end with a prayer of thanksgiving and praise to the Lord for the success of the endeavor.

Some people think of prayer as just one of many spiritual activities that people do. Prayer is unique, though.

It is the one spiritual activity that should weave its way through all other spiritual activities. Just as the veins and arteries are threaded throughout the entire body to carry the life-giving blood to all the members of the body, so prayer should be threaded throughout all our activities to carry the life-giving Spirit of God to all the members of the Body.

The Messiah's resurrected body provides a picture of how the local body should function in regards to the flowing of the Holy Spirit through prayer. Pay close attention here and let me explain. The Bible says that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 15:30). Before His death, Yeshua was flesh and blood. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same" (Heb. 2:14). But after His death and Resurrection, He was no longer flesh and blood. He was flesh and *bone* (Lk. 24:39), but He was not flesh and blood. His blood had been spilled at the Cross and was offered in the heavenly Tabernacle. (See Hebrews 9:12-14.) Yeshua's resurrected body was flesh and bone, but it had no blood, for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."

Because it was a real, tangible body of flesh, His veins and arteries were still threaded throughout His resurrected body. Something was different about the veins and arteries now, though. Blood no longer flowed through them. Something else flowed through those veins and arteries, something that made His entire body incorruptible. That something was the Spirit of God. Leviticus 17:11 says that "the life of the [corruptible] flesh is in the blood." But the life of the incorruptible flesh of our resurrected Lord is the Spirit of God that flowed and still flows through His veins and arteries. Because His blood was spilled, He was "put to death in the

flesh [for 'the life of the flesh is in the blood'], but quickened [made alive] by the Spirit" (1 Pet. 3:18). The same Spirit that gave new life to His flesh in the tomb continues to flow through His veins and arteries and will keep Him alive for all eternity, for the Spirit is eternal, as Hebrews 9:14 tells us: "How much more shall the blood of Messiah, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" As the blood gave life to His pre-Resurrection flesh, so the Spirit gives life to His post-Resurrection flesh.

This picture of the Holy Spirit flowing through the veins and arteries of the Lord's resurrected body shows us how the Lord wants the Holy Spirit to flow through a local body of disciples. *The Holy Spirit flows through the veins and arteries of prayer.* Without veins and arteries, blood cannot flow through a human body. Without the veins and arteries of prayer, the Holy Spirit will not flow through a local body of believers. Every member of a human body needs veins and arteries to receive the life-giving blood. Every member of a local body of believers needs the veins and arteries of prayer to receive the life-giving Spirit of God.

It is significant that Yeshua said that His Father's house would be called a house of prayer. Many activities go on in God's house, but the one activity Yeshua singled out was prayer. Prayer is the channel and the means by which the Holy Spirit energizes and blesses all our other activities for the Lord. Through prayer the Holy Spirit puts persuasive power in the word of our testimony, so people will recognize truth if they are looking for it.

Veins and arteries have a continual life-giving movement of blood flowing through them. Our prayers should have a continual life-giving movement of the Holy Spirit flowing through them.

Our prayers should not be stagnant and timid; they should be lively and bold. Our prayers should not be emotionless and cold; they should be white-hot (or at least warm!) and emotional. If blood in the veins becomes stagnant and cold, the body is sick. You'd better get that blood warm and flowing again. If the spirit in your prayers has become stagnant and cold, you are spiritually sick. You'd better get the spirit of prayer warm and flowing again.

People often ask me for advice and counsel about various problems, and that is okay. Some people need counseling, and sometimes they need it for an extended period of time. However, after advising and counseling people for many years, I am convinced that many (perhaps most) of the people who think they need a lot of counseling really need just one word of counsel: *Learn to pray!* If they would learn to really pray, the Holy Spirit would show them what to do about their problem.

"I know I should pray more," people often say. "My prayer life should be better than it is, but I don't know how to improve it." How does a person learn to pray (or pray more or pray better)? There are no "five quick and easy steps." You learn to pray by taking the time to pray. As Leonard Ravenhill once said, "The secret of prayer is secret prayer." Learning to pray is similar to learning how to swim. There are a few mechanics of swimming that you can learn before you enter the water - body movements and positions, breathing techniques, etc. But you don't really learn to swim until you actually step into the water and start moving your limbs. In the same way, you don't learn to pray until you step into the waters of the Holy Spirit and start praying.

Just as there are some mechanics and techniques of swimming to keep in mind, so there are some basic things about prayer to keep in mind. Most of these things are obvious - or should be, at least to people who read the Bible. There are basic fundamentals such as approaching God in faith, humility, and gratitude, giving praise,

adoration, and thanks, presenting your requests to Him, etc.

One aspect of prayer that is often neglected or minimized is the importance of audible utterance. Some people feel inhibited and timid about praying aloud, especially in front of others - or in some cases, even when praying alone. This should not be. When the Bible speaks about prayer, it is normally described with words of audible utterance. Just flip through the Psalms and you will see the Scriptures sprinkled with words such as *speaking, declare, proclaim, utter, say, cry out, cry aloud, lift up your voice, tell, call upon, shout*, etc. While it is true that God can "hear" a person who prays silently, this list of words makes it clear that silent prayer is the exception to the rule. It is not the norm. Spoken, audible prayer is the norm.

In the early 1970s I read a book about the persecuted underground church in China. Some American Christians had visited China and attended some prayer meetings there. The American Christians were surprised to learn that when these Chinese Christians went to prayer, all the individuals prayed aloud at the same time, instead of each individual politely waiting his or her turn to pray, like the American Christians were used to doing.

The Americans asked them, "Isn't it confusing for all of you to pray at the same time like that?"

The Chinese Christians said that it was not confusing to *them*.

At Pentecostal prayer meetings that I attended as a young believer, we often prayed like this, and I, like the Chinese Christians, did not find it confusing either.

Pentecostals are sometimes criticized for praying so loudly. "Those Pentecostals are so *loud!*" people loudly proclaim. The early Hasidic Jews were similarly criticized by their fellow Jews for their loudness. The Ba'al Shem Tov taught his disciples to pray loudly, read loudly, and sing loudly. It bothered the other Jews that the Hasidim shouted their prayers in the synagogues.

It is no doubt true that some

Pentecostal individuals and some Hasidic individuals are louder than the average person. However, I believe that much of the criticism of loudness is highly exaggerated. Usually the loudness is not due to everyone shouting. Usually it is due to the fact that several individuals are audibly praising and praying at the same time, most of them at their normal speaking volume. To demonstrate this, I conducted an experiment at our congregation one Sabbath. I asked everyone to stand and randomly open their Bibles to any chapter in the Book of Psalms. Then I told everyone to simultaneously read their psalm aloud as a prayer, at their normal speaking volume, and then after that to continue praying for a while from their hearts in their own words. As we all did this, it sounded like a loud Pentecostal church or Hasidic synagogue, even though no one was shouting.

If you are uncomfortable praying aloud, do it anyway. It will help you stay focused and keep your mind from wandering, as so often happens with silent prayer. After some time you will get used to praying aloud. Eventually you might even find yourself getting emotional and shouting out with a loud voice once in a while. And that's okay, because that's Biblical. If you doubt this, look in an exhaustive concordance and see how many times the words *shout* and *loud* are used in the Bible.

Whether you prefer to pray with your volume set at 1 or at 10 or somewhere in between, prayer is not optional if you want to be spiritually healthy. Prayer must be threaded throughout all the areas of your life, like your veins and arteries are threaded throughout your entire body.

Not everyone is called to roles of leadership in the Body, and no individual is expected to have all of the gifts of the Spirit. But praying is one thing that every individual disciple is expected to do - consistently, habitually, "without ceasing." It is a life-long discipline. If you ever quit praying, the flow of the Spirit will cease, as surely as the flow of blood ceases when veins and arteries collapse. □

THE MIXT MULTITUDE

Dr. Daniel Botkin

"And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, 'Who shall give us flesh to eat?'" (Numbers 11:4)

It is generally believed that this mixed multitude consisted of Egyptians who had joined themselves to the Hebrews when they left Egypt. The fact that "the children of Israel also wept" after the mixed multitude fell a lusting would seem to confirm this view of the mixed multitude as a group of Egyptians separate from, yet among, the children of Israel.

Regardless of who these people were, they represent the carnal people of any local assembly. They are the people who tag along to get the blessings of God, but contribute very little except trouble. They are dependents among disciples. They are the fleshly, worldly-minded (and often unregenerated) whiners who are not satisfied with God's provision of Yeshua as the Bread of heaven. They have to have some flesh to go along with the manna that God provides. Their dissatisfaction often spreads even to those in the congregation who are true children of Israel, and stimulates their appetite for flesh, too. The margin of the Scofield Reference Bible has an interesting remark about the mixed multitude:

"Unconverted church members, unable to desire or understand Christ as the Bread of God, will clamour for things pleasing to the flesh in the work and way of the church: sumptuous buildings, ornate ritual, an easy doctrine. Alas! they lead away the unspiritual believers also."

The complaining of the mixed multitude caused the children of Israel to also start complaining. Before long, they were all yearning for the fleshpots of Egypt and scorning God's miraculous provision of manna. "We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the mel-

ons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick. But now our soul is dried away: and there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes" (Num. 11:5f).

Like the mixed multitude, some people today prefer the comforts and pleasures of the world rather than God's provision of His Son as the Living Bread which came down from heaven. The mixed multitude viewed the manna as something which dried away their souls. The mixed multitude today see "the simplicity of Messiah" as insufficient for them. "Surely He isn't enough to satisfy our spiritual appetites," they say. They view things like prayer, holiness, Bible study, and obedience to God's commandments as things which deprive them of fun and pleasure. God is viewed as a Cosmic Killjoy.

Most local congregations at some time have a mixed multitude who want to mix flesh and spirit. "Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned" (Hos. 7:8). Like a pancake left unturned on the griddle, the mixed multitude are burned on one side and raw on the other, and of no use for anything. (In colloquial English, we would say they are "half-baked.") They have too much of the world to be of any use in God's Kingdom, and too much interest in God to be of any use to the world.

When the mixed multitude and the carnal Israelites cried for flesh, the Lord said He would give them flesh - "until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you," He said.

Yahweh sent a flock of quails into the camp "and let them fall." If God's people cry to God for flesh in their camp, He lets it fall like a flock of birds. He allows churches to bring in carnal ministers whose words feed the fleshly nature rather than the spirit. He allows them to introduce worldly things that stimulate the flesh instead of the spirit. God lets flesh fall wherever it is desired: in worship meetings,

at music concerts, at evangelistic rallies, even at prayer meetings. If people want to gorge themselves on a worldly mixture of flesh and spirit, the Lord lets them do it. And He lets them suffer the consequences.

The anger of Yahweh was "kindled greatly" by these complainers and crybabies. Moses was displeased, too, so much so that he asked God to kill him. "Kill me, I pray Thee, out of hand," Moses pleaded. (Congregational leaders who have had to deal with complainers and crybabies can probably relate to Moses' prayer.)

The Lord didn't kill Moses. Instead, He told Moses to gather seventy elders. "I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them: and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone." (Apparently Jethro's earlier suggestion in Exodus 18, that Moses appoint rulers of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, did not work - perhaps because it was a well-intentioned idea, but an idea which originated from man and not from God.)

Moses called the seventy elders to gather around the Tabernacle. "And Yahweh came down in a cloud and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease."

The flame of a candle is not diminished when it is used to ignite other candles. In the same way, Moses' anointing and authority was passed on to these seventy men without diminishing Moses' own authority and anointing. Now there was more machinery, and it was well-oiled by the anointing of the Holy Spirit (unlike the Exodus 18 experiment which Moses had tried at the suggestion of Jethro.)

There is an interesting and instructive footnote to this story. Two of the

elders, Eldad and Medad, were not present at the Tabernacle with the others when the Lord came down and put the spirit of prophecy on the elders. For some unknown reason Eldad and Medad remained in the camp when the elders were called to come outside the camp. Yet "the spirit rested upon them" and "they prophesied in the camp." When someone ran and told Moses, Joshua said, "My lord Moses, forbid them!"

Moses replied, "Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!"

Moses' reply to Joshua is very similar to some statements Paul makes concerning the anointing and gifts of the Holy Spirit. The "love chapter," 1 Corinthians 13, is placed between 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, chapters which are about spiritual gifts. Love is the glue that binds the spiritual gifts together (or, the frosting in the middle of the Oreo cookie - the best part!). Love must govern the operation of the spiritual gifts, and is far more important than the spiritual gifts. The greater value of love, however, does not diminish the importance of spiritual gifts such as prophecy, tongues, and interpretation of tongues. Love is more important Paul says - "But covet earnestly the best gifts," he adds (1 Cor. 12:31). "Follow after charity [love], and desire spiritual gifts, but rather [or 'especially'] that ye may prophesy" (1 Cor. 14:1). It's not an either/or option; it's a both/and opportunity. Paul also says in 1 Corinthians 14, "I would [I wish] that ye all spake with tongues," although prophesying is even better, he adds. He says he will pray and sing in the spirit (and it is clear from the context that this means to pray and sing in tongues), and he says, "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all." Yet just as Moses did not want to restrict the gift of prophesying to a limited number of God's people ("Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!" Moses said), so Paul says, "I would that ye all spake with tongues"

and "ye may all prophesy one by one."

Here's another interesting lesson from the episode of Eldad and Medad. With the exception of Eldad and Medad, all the elders who received the anointing were outside the camp. When the Lord pours out His Spirit to bring revival, He often follows this same pattern. Oftentimes the majority of the people who are "in tune" to that which the Spirit is presently doing are people who are "outside the camp," i.e., outside of the mainstream denominational church world. Those who receive the revelation which is most needed for their generation are often spiritual "misfits" who do not feel at home in the conventional church world.

However, there are usually a few other individual elders who, like Eldad and Medad, do not go outside the camp of the mainstream church, yet they too receive the anointing and they prophesy "in the camp." And just as Joshua told Moses he should make Eldad and Medad stop prophesying, so some of those who are outside the camp think that it is wrong for these Eldads and Medads to prophesy inside the camp of mainstream Christianity.

"But they should come out of Babylon!" Perhaps they should. Perhaps Eldad and Medad should have come outside the camp, too. But consider this. The disciples once met a man casting out devils in Yeshua's name, and they forbid him because he was not following along with the rest of the disciples. Yeshua said, "Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us" (Luke 9:49f). If an Eldad or a Medad is prophesying the true Word of the Lord inside the camp of the conventional church world, we should not be upset. We should rejoice, and let God bring them outside the camp in His time.

Another interesting thing about Eldad and Medad is the alliterative sound of their names. Moses had complained to the Lord because he felt like he was expected to be a wet nurse to the people. "Have I conceived all this people?" Moses asked. "Have I begotten them, that Thou

shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child?" (Num. 11:12).

There is a linguistic connection between the nature of Moses' complaint and the names Eldad and Medad. Moses felt like he was expected to be a wet nurse and provide breast milk for the crybabies. One of the Hebrew words for breast is *dad*. Embedded in the names *Eldad* and *Medad* is a pair of breasts. They, along with the other elders, would help Moses provide spiritual milk for the people. The prefixes *el-* and *me-* mean "to" and "from" respectively. The names *Eldad* and *Medad* mean "to the breast" and "from the breast" respectively. Perhaps the Lord allowed Eldad and Medad to remain in the camp, separated from the other elders, to draw attention to the fact that God's people will be brought to maturity only by the outpouring of the Spirit on a body of elders - elders who can help the people go "to the breast" (*el-dad*) to receive spiritual milk in times of hunger and thirst, and "from the breast" (*me-dad*) in times of contentment. □

"I Pledge Allegiance..."

- Daniel Botkin -

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My four-year-old daughter and her two little cousins had just finished their first day at a Christian nursery school, and I was picking them up.

"What did you do in nursery school?" I asked them after we got into the car.

"Well," my niece replied, "First we all stood and prayed to the flag."

Children's misconceptions can be amusing. However, when children have misconceptions about serious spiritual matters, we should ask if we are doing something to send the wrong message. We are a people whose true and eternal citizenship is in heaven. What message, then, do we want to convey about the flag of our earthly nation? Our view of the American flag should be respectful, yet different from the view of the typical non-believing citizen.

I certainly do not condone flag-burning or any other form of deliberate disrespect for our nation's flag. I love America, even in its present backslidden state. I am extremely grateful for the founding fathers who established our great nation and for all those who have sacrificed to keep America free. As an American citizen, I appreciate all the good things for which our flag stands. But as a disciple of the Son of God, I must pledge my allegiance to God's eternal Kingdom, not to a piece of cloth that will someday burn or rot

or be eaten by worms.

At the risk of offending patriots, I must say that I am sometimes disturbed by the undue reverence that some Christians give to the American flag. Most churches display a Christian flag. I have no particular fondness for the Christian flag (I think it is unnecessary), yet it bothers me to see the American flag displayed to the right of the speaker in churches, while the Christian flag stands on the speaker's left. I realize this is simply following the customs of flag etiquette, but this particular custom bestows a higher honor on the American flag than on the Christian flag. It is common knowledge that the right-hand position is considered the position of higher honor, and the left hand the place of lesser honor. There are several places in the Bible that speak of the right hand as the position of higher honor (Gen. 48:13-20; Eccl. 10:2; Matt. 25:33; Acts 7:55f). Placing the American flag to the speaker's right and the Christian flag to the speaker's left sends a message that our primary allegiance is to America and our allegiance to God's Kingdom is secondary.

Simply switching the positions of the flags is probably not the best solution to the problem. No doubt some would think that the change was due to anti-American sentiment or a lack of patriotism.

The simplest solution would be to remove the American flag from the building. After all, we do not need to be reminded during worship that we are Americans. In God's world-wide Kingdom, all national, ethnic, and racial differences should be of no

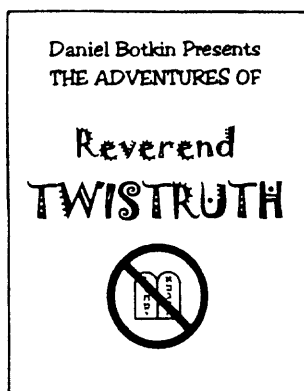
importance. But if congregants insist on displaying the American flag in their church building, I suggest placing it someplace other than in the sanctuary, perhaps in a room where there is no Christian flag to compete for the right-hand position of higher honor.

Our treatment of symbols often reveals what is in our hearts. If we give too much honor to symbolic objects, we can fall into the sin of idolatry. This truth is demonstrated by the fact that the brass serpent Moses made in the wilderness eventually became an idol to the people of Israel (Numbers 21 & 2 Kings 18). The brass serpent had been made at God's command and was used as a tool of deliverance. As a symbol of God's mercy and deliverance, it was certainly an object worthy of respect. But when the people showed more honor to the symbol than they did to the God whose deliverance it represented, the symbol became an idol and had to be destroyed. Americans can turn the flag into an idol as easily as the Israelites turned the brass serpent into an idol.

We should be thankful for all the good things our flag represents. But if we honor the flag of our nation more than the God who has preserved our nation, the flag becomes an idol.

If we zealously defend the American flag whenever someone publicly and deliberately dishonors it, but remain silent when someone shows contempt for the Bible, we are showing where our deepest allegiance lies.

Let's respect our nation's flag, but be careful to give our honor first and foremost to the Lord, and pledge our deepest allegiance to His Kingdom. □



The Feast of Tabernacles is supposed to be a time of joy, but sometimes there might be a person who brings a bad spirit into the camp. A few years ago I put together this declaration against bad spirits. Each year, we begin the Feast by having everyone read this aloud together on the opening night. It helps to fumigate the camp of any bad spirits that might be there, so that everyone can enjoy the Feast. You might want to consider doing this at your Feast of Tabernacles. You can make copies of this declaration, or write your own. -DB



In the name of Yeshua I renounce and reject and send away every evil spirit:

- every familiar spirit that makes occultic ideas look attractive to me (Lev. 20:27)
- every spirit of jealousy that causes me to imagine false accusations against others (Num. 5:30)
- every sorrowful spirit that robs me of the joy of the Lord (1 Sam. 1:15)
- every lying spirit that tries to deceive me or tempts me to try to deceive others (1 Ki. 22:22)
- every spirit of anguish that grieves me (Job 7:11)
- every spirit of haste that urges me to act or speak in anger or impulsively without thinking (Prov. 14:9)
- every spirit of pride that goes before destruction and every haughty spirit that goes before a fall (Prov. 16:18)
- every perverse spirit that perverts my spiritual senses and causes me to err like a drunken man (Isa. 19:14)
- every spirit of deep sleep that closes my eyes to truth (Isa. 29:10)
- every spirit of heaviness that causes me to be depressed (Isa. 61:3)
- every spirit of whoredom that causes me to go whoring after other gods (Hos. 4:12)
- every unclean spirit that defiles my mind with impure thoughts or my body with impure deeds (Mt. 12:43)
- every deaf spirit that prevents me from hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit (Mk. 9:25)
- every dumb spirit that prevents me from speaking out for the Lord (Mk. 9:25)
- every spirit of infirmity that weakens my body, soul, or spirit (Lk. 13:11)
- every spirit of divination that poses as the Spirit of God (Acts 16:16-18)
- every spirit of error that poses as the spirit of truth (1 Jn. 4:6)
- every seducing spirit that tries to draw me away from the faith with doctrines of devils (1 Tim. 4:1)

In obedience to the Apostle Paul's instructions, I put off anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, and filthy communication out of my mouth. I put off the old man with his deeds, and I put on the new man. As the elect of God, I put on mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance and forgiveness. Above all, I put on charity, God's *agape* love. (Col. 3:8-14)

UNITY

Daniel Botkin

The content of this article is based on my address to those assembled for the MIA Conference in Nashville this July. The theme of the conference was One People, One Promise, One Purpose.

הנה מה-טוב ומה-נעים
שבת אחים גם-יחד

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Psalm 133:1).

The Hebrew text of this verse provides the words for the well-known tune *Hineh Mah Tov*. The first word of this psalm, *hineh*, is usually translated "behold." When I was in Hebrew class many years ago in Jerusalem, our teacher told us that *hineh* means "here." We had learned two other Hebrew words for "here," namely *poh* and *kan*. What is different about *hineh*, our teacher told us, is that it means "right here." It can be a way of saying, "Hey! Look here! Check *this* out." So, hey! Check *this* out: How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

There exists a type of goodness and pleasantness which can only be experienced where brethren dwell together in unity. This type of goodness and pleasantness is impossible to experience alone. It is something that hermits never experience. The stereotypical cranky lone prophet never tastes this goodness and pleasantness of which the psalmist speaks.

Notice, though, that it is not enough to merely dwell together. Brethren must dwell together *in unity* in order to know this particular goodness and pleasantness. Many brethren know from past experience that the converse of this psalm's opening statement is also true: Behold, how *bad* and how *unpleasant* it is for brethren to dwell together in *disunity*.

The oneness of believers is so

important that Yeshua spoke of it as being proof to the world that He was sent by the Father. When praying for His disciples of His own generation and of future generations, He prayed "that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me" (John 17:21). Unfortunately, the world looks at all the professing believers today and sees disunity instead of oneness.

Believers usually do realize that oneness is important, and they have made well-intentioned attempts to establish unity. One way that has been tried and found wanting is to appoint an old bachelor in Rome as the Vicar of Christ and invest him with papal infallibility. This Roman Catholic method does create a sort of "unity," but it leads to many problems that are far more serious than disunity.

The Protestant method of attempting to achieve unity is to hammer out creeds and doctrinal statements to which everyone can agree. Doctrinal statements are sometimes necessary to clarify a congregation's position on certain issues, but it is next to impos-

sible to write a doctrinal statement that covers everything and pleases everyone. Most written creeds and doctrinal statements are either so general, so bland and watered down, that they are too inclusive; or they are so detailed and so nit-picky that they are too exclusive.

Creeds and doctrinal statements are sometimes needed for clarification, but they are not the source of unity. The source of unity is hinted at in the second verse of Psalm 133, where the goodness and pleasantness of brethren dwelling together in unity is described: "It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments."

The source of unity in the Body of Messiah is the Head of the Body, our High Priest Yeshua, of whom Aaron was a picture. More specifically, the source of unity is the anointing that flows down. Notice that it flows down first from the Head, secondly to the beard, and then all the way down to the skirts of the garments.

We know that the Head of the Body is Yeshua. Who does the beard represent? The Hebrew word for beard is *ZaKaN* (זֶכֶן). This is spelled with the same three letters as *ZaKeN* (זֶכֶן), which means "elder" (presumably because a man who is qualified to be an elder is at least old enough to have a beard). So we can think of the beard in this psalm as representing elders, i.e., those who function as leaders in the Body.

That leaves the skirts of the garment, which would be those people who are not part of the beard, i.e., those who are in the Body but do not function as leaders in the Body. These members are in no way inferior to leaders, nor are they less beloved. Every member of the body is important. The Body of Messiah would be incomplete and lacking without every member.

A man with low self-esteem (what we used to call an inferiority complex) may think that he is an unimportant member. "The Lord has no use for me," he says. "I'm no more important than the little finger of the left hand." The little finger of the left hand may not seem important to some people, but my little finger on my left hand is very important to me. When I play a guitar, there are certain chords that would be impossible to play without the little finger of my left hand,

Every member of the Body is important, and the unity of all those members is important. Unity brings the anointing, and the anointing brings unity. The anointing of the Holy Spirit flowing down - from the Head, to the elders, and all the way down to those who are the least in the Body - brings about a unity that is good and pleasant.

Even in my pre-Messianic, pork-eating days, I experienced this goodness and pleasantness with two close friends, Mike and John. We tasted the goodness and pleasantness of this psalm because we dwelt together in unity. We were able to dwell together in unity because of the anointing of the Holy Spirit upon us. We prayed together a lot and we labored for the Lord together a lot. Our families even lived together in the same house at various times. We functioned as one in spite of doctrinal differences or personality differences. Whenever we assembled together for prayer, the Holy Spirit would fall upon us and the glory of the Lord would flood our souls. Our fire-baptized Pentecostal prayer meetings melted away any differences we had, and we yielded to the law of love. (See the opening remarks in the Charles Finney article on page 18.)

The key to unity is letting the glory of the Lord flood our souls. How do I know this? Partly from my own past personal experience, but even more importantly because of what Yeshua said in John 17:22: "And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one." He gives us a taste of His glory so that we may be one, He says. How does His glory enable us

to be one? By gradually bringing us all into conformity to His image. As we all focus on the glory of the Lord, the anointing flows and brings each individual more and more into conformity to His image, His will, His desires. The Apostle Paul described it this way: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18).

A.W. Tozer wrote a lot about the importance of the individual experiencing the glory of the Lord in a close, intimate walk with God. In *The Pursuit of God*, Tozer shows the connection between the glory and unity: "Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? They are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which each one must individually bow. So one hundred worshippers met together, each one looking away to Christ, are in heart nearer to each other than they could possibly be were they to become 'unity' conscious and turn their eyes away from God to strive for closer fellowship."

Yeshua gave us the glory so that we may be one. The glory brings unity without demanding uniformity. On a guitar all the strings have a very similar sound, yet each individual string has its own distinct sound. Each individual disciple is like a string on a musical instrument. A disciple gets "in tune" by letting the Lord adjust his life so that he will produce the exact sound which he was created to produce. When every individual is in tune to the Holy Spirit, the Lord can strum the strings together and play beautiful chords.

As we gaze on the glory, we are transfigured from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord, Paul said. As we become more like the Lord, we become more like one another, yet without losing our individual distinctiveness. As we draw closer to the Lord, we automatically are drawn closer to one another, just as the spokes of a wheel get closer together

as they approach the center hub of the wheel.

A few years ago a vision formed in my mind. I saw a circle of short, burning candles. They were all circled around one larger, higher candle that was burning in the center. As the little candles burned down, their wax melted and flowed toward the big candle in the center, like spokes attached to the center hub of a wheel. As the wax flowed to the center, it was absorbed by this big candle. As the center candle absorbed the molten wax, it grew higher and higher, while the small candles on the perimeter of the circle grew lower and lower.

As we gather around our Lord, focus on Him, and let ourselves be melted like wax in His presence, our individual lives will flow into Him, and we will become one in Him. Like the center candle, He will be elevated and exalted. "He must increase, but I must decrease," John the Baptist said (John 3:30). As we all humble ourselves and focus on the glory of the Lord, we decrease like the candles on the outer perimeter of the circle, and He increases like the candle in the center of the circle. □

CAUSE AND EFFECT AND THE MYTH OF UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

Daniel Botkin

When God created the heavens and the earth, He built into this universe a system of cause and effect. The world operates by laws of cause and effect. For every effect there is a cause. Nothing happens or comes into existence without some known or unknown cause behind it.

God made it clear to Adam that his choices would be the cause of either positive or negative consequences. Choosing to eat from the tree of life would produce the effect of life; choosing to eat from the tree of knowledge would produce the effect of death. If Adam died, there would be a cause behind his death. Some 5,000 years after Adam's death, we still realize that death does not happen without some cause behind it. When we hear that someone has died, we usually ask, "How did it happen?"

This phenomenon of cause and effect is very obvious when the effect is something as serious and irreversible as death. But when the effect is something less serious than death, it is easy to forget (or even to deny) that there is a cause behind the effect. Because we live in a world of cause and effect, we should assume that whenever something happens, whether good or bad, there is some cause behind it. (This does not mean that every bad thing that happens to us is always the result of our own personal sins. Sometimes it is, but sometimes it is a test of our faith, as was the case with Job.)

The Bible is filled with statements of cause and effect. Many of the warnings to obey God's commandments are worded in the language of cause and effect. "If you do this, then I will do that"; "Do this... so that..."; "Don't do that... lest..."; "Thou shalt not... or else!" The first few chapters of Deuteronomy contain several cause-and-effect warnings like these.

"If... then..." statements are conditional. When God says, "If you will obey Me, then I will bless you," He is

not obligated to bless you unless you first obey Him. Your obedience becomes the cause of God's blessings. Conversely, your disobedience becomes the cause of God's curses.

Some people do not like to hear about consequences and conditions when discussing the blessings of God. Some folks believe that God's love is unconditional, that He loves everybody, even the wicked, unconditionally. There is so much talk in the church world about God's "unconditional love" that many people mistakenly assume that this idea is from the Bible.

In a general, universal sense, God's love for the human race as a whole could perhaps be called "unconditional." (See John 3:16.) But God does not have unconditional love for every individual of the human race. There are some individuals whom God hates. This is not just Daniel Botkin's personal opinion; it is what the Bible plainly states. Psalm 5:5 says that God hates all workers of iniquity. Psalm 11:5 says He hates the wicked and lovers of violence. Proverbs 6:19 says He hates a false witness who speaks lies, and he who sows discord among brethren.

It may disappoint some readers to hear this, but God does not unconditionally love every individual of the human race. He does not unconditionally love workers of iniquity, nor the wicked, nor lovers of violence, nor

false witnesses who speak lies, nor those who sow discord among brethren. God hates these individuals, the Bible says.

To speak of "unconditional love" implies that there is no "If... then...", that there is no cause and effect. But we live in a world of cause and effect. If a person is a worker of iniquity, or wicked, or a lover of violence, or a false witness that speaks lies, or one who sows discord among brethren, then God hates that person.

If we are not one of these recipients of God's hatred, why is it important for us to know this? It is important to know this because we do not want to misinform people about the nature of God's love. If I say, "Smile, God loves you" to workers of iniquity, or to the wicked, or to lovers of violence, or to false witnesses who speak lies, or to those who sow discord among brethren - people whom God in fact hates - then I myself become a false witness speaking a lie.

One rarely hears sermons about God's hatred for certain classes of individuals. That is to be expected, because the overall message of the gospel is the love of God as expressed through His Son. It is true that Jesus came into the world to call sinners to repentance and to save them. But Jesus' love for sinners will not stop Him from killing them and casting them into the lake of fire if they refuse to repent. When the Bible describes the Lord's return, it says that "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power" (2 Thes. 1:7-9). The first time the Messiah came, He demonstrated the love of God and called sinners to repentance. The second time He comes, He will execute the wrath and

vengeance of God upon unrepentant sinners by melting the flesh off their bones.

How should we relate to sinners? Like Yeshua did at His first coming, we should demonstrate the love of God and call them to repentance. At the same time, we should not give them the false impression that God loves them unconditionally even if they remain in their sins. If a sinner continually hardens his heart and becomes a worker of iniquity, or wicked, or a lover of violence, or a false witness, or one who sows discord among brethren, then God will hate him. At that point, we need to be careful about how we relate to such sinners. We even need to be cautious and prayerful about how much help to give to a sinner who has earned God's hatred. King Jehoshaphat, a righteous king, agreed to help wicked King Ahab in a war. After the battle, a prophet rebuked King Jehoshaphat with these words: "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate Yahweh? Therefore is wrath upon thee from before Yahweh" (2 Chron. 19:2). This verse makes me be careful about how much help to give to someone if I know that he is ungodly and hates the Lord. We are commanded to love our own enemies, but I'm not so sure how much love we are supposed to have for God's enemies. King David said, "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee? And am I not grieved with those that rise up against Thee? I hate them with perfect hatred" (Ps. 139:21f).

Lost sinners need to know that we live in a world of cause and effect. They need to realize that the choices they make have both temporal and eternal consequences. What they choose to do or not do about their sinful condition will be the cause of either forgiveness and eternal life with the saints of God, or everlasting fire with the devil and his angels. Telling an unrepentant sinner that God loves him unconditionally is not the Biblical model for calling hardened sinners to repentance.

Believers, too, need to realize that their choices have both temporal and

eternal consequences. In some Christian circles, the people's view of Christianity could be summed up something like this: "To become a Christian, you go up to the church altar and repeat the words of the 'sinner's prayer.' You give Jesus permission to come into your heart and be your personal Savior. Then you have the option of deciding whether you want to be a carnal Christian or a spiritual Christian. You can be a carnal Christian and still go to heaven. But if you want to be a spiritual Christian, you'll go to church on Sundays, so you can be reminded once a week that you don't need to do anything for the Lord, 'cause salvation is a free gift."

It's true that salvation is a gift from God, but it is not exactly "free." It cost the Son of God His life. Because He paid the price of redemption, He can freely offer forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Even salvation operates by cause and effect. His death is the cause which produces the effect of your forgiveness. But your forgiveness, once received, should become a cause. Your receiving of God's gift of eternal life should cause you to want to do something for the Lord - not out of a need to earn your salvation, but out of gratitude for His amazing grace. If you are not motivated and inspired to do something for the Lord, then I suggest that you "examine yourselves [to see] whether ye be in the faith" (2 Cor. 13:5).

Not only lost sinners, but also saved believers need to remember that we live in a world of cause and effect. For every effect there is a cause. Furthermore, it is important to understand that we cannot always know the exact cause behind each and every effect. Many of the cause-and-effect warnings in the Scriptures are not real specific. They are just general statements which tell us that obedience to God's commandments will bring the effect of blessings, and disobedience of God's commandments will bring the effect of curses. Some passages get specific, but in most of the warnings, the specific forms of the blessings and curses are not described in great detail. This

means that if you disobey God's commandments, your disobedience will result in some sort of negative consequences, but you may never know which act of disobedience caused which negative consequence. So it's best to not disobey at all.

Things go on behind the scenes in the unseen realm of the spirit. The choices we make become the causes of positive or negative results. We do not need to understand the "Why?" or the "How?" of cause and effect. Joshua did not understand why God told him to march around Jericho, nor how this would make the walls fall down flat. Naaman the leper did not understand why the Prophet Elisha said to dip in the Jordan, nor how that would heal his leprosy. Yet both of these men got the desired effect because they obeyed. They obeyed because they had faith that their obedience would be the cause of the desired blessing.

Each time we obey the Lord, our obedience becomes the cause of some positive effect; each time we disobey the Lord, our disobedience becomes the cause of some negative effect. We may never know which specific acts of obedience or disobedience produced which results, but we can be certain that obedience brings blessings and disobedience brings curses. "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live" (Deut. 30:19). □

THE TWO WITNESSES OF REVELATION

Dr. Daniel Botkin

"And I will give power unto My two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies; and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy; and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will" (Rev. 11:3-6).

A lot of speculation and differences of opinion surround the identity of these two witnesses. The two witnesses are called "the two olive trees and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth." This clearly identifies them as Zechariah's two olive trees, also referred to as "the two anointed ones that stand by the Lord of the whole earth." Zechariah describes his vision of the two witnesses:

"I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof; And two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof... Then answered I, and said unto him, What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof? And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves? And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth" (Zech. 4:2ff).

Zechariah's question suggests that he was as puzzled about the identity of the two olive trees as some people today are about the identity of the two witnesses of Revelation. The angel's reply to Zechariah's question, that they are "the two anointed ones, that stand

by the Lord of the whole earth," leaves many readers still scratching their heads and wondering who exactly these guys are.

Because of the powers that the two witnesses possess in Revelation, many Christians believe that they will be Moses ("power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with plagues") and Elijah ("power to shut heaven, that it rain not"). Other Christians believe they will be Elijah and Enoch because according to Hebrews 9:27, "it is appointed unto men once to die." Since both of these men were taken up to heaven without dying, they must return to earth for an appointment with death. Their appointment with death will take place in the context of their role as the two witnesses, the argument goes.

Various rabbis commenting on Zechariah 4 have suggested several different pairs of candidates: Joshua the High Priest and Zerubabel; Aaron and Moses; Moses and David; Aaron and David; Aaron and the Messiah; Messiah ben Yosef and Messiah ben David. David Stern's *Jewish New Testament Commentary* discusses the various candidates, then adds this interesting comment: "Meanwhile, believers in Jerusalem have grown used to being presented with other candidates. They appear every few months, often dressed in sackcloth like the Prophets of the *Tanakh*, and claiming to be 'in the spirit and power of Elijah' or even to be Elijah himself." (I know what David Stern is talking about. My wife and I saw and heard about such people when we lived in Jerusalem in 1976. When our daughter Shoshanna lived there a few years ago, she met a nice lady who claimed to be the wife of Jesus Christ. Psychologists in Israel have a name for this affliction. They call it "The Jerusalem Syndrome.")

So, who exactly are the two witnesses? I do not get real dogmatic about the details of end-time prophecy, because there are usually several possible ways that a yet-unfulfilled

prophecy can be legitimately understood and interpreted. And until the prophesied events actually happen, there is no way to prove with 100% certainty whose understanding is the most accurate. So I have a wait-and-see attitude when it comes to the details of end-time prophecy.

One thing to remember about Revelation is that it is a book filled with symbolic language. Everything in Revelation does not need to be taken literally, and some things *cannot* be taken literally. (For example, Jesus does not have a literal metal sword coming out of His mouth.)

Without getting into all the details and without being dogmatic, I would like to suggest that perhaps the two witnesses are not two individual men, but rather two *corporate* men, i.e., two distinct bodies of people. The angel told Zechariah that they are "the two anointed ones [*b'nei ha-yitzhar*, 'sons of clear oil'], that stand by [or, stand upon (לעל)] the Lord of the whole earth." If Yahweh's two witnesses are indeed two distinct bodies of people, let me ask a question: Which two groups of people historically have stood by Yahweh, the Lord of the whole earth (stood by Him in the sense of standing with Him and for Him, and stood "upon" Him in the sense of trusting Him as the foundation of their faith)? Which two groups of people could be called "sons of clear oil" because their anointing has its origin in clear Divine revelation, unlike the muddled, contaminated "anointings" that exist in pagan religions? Which two groups of people have historically borne witness to Yahweh, the one true God of the Holy Scriptures? The obvious answer is Jews and Christians.

Both of these groups have made many serious mistakes and continue to do so, but they are the only two collective bodies of human witnesses that Yahweh has. A witness does not need to be perfect in order to be a true and reliable witness. To be a true and reliable witness, one only has to testify of the truth that he has seen and heard. John wrote, "That which we have seen

and heard declare we unto you" (1 Jn. 1:3). "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard," Peter said (Acts 4:20). It was not the sinless perfection of the Apostles which made them true and reliable witnesses; it was the truth of that which they had seen and heard.

As I stated earlier, I am not dogmatic about the details of end-time prophecy. The two witnesses may very well be two individual men (though even this does not rule out the possibility of Jews and Christians now functioning as God's two witnesses in a collective sense until the appearance of the two individuals.) If two individual men do appear as the two witnesses, I believe Moses and Elijah are the most likely candidates. (Enoch's deathless translation can be explained as a simple exception to the rule. If he was translated so that he "should not see death," then he *should NOT see death*. In other words, he should *not* die - neither then, nor in the future. If the "appointed unto men once to die" statement is taken so literally that it leaves no room for exceptions, then that would mean that Lazarus, Tabitha, Eutychus, and all the other people who were raised from the dead would still be living somewhere on earth today, because they all kept their appointment to once die. Yet we know that all these people had to die a second time after their [temporary] resurrections. It was appointed unto these particular individuals to *twice* die, as an exception to the rule. Therefore it could be appointed unto Enoch *zero times* to die, as an exception to the rule.)

Even if the two witnesses turn out to be Moses and Elijah in the end of days, Yahweh still has His two collective witnesses composed of Jews and Christians today. Moses and Elijah can be seen as representative heads of these two bodies of people, Moses representing the Jews and Elijah representing the Christians.

Moses was not a Judahite (Jew) of course, but he is known as the one through whom the Torah was given, and Jews are the ones who have preserved the Torah.

Elijah was not a "Christian" in the modern sense of the word, but he was certainly anointed (which is what the

generic sense of the word *Christian* implies). Elijah was from Ephraim, the ten northern tribes whose descendants are now scattered among the Gentile peoples, including Christian people.

So just as Moses represents the Torah and the Jewish people, so Elijah can represent the Prophets and the Christian people, because the spirit of prophecy is now among Christians, not Jews. The Jews freely admit that the spirit of prophecy departed from them: "When the latter prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi died, the Holy Spirit departed from Israel" (Sanh. 11a). Christians, on the other hand, have been blessed with the presence of the Holy Spirit and the spirit of prophecy, for "the testimony of Yeshua is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10).

Yahweh has two witnesses on parchment, namely the Torah and the Prophets, which are fully revealed in the Gospel of the Messiah Yeshua. Yahweh's two individual human representatives of the Torah and the Prophets are Moses and Elijah, who are embodied in the Person of the Messiah Yeshua. Yahweh's two human witnesses in a collective sense are Jews and Christians, who will eventually be (re)united into one Body, with Messiah Yeshua as the Head.

I do not claim to know all the details of the how, the where, the when, etc. Like others, I merely "know in part" and I "see through a glass darkly" (1 Cor. 13:12). But I *do see*! I see that the Lord is doing something in our generation that He has not done in previous generations. Do you not see it too? He is awakening Jews to see that Yeshua is their Messiah, and He is awakening Christians to see that Israel's Torah is for them, because they are now part of "the commonwealth of Israel" (Eph. 2:12) and part of the olive tree of Israel (Rom. 11:17ff).

As a remnant of Jews awakens to see the revelation of their Messiah and a remnant of Christians awakens to see the revelation of the Torah, the Lord is bringing together His faithful remnant, His two bodies of anointed witnesses, His sons of clear oil, in preparation for the end of days. The woman with a crown of twelve stars, the Israel of God, is once again travelling in birth to bring forth a manchild. Satan's anger is

directed not only at the woman Israel, but also at "the remnant of her seed": "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Yeshua the Messiah" (Rev. 12:17).

Though I see through a glass darkly, one thing I see very clearly in this verse is that Satan is angered by two things: 1) people keeping the commandments of God, and 2) people having the testimony that Yeshua is the Messiah. Satan has hated the Jews for doing the former (even though they have not done the latter), and he has hated the Christians for doing the latter (even though they have not done the former). Whenever he sees a body of people doing both, he will be doubly angered.

In the end of days, God's faithful remnant will be identified by both marks: keeping the commandments of the Torah and testifying that Yeshua is the Messiah. This is how "saints" are defined in Revelation 14:12, as "they that keep the commandments of God, and have the faith of Yeshua." After it is all over, we will stand on a sea of glass with the harps of God and sing two songs: the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb (Rev. 15:2f).

Zechariah calls the two witnesses "the two anointed ones that stand by the Lord of the whole earth." In the following chapter he gives some indication of the destiny of those who *don't* stand by the Lord of the whole earth, who *don't* want to be a part of the anointed ones. Those who are not embodied in the anointed ones are pictured as being embodied in a woman sitting inside an ephah, a large basket. Two other women, with wings like a stork, lift the ephah and fly away with it.

"Whither do these bear the ephah?" Zechariah asked the angel.

"To build it a house in the land of Shinar," the angel answered.

Shinar is the old name of Babylon, the place God's people are called to come out of in Revelation. As we approach the end of days, people will have to choose which body they want to be a part of - the body composed of the witnesses who keep the commandments of God and testify of Yeshua, or those who remain in Babylon. □

THE GOLD SHIELDS OF SOLOMON AND THE BRASS SHIELDS OF REHOBAM

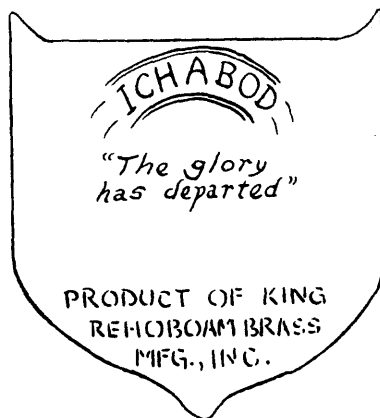
Daniel Botkin

When Solomon was king, he made 300 shields of gold "and put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon" (2 Chr. 9:16). After Solomon died, his son Rehobam became king. Rehobam did not inherit his father's wisdom. Nonetheless, his kingdom got off to a good start, thanks to some godly Levites and Israelites. "So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehobam the son of Solomon strong, three years: for three years they walked in the way of David and Solomon" (2 Chr. 11:17). Unfortunately, the good times did not last very long: "And it came to pass, when Rehobam had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of Yahweh, and all Israel with him" (2 Chr. 12:1).

Two years later, the Lord allowed Shishak, king of Egypt, to attack Jerusalem "because they had transgressed against Yahweh" (vs. 2). A prophet brought the word of the Lord to Rehobam and the princes of Judah: "Thus saith the Lord, Ye have forsaken Me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak" (vs. 5).

This prophetic word brought *some* repentance, so the Lord granted them only "some deliverance" (vs. 7). He said He would not pour out His wrath on Jerusalem, but He allowed Shishak to take away all the treasures of the Temple and of the king's house, including those 300 shields of gold that Solomon had made. So Rehobam made shields of brass to replace the shields of gold.

This story provides a brief summary of what happened to the Messianic Community (a.k.a. "the Church") early in its history. When David reigned, Israel was powerful and prosperous. It continued this way after David was gone, when Solomon reigned. This pattern was repeated in the New Testament. When Messiah Son of David was on the earth, the power and prosperity of the Lord were manifested in miracles, signs, and



wonders. After the Son of David left earth, the Apostles walked in this same power. The third generation of believers, like Rehobam, "walked in the way of David and Solomon" for a season. But after the Church was "established" (like Rehobam) and began walking in its own strength (like Rehobam), Church leaders followed the example of Rehobam. They forsook the Torah (at least those parts which they deemed "too Jewish"), and all Christians with them.

Because of the Church's compromise, the Lord soon allowed the Enemy to rob the Church of much of its spiritual treasures. Just as God allowed Shishak to steal Solomon's shields of gold, so He allowed Satan to rob believers of the Shield of Faith. Faith to do miracles, signs, and wonders gradually faded with that generation of believers who forsook the Torah. Miracles never completely disappeared - they can still happen even now - but both the magnitude and the frequency of miracles greatly diminished as the Church drifted away from the Torah.

After the Church lost its gold Shield of Faith, it continued to follow the example of Rehobam. It made shields of brass - cheap, inferior substitutes that can be brightly polished to look like gold to the untrained eye. So now instead of healing the sick with the gold Shield of Faith, we help the sick with brass shields in the

form of Christian hospitals and medical clinics. Instead of selling our excess possessions and parting them to all men as every man has need, we donate a small percentage of our wealth to Christian relief agencies. Instead of being closely-knit communities of devoted disciples, we are loosely-knit denominational clubs whose members are, with few exceptions, not true disciples.

This pattern of losing the gold Shield of Faith and substituting a shield of brass is often repeated by believers on an individual level, too. When a disciple's first love for the Lord is at its peak and white hot, he has a gold Shield of Faith to deal with any sickness that comes at him. He prays a prayer of faith, and the Lord soon heals him. But when the disciple leaves his first love, he soon loses his Shield of Faith, because "faith worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6). Then when sickness comes, he has to rely on Blue Cross or Blue Shield instead of on the Savior's Cross and the Shield of Faith.

Some individuals make their job into a brass shield. When a disciple still has his first love for the Lord, he faithfully keeps the Sabbath, even if it means less money and less opportunities for promotions. He'll keep the Sabbath even if it causes him to lose his job. His gold Shield of Faith quenches every fiery dart of fear about finances. But when he leaves his first love, his faith in God's providence fades. Then when his employer orders him to work on the Sabbath, he is afraid he will lose his job and be unable to pay his bills if he refuses. So he uses his job as a brass shield and works on the Sabbath.

I knew of a brother years ago who used his job as a brass shield in a different way. This brother (whom I will call Tom) had a job singing and playing music in bars and night clubs when he first came to the Lord. The brother who led Tom to the Lord knew that this was not a good environment

for a new believer, so he told Tom he should quit his job and trust God to provide some other kind of work. So Tom quit his job and the Lord provided better work and better pay. As long as Tom maintained the fire of his first love, the Lord continued to provide. But as Tom's first love faded, so did his faith. Eventually he had no job and he felt like he had to go back to playing music in bars. This brother backslid. He committed adultery and his wife divorced him. Then he lived in sin with another woman, who gave birth to their illegitimate child. Tom eventually repented and got right with the Lord again, but only after years of heartache. If Tom had kept the fire of his first love burning, the Enemy would not have robbed him of his Shield of Faith.

Shields of brass are cheap, inferior substitutes for the gold Shield of Faith, but are shields of brass always wrong? If a shield of brass is causing you to sin, it is definitely wrong. You need to repent, return to your first love, and get rid of that brass shield. But what about things like Christian doctors, hospitals, and medical clinics that exist as substitutes for miraculous healings? Because these are less than ideal, some believers shun any medical treatment. Some go so far as to say that it is sinful to go to a doctor or to take any kind of medicine. These things may be shields of brass, but they are better than no shields at all. Ideally, I would prefer to see people healed with nothing more than the Shield of Faith. I believe this power will eventually be restored to God's people, but in the meantime, it's foolish to curse the brass shields and throw them away if they can get the job done (without causing you to sin).

If you do not yet have the Shield of Faith, don't throw away the shield of brass if it is not causing you to sin and if it is getting the job done. When my wife was in high school in the 1970s, one of her classmates got all fired up at a Pentecostal healing rally. As the carload of teenagers were driving home after the meeting, this young brother decided to throw his eye-glasses out the car window as an act

of faith, trusting that Jesus would heal his eyesight. As they sped over the bridge, he cast his glasses out the car window and they sank beneath the waters of the Illinois River. It didn't work. Apparently it was an impulsive act of presumption rather than an act of real faith. His parents were quite displeased when he had to explain to them what happened to his glasses.

Some believers who shun all doctors and medicines have lost much more than a pair of glasses. In the 1970s there was a hyper-charismatic group based in Indiana, led by a man named Hobart Freeman. Freeman was fiercely opposed to all forms of doctoring and medication, and preached against it. He taught that believers should just confess by faith that they had received their healing. Any symptoms of sickness that lingered afterwards were to be considered nothing more than "Satanic deception." I had a friend who met with a group of Freemanites here in Peoria. This brother, like all faithful Freemanites, tried to totally shun all medicines, even aspirin. Some of his teeth rotted away because he refused to go to a dentist. He refused to wear his glasses, and confessed "by faith" that the Lord had healed his eyes. But the driver's license examiner wasn't convinced of it, because he failed his seeing test. So he couldn't get his driver's license renewed because of the unbelief of the examiner. He had a concrete construction business, and had to have his employees drive him around, until he finally compromised and went back to wearing glasses.

Many of the Freemanites in Indiana lost a lot more than their teeth or their driver's license. Some of them lost their lives or the lives of their children. Over a period of several years, there were around 100 deaths among the Freemanites, many of them children and most (if not all of them) deaths which could have been prevented. Parents were charged with child abuse and Freeman was charged with aiding and abetting negligent homicide. Two weeks before his court date, Freeman died of an infection, which some sources say was treatable.

As I write this, a 50-year old friend of mine is languishing away in a nursing home because he refused to take insulin for his diabetes, insisting that he was trusting God to heal him. He could have lived if he had taken insulin, but now his internal organs are damaged beyond repair, one doctor says. Unless God miraculously intervenes, he may be dead by the time most readers get this. A premature death due to presumption and stubbornness does not glorify God.

These are extreme cases, but they demonstrate the folly of throwing away the shields of brass if you don't really have the true Shield of Faith. If a shield of brass is causing you to sin, it needs to be thrown away. But some shields of brass function as a kind of temporary scaffolding to help us while we are in the process of rebuilding the structure of "the faith which was once delivered" and later was lost. We are rebuilding this structure like the Jews rebuilt Jerusalem after they left Babylon. They no doubt needed scaffolding to rebuild some of the walls, as we do. Scaffolding should not be dismantled until it is no longer needed. If it is dismantled too soon, it only makes the task more difficult.

When the Jews left their Babylonian exile and returned to Jerusalem, it would have been nice if the Temple and walls had still been standing intact and waiting for them. They weren't, though. The returning exiles had a long, difficult job of restoration ahead of them, and enemies to hinder the work.

When we leave our Babylonian exile, it would be nice if we found ourselves immediately walking in the same measure of power and authority that we see in the Book of Acts. But coming out of Babylon does not make the New Jerusalem magically appear. We have a lot of recovering and rebuilding to do. If we haven't yet recovered the gold Shield of Faith in a certain area of work, we may have to temporarily use a brass shield as a substitute for scaffolding - but only if the brass shield does not cause us to sin, and only until we recover the gold Shield of Faith. □

ISAIAH 58: A Reading for Yom Kippur (or any other day of the year) Daniel Botkin

Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, is a day of prayer and fasting. It is also a sabbath. One passage of Scripture that is read in the synagogues on Yom Kippur is Isaiah 58, a chapter which speaks about prayer, fasting, and Sabbath-keeping.

The chapter opens up with the words "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show My people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins." Notice that this message concerns the transgressions and sins of God's people, not of the heathens. The heathens need to wake up and turn to God, too, but this chapter concerns God's covenant people.

The instruction is to lift up thy voice like a trumpet, a *shofar*. The shofar is traditionally associated with awakening people to repentance. If people do not make a conscious effort to stay spiritually alert and awake, they will find themselves being drawn into spiritual slumber. This is the reason people need to experience spiritual re-awakenings from time to time. The blowing of the shofar during the Fall Feasts is a reminder to "awaken to righteousness, and sin not" (1 Cor. 15:34).

If you lift up your voice (or pen) and try to awaken God's people to righteousness, you will be considered an unwelcome pest by the slumbering saints. The reason for this is because sleeping people do not like to be awakened. Many years ago I worked at a children's home. I worked the late-night shift when the boys were asleep. Each morning I had to have them all out of bed and getting ready for school before I left to go home at 7 a.m. I would go from room to room and start waking them up at 6:30. Most of them would mumble, "Okay, I'm awake," then immediately go back to sleep as soon as I left to go to the next bedroom. It was a real struggle to get a dozen or so lazy teenage boys out of bed that early in the morning.

I finally solved the difficulty by getting a loud whistle, one like athletic coaches and referees use. I would go into the bedrooms at 6:30 and gently awaken the boys. Then I would return about five minutes later, reawaken them, and add, "If you don't get out of bed right now, I'll have to blow the whistle." If there was not an immediate response, I would fill my lungs full of air and blow the whistle as loudly as I could. Most of the boys only had to experience the whistle one or two times. After that, the mere threat of the whistle caused them to jump out of bed and beg, "Don't blow it! I'm up, I'm up!"

Sleeping teenagers don't like to be awakened, and slumbering saints don't like it, either - especially when the call to awaken is loud like a shofar (or whistle). Slumbering saints often dislike attempts to awaken them because they do not want to make any changes. They have settled into a comfortable religious routine, and don't want to be disturbed. Like Isaiah's audience, "they take delight in approaching to God" (vs. 2) - as they should - but their worship and devotion to God is shallow. One proof of their shallowness is in their motives and manner of prayer, fasting, and Sabbath-keeping. They fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness, like Jezebel did. (See 1 Kings 21:9-13.) Or, they focus only on the outward aspects (bowing the head, sackcloth and ashes), but ignore the weightier aspects (loosing the bands

of wickedness, undoing heavy burdens, freeing the oppressed, breaking every yoke, feeding the hungry, taking in the poor, clothing the naked, and not neglecting their own family's needs).

Prayer and fasting, whether on Yom Kippur or any other day, bring positive results when done with the right motives and in the right way. After Isaiah describes proper fasting, he mentions some of the results: light, health, righteousness manifested, glory, answered prayer, Divine guidance, satisfaction, restoration of waste places and old paths (vss. 8-12).

These blessings promised in Isaiah 58 are not guaranteed through prayer and fasting alone. Sabbath-keeping is also mentioned as a condition of receiving these blessings:

"If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words" (vs. 13).

The KJV translation can be a bit ambiguous and even misleading for readers who are not used to reading "King James-ese" English (also called Elizabethan English). To a modern-day speaker of English, to "turn thy foot from the Sabbath" sounds like walking away from the Sabbath and abandoning it. What it actually means is to turn away your foot from activities forbidden on the Sabbath, and to do it *because of* the Sabbath, *mi-shabbat*. In Hebrew the *mi-* prefix usually means "from" in the sense of origin, but can also mean "from" in the sense of "because of." We sometimes use "from" this way in English: "He fainted from exhaustion" means he fainted *because of* exhaustion.

Another word that can be misleading in this verse is the word translated "pleasure." Some Sabbath-keepers read this and erroneously conclude

that all pleasurable, fun activities are forbidden on the Sabbath. If you have ever read Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Praire* series, you may remember Pa telling Laura how his family kept the "Sabbath" (i.e., Sunday) when Grandpa was a boy. After a cold Sunday-morning breakfast, they walked to church. They were not allowed to laugh or talk or even smile on the way to church. At church they dared not fidget or swing their feet or look out a window. On the way home they could talk quietly, but laughing and smiling were still forbidden. After a cold dinner, the children sat in a row on a bench and studied their catechism til the sun went down. The entire day was a dreary, somber, pleasureless affair.

The Lord wants His people to refrain from working or conducting business on the Sabbath, but He does not want the Sabbath to be a day devoid of all pleasure, because the very next phrase says "call the Sabbath a delight." If the Sabbath is purged of all pleasure, how can it be a delight? When the Scripture says to turn away thy foot "from doing thy pleasure," this does not rule out *all* pleasure. It only rules out pleasures which would constitute the breaking of the Sabbath (e.g., pleasures involving work or the transacting of business). Some other translations of the phrase are: "from doing as you please" (NIV); "from pursuing thy business" (JPS); "from accomplishing your own needs" (Stone Tanach).

When prayer, fasting, and Sabbath-keeping are done properly and for the right reasons, they are braided together into a three-fold cord which can be used like a lasso to secure the blessings promised in Isaiah 58.

"Then shalt thou delight thyself in Yahweh," the chapter ends, "and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of Yahweh hath spoken it." Amen. □

ANTINOMIANISM

Daniel Botkin

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GRATITUDE & THANKSGIVING

Daniel Botkin

Like most people who have lived over fifty years, I have experienced a lot of saddening things. I have lost people whom I dearly loved, some through death, some through betrayal, and others through happenstance. In addition to the loss of loved ones in the past, I have a constant source of sadness in the present. Our youngest daughter, Autumn, has Down syndrome. Her disabilities cause a lot of difficulties for her and for the entire family. If I wanted to, I could focus on all the past and present sad stuff in my life, wallow in self-pity, and become a very depressed, bitter person. You know the type - a person who is always miserable and expects everyone else around him (or her) to be equally miserable.

Everyone who lives in this sin-infected world experiences some sadness. Anyone can focus on the sadness in life. I've found that it's far better to focus on the blessings in life and give thanks to God for the good things. I have no answer to the "Why?" question. I have absolutely no idea why life on earth has to include sadness and suffering. I do not know why a God who is Almighty, omniscient, all wise and all good allows evil to run its course. The only thing I know about such things is that there will someday be a Day of Judgment. On that Day the righteous Judge will right every wrong ever done, fix every injustice ever suffered, and mete out appropriate rewards and punishment. Knowing this, I can be thankful for the blessings in life instead of becoming bitter about the sadness.

It is important to always be thankful, even in difficult times. Ingratitude was one of the sins of the wilderness generation. "Our fathers understood not Thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of Thy mercies... They forgot God their Saviour, which had done great things in Egypt" (Ps. 106:7-21).

Dwelling on past or current hard-

ships leads to ingratitude. Ingratitude leads to murmuring and complaining, which lead to sin and judgment.

In his book *The Essentials of Prayer*, E.M. Bounds discusses the difference between gratitude and thanksgiving. Gratitude is an inward emotion, something felt in the soul. Thanksgiving is a voluntary outward expression of the inward gratitude which one feels. Thanksgiving flows out of gratitude. If your life is not marked by frequent expressions of thanks to God, this is an indication of ingratitude. "Gratitude and murmuring never abide in the same heart at the same time," Bounds writes.

Many of the Psalms exhort us to give thanks to the Lord. Several of Paul's Epistles likewise tell us to give thanks. It is obvious from the Scriptures that God wants us to offer prayers of thanksgiving.

Most people do not need a pre-written, prescribed prayer to give thanks to God. However, for those who may have difficulty coming up with the right words to express their gratitude, the rabbis have written many blessings which can be used to thank God for various things. There are the well-known blessings that are recited to give thanks for the fruit of the vine and for bread which comes from the earth. There are other blessings to give thanks for other foods. There are blessings to give thanks for children, for the various festivals, for hearing good tidings, for the beauties and wonders of nature, for scholars, and for the Torah. There is even a blessing that Orthodox Jews recite after going to the bathroom.

("Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who fashioned man with wisdom and created within him many openings and many cavities....").

When Nehemiah was rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, he appointed "two great companies" for the express purpose of giving thanks to God. Nehemiah 12:31 says that one of these two companies of thankers stood by the Dung Gate. Maybe this is what inspired the rabbis to write their after-the-bathroom blessing?

E.M. Bounds writes, "Love grows as gratitude is felt, and then breaks out into praise and thanksgiving to God." An example of this can be seen in Psalm 116:1f: "I love Yahweh, because He hath heard my voice and my supplication. Because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live."

It's okay to recall your past suffering if you also recall the Lord's faithfulness in getting you through that suffering. This is what the psalmist does in the next verse: "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow." But then he immediately adds, "Then called I upon the name of Yahweh: O Yahweh, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul. Gracious is Yahweh, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful." Then the psalmist recalls, "I was brought low, and He helped me," and he continues to give heart-felt thanks for the Lord's help.

In gratitude for God's faithfulness, the psalmist says, "I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of Yahweh." Sometimes when we are still hurting from our suffering and loss, it's difficult to give thanks for anything. These are the times when prayers of thanksgiving are a real sacrifice. Prayers of thanksgiving spoken during times of pain are a sacrifice that will not go unnoticed by the Lord. □

BELIEVING IN YESHUA TO BE SAVED: NECESSARY OR OPTIONAL FOR JEWS?

Dr. Daniel Botkin

Can Jews have everlasting life in Yeshua's Messianic Kingdom if they believe that Yeshua was a false messiah? Some Christian and Messianic Jewish leaders have been teaching that Jews can "be saved" or "go to heaven" or "have eternal life" without believing in Jesus/Yeshua.

John Hagee, pastor of the Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas, is one well-known Christian teacher who has embraced this doctrine, according to an article in this summer's newsletter from Tzemach Institute for Biblical Studies. Ken Garrison, the writer of the article in *The Tzemach Letter*, believes that Hagee's view reflects "true Biblical theology" and that the opposite view (that Jews must believe in Yeshua to be saved) is "false Constantinian doctrine."¹ John Hagee's view is by no means new. Other Christians in the past have proposed a "dual covenant theology" that exempts Jews from having to believe in Jesus for salvation. But it is only in recent years that well-known Evangelicals like Hagee have gone public with this view.

In the Messianic Jewish academic world, discussion about this topic has recently been raised as a result of Mark Kinzer's book *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005). The latest issue of *Keshet*, *A Journal of Messianic Judaism* is devoted to a discussion of Kinzer's book, and includes responses to the book from six Christian and Messianic Jewish leaders, followed by Kinzer's rejoinder to these responses.

For people who know and believe all of the many New Testament statements that plainly speak about the need to believe in Jesus, this naturally begs the question: If individual Jews believe that Yeshua was a false messiah, then how will those individual Jews get into His Kingdom? This question is neither unfair nor anti-

Semitic. It is a legitimate question that must be answered if the teaching is to be given serious consideration. If this teaching is to be accepted by people who believe the New Testament Scriptures, then the teaching must be explained in a way that will make it compatible with the New Testament Scriptures.

Ken Garrison's explanation in *The Tzemach Letter* focuses on two statements Jesus made. In the first statement, Jesus describes the resurrection of the dead with these words: "... those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28f). Garrison comments: "According to the specific teaching of Messiah Jesus, judgment is based on what has been done in this life." The second statement that Garrison quotes is Jesus' answer to the rich young ruler who asked how he could have eternal life: "... if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt. 19:17b). Garrison states that "the New Testament basis for judgment is the deeds of this life," and he references (but does not quote) Romans 2:6-8, Revelation 20:11-15, and Romans 2:12-16. "It is important to note that we maintain that this basis for judgment is possible because all men have been justified by the expiating death of Messiah Jesus on the cross (Romans 5:18.)"²

While Garrison's explanation focuses on deeds, Mark Kinzer's *Postmissionary* explanation takes a different approach. Kinzer claims that Yeshua is, in fact, present among the Jewish people in a hidden, mysterious way. He is not recognized by Jews (except for Messianic Jews), but He is there, even among the ones who strongly reject Him. Kinzer does not say in his book whether or not Yeshua's "hidden presence" within the Jewish community brings salvation to individual Jews who reject Yeshua.

As a matter of fact, all three of the Messianic Jewish responses to Kinzer's book express concern over Kinzer's ambiguity about this. In Kinzer's rejoinder, he acknowledges this ("All my Messianic Jewish reviewers call for a clear statement of my views regarding the salvation of Jews who lack explicit Yeshua-faith"³), but he does not give a statement to clarify his position. However, Kinzer was quoted in a *Jews For Jesus* publication a few years ago as saying, "I believe it's still possible for a Jew who doesn't know Yeshua to have a living relationship with God, just as a Christian"⁴

Are people like Kinzer and John Hagee correct? Is there some way that Jews can deny and reject Yeshua and still be saved? I speak as a man who has had a deep love and admiration for Jews since 1972, when I was first saved. Of all the people-groups in the world, there is no other group I would rather see saved than the Jewish people. I would love to believe that individual Jews can be saved without believing in Yeshua - *but only if it is Scripturally true*. This is the crucial question. Is it Scripturally true that individual Jews can reject Yeshua and still be saved? I would love to believe it, but I am not convinced that it is Scripturally true. Neither are the Messianic Jewish leaders who reviewed Kinzer's book in *Keshet*. David Stern, translator of the *Jewish New Testament* and editor of the *Complete Jewish Bible*, writes:

"This idea that Yeshua is present with Jews who do not accept him as Messiah, or even vehemently reject him, distresses many believers - and rightly so - for whom bringing the saving message of Yeshua to the Jewish people is of paramount importance. They fear that Christians may think this 'mysterious presence' of Yeshua behind the scenes suffices for the salvation of individual Jews and thus become complacent about

Jewish evangelism. Unfortunately, Kinzer's book is unclear about this, and this is my main criticism of it. Is Yeshua's *hidden* presence with Jews a *saving* presence, or not? If his answer is 'Yes,' then I think we part company."⁵

Later in his review, Stern adds:

"The idea of Yeshua's hidden presence in the Jewish community can easily be misunderstood or abused. The ekklesia could draw the false conclusion that if Yeshua is already present among the Jews, there is no need for evangelism or witness of any kind. Such complacency would simply be Two-Covenant Theology in disguise, and not a very clever disguise. Also the question arises, 'Why only the Jews? If Yeshua died for all human-kind, why isn't he "mysteriously present" with Muslims, Hindus, South Sea Islanders, even atheists?'"⁶

Stern's question is one that needs a clear answer if Kinzer's theory is to be given any serious consideration. Some liberal theologians with a low view of the inspiration of the Scriptures would probably answer that Jesus *is* in fact "mysteriously present" among all those groups, and that his presence is a saving presence. In *The Tzemach Letter*, Ken Garrison states: "Some aborigines who have never heard of the Bible or the God of the Bible but live humbly before God (Micah 6:8) relative to the natural revelation available to them will most likely be accepted by God in the afterlife."⁷

We know that God is a just Judge and will judge all individuals fairly. This knowledge might make us suspect that God may somehow make a way for Jews (or aborigines) to have eternal life without believing in Jesus, but we have no right to teach it as doctrine. To do so is going "beyond what is written" (1 Cor. 4:6). Our commission is to tell the lost, both Jew and Gentile, that they need to believe in Yeshua/Jesus or they will perish. Jonah's commission was to tell the Ninevites that Nineveh would be destroyed in forty days. Because the people repented, God withdrew His decree and spared them. Jonah had suspected that God might do this

(Jonah 4:1f). But when Jonah proclaimed, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown," he did not voice his theological speculation by adding, "But to be honest with you guys, I think God might be bluffing!" This would have probably led to no repentance and guaranteed Nineveh's destruction. If our voiced (or written) speculations give lost people the impression that God might be bluffing about the need to believe in Jesus, this will only encourage them to remain in their lost condition, and will guarantee their separation from God for all eternity. Speculating about how God will judge heathens who never heard the gospel is a subject beyond the scope of this article, so let us return to the Messianic Jewish responses to Kinzer's book.

Daniel Juster is another well-known Messianic Jewish leader who raises important questions for Kinzer:

"Do individual Jews need to embrace Yeshua to be saved, or to have everlasting life? ... Is Judaism so good, true, beautiful and adequate? Is it true to say that, while embracing Yeshua in a Jewish context may be best, nevertheless, traditional Judaism, in a way unawares, connects one to Yeshua too?"⁸

Juster answers his own question: "I do not think that Scripture supports Kinzer's more happy analysis of the condition of religious Jews or such a high view of post-Yeshua Judaism."⁹

The third Messianic Jewish leader to review Kinzer's book is Mitch Glaser, president of Chosen People Ministries, an organization that targets Jews for evangelism. Glaser begins his review somewhat tongue-in-cheek:

"As a career missionary, I read the title of Mark Kinzer's new book, *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism*, with some consternation. After all, he seems to be indicating that my job is obsolete!"¹⁰

As for Kinzer's theory that Yeshua is "present but unrecognized" in the Jewish community, Glaser considers it "quite a theological leap."¹¹ Glaser, like David Stern and Daniel Juster, expresses concern about Kinzer's ambiguity when it comes to the

question of individual Jews who reject Yeshua.

At this point, some Christian readers might be wondering how a person who believes in the New Testament Scriptures could even consider the possibility of Jews being saved without believing in Jesus. Didn't Jesus say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John 14:6)? Aren't there dozens of verses which clearly state that a person must believe in Jesus to be saved? Yes, there are. And some people would probably explain those verses by saying something like this:

"Jews who believe in God also believe in a coming Messiah whom God has promised. So if they believe in God's promise of a coming Messiah, they do, in fact, believe in Jesus. They just don't realize it."

This reasoning process could be explained with equations: "If $a = b$ and $b = c$, then $a = c$. If Jews believe (a) in God's promised Messiah (b), and God's promised Messiah (b) is Yeshua (c), then they believe (a) in Yeshua (c)."

Or, to put it another way: "If a man believes in Superman, then he also believes in Clark Kent without realizing it, for Superman and Clark Kent are really the same person." (Although if a man who believed in Superman despised Clark Kent and falsely accused Clark of wrongdoing, I'm not sure how much that man would be helped by his faith in Superman.)

If we discover on the Day of Judgment that God lets unbelieving Jews into the Kingdom on some basis which we (or I, at least) cannot presently see, I will be as relieved and happy about it as anyone. However, I am sad to say that I do not see a Scriptural basis for this. For one thing, Jews who believe in a coming Messiah usually think of it in terms of national redemption, not in terms of personal salvation and forgiveness through Messiah's sacrifice. Secondly, there are too many New Testament Scriptures which seem to exclude the possibility of an individual "believing in Jesus" without realizing it:

- "... if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." (John 8:24)
- "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)
- "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Messiah is born of God..." (1 John 5:1a)

One of Kinzer's claims is that the Jewish "no" to Yeshua is a paradoxical "yes" to God. However, there are many verses which show that those who truly know and love God will recognize and love His Son:

- "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me: for he wrote of Me." (John 5:46)
- "If God were your Father, ye would love Me." (John 8:42)
- "He that hateth Me hateth My Father also." (John 15:23)
- "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." (1 John 2:23)
- "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Messiah is born of God: and every one that loveth Him that begat loveth Him also that is begotten of Him." (1 John 5:1)
- "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9)

Yeshua said to the Father, "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Yeshua the Messiah, whom Thou hast sent" (John 17:3). Eternal life and the knowledge of God cannot be separated from the knowledge of Yeshua the Messiah.

I do not have a problem with someone believing that Yeshua has been present among the Jewish people *as a collective body*, that He is the One who has preserved the Jewish people *as a nation* all these centuries. But this "hidden presence" of Yeshua does not change the lost condition of those individual Jews who do not believe in Him. Consider what

2 Corinthians 4:3f says about the spiritual condition of those from whom Yeshua is "hidden":

● "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

If Yeshua is present among the Jewish people but hidden, then those individuals who do not see Him are lost and blinded, according to this passage.

Some people have suggested that after the resurrection of the dead, Jews will see Yeshua as He truly is, and will then have the opportunity to confess him as the Messiah. After the resurrection, though, *everyone*, even non-Jews, will realize who He is. It will not require any faith to confess Him then. And some verses indicate that a post-resurrection confession will be too late, that our confession of Him must be made during this life:

- "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 10:32f)

The phrase "before men" implies a confession or denial in this life, not in the age to come. John 3:18 also confirms this:

- "He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

John makes other strong, clear statements about the need to believe in Yeshua:

- "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself. He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And

this is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." (1 John 5:10-12)

The above passage indicates that those who do not believe the record concerning God's Son (i.e., the testimony of the Apostles and others who were eyewitnesses of Yeshua's Resurrection) do not have the Son, and therefore do not have eternal life.

The Epistle to the Hebrews (or, "Messianic Jews" as it is called in the *Jewish New Testament*) has some strong warnings that Messianic Jews (and non-Messianic Jews) today need to remember when considering the question of salvation:

- "For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. 2:2f)

Context makes it clear that the "great salvation" is the salvation provided through Yeshua. The warnings continue in the next chapter:

- "Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart... Take heed [Hebrew] brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." (Heb. 3:7f, 12)

In the context of these verses, the writer is presenting Yeshua as the Messiah, "worthy of more glory than Moses" (vs. 3). According to this passage, those individual Hebrews who harden their hearts toward Yeshua do so from an evil heart, and in so doing they depart from the living God, just as those who rejected Moses did. Furthermore, to reject Yeshua is even more dangerous than rejecting Moses:

- "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be

thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy [common] thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace?" (Heb. 10:28f)

Anyone - Jew or Gentile - who regards the blood of Yeshua as a common thing insults the Spirit of grace.

According to the Bible, outright denial of Yeshua makes a person a liar, a false prophet, and a false teacher:

- "Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Yeshua is the Messiah?" (1 John 2:22)
- "...false prophets... false teachers... bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them and bring upon themselves swift destruction." (2 Pet. 2:1)

I would not want to be in the shoes of those rabbis who deny that Yeshua is the Messiah. According to John, they are liars, and "all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8).

It's true that Yeshua told the rich young ruler to keep the commandments if he wanted to enter into life. But those Orthodox rabbis who teach that Yeshua was a false messiah do not keep the commandments, because one of the commandments is "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor" (Ex. 20:16). Those who call Yeshua a false messiah are breaking this commandment. Another commandment is "Thou shalt not covet" (Ex. 20:17). This was probably the one commandment that the rich young ruler had not kept, "for he had great possessions" and "he was very rich," and he let his wealth keep him from following Yeshua (Matt. 22 & Lk. 18:23). The covetousness that Yeshua perceived in this young man's heart was probably the thing that prompted Yeshua to tell him to keep the commandments, in order to expose his covetousness. Yeshua

knew that "the just shall live by his faith" (Hab. 2:4), so He was *not* telling the young man that he could be *justified* by keeping the commandments of the Law. The Apostles repeat and confirm this 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 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)

Even the Tenach (Old Testament) teaches that a man is justified by faith. Yet many Jews believe that doing enough *mitzvot* (commandments) will earn them a place in Paradise. Sadly, even some rabbis believe and teach this. If you do not believe this, let me quote a well-known and highly-respected Orthodox rabbi who wrote an article in the *Jewish Press* a few years ago. The rabbi was discussing some of the differences between Judaism and Christianity, and extolling the alleged superiority of Judaism over Christian beliefs. "Jesus is so much less complicated than the Jewish G-d," the rabbi wrote, "promising a place in eternity through a simple act of faith... But for all my admiration of Christianity, I would rather rot in hell than go to a heaven I hadn't earned."¹² Tragically, this rabbi will most assuredly get his wish and rot in hell if he continues to believe that he can earn a place in heaven. Daniel Juster is correct when he writes:

"Most of our people today can be rightly described as, 'The lost sheep of the house of Israel.' As one who has lived in New York, Chicago, Washington and now Israel, my general sense is that non-messianic Jews who profess to have a love relationship with God are a small number. Israelis in many ways have abandoned the Torah. Most have little interest in a

return to Orthodoxy. In my view, Yeshua is the way for our people to return to God and Judaism."¹³

I would modify Juster's last statement and say that Yeshua is the *only* way for Jews to return to God. If there were some other way, why did Peter, Paul, Barnabas, and many others risk their reputations and their very lives trying to convince their fellow Jews that Yeshua was the Messiah?

- For he [Apollos] mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Yeshua was Messiah." (Acts 18:28)

- "Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Yeshua was Messiah." (Acts 18:5)

Why was it so important to these men to testify to the Jews, if Jews don't need to believe in Yeshua to be saved? Paul knew that they were *not* saved:

- "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." (Rom. 10:1)
- "I say the truth in Messiah, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Messiah for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites..." (Rom. 9:1-4a)

Paul would not pray that his fellow Jews "might be saved" unless they were lost. If Jews don't need to believe in Yeshua, why did Paul lament their unbelief? Juster asks similar questions:

"How can we account for the biblical statements in John which passionately call for Jews to make a life and death existential decision for Yeshua? How do we understand the preaching of Paul, and the pattern in Acts? Would Paul wish himself to be personally accursed so that Jews would have a richer faith than their already adequate but weaker faith?"¹⁴

Teachers like Kinzer, Hagee, and

others make Judaism look like an acceptable alternative to Jesus. This only encourages more non-Jewish Messianics to deny Yeshua and convert to Judaism. After all, if a person can have a good relationship with God through Judaism, who needs Jesus? If a person can be saved by just being a good Jew, Yeshua would not have needed to die - "for if righteousness comes by the law, then Christ died in vain" (Gal 2:21).

I am reminded of the testimony of Israeli believer Reuven Doron. As a young man, Reuven was searching for meaning in life. At the urging of a Christian friend, Reuven began to pray and seek God. Hour after hour, night after night, Reuven poured out his heart in prayer, trying to find God. But God would not answer. Reuven tells how he finally realized why God was silent:

"In that deafening silence, in that great emptiness of mind and soul, I came upon a great discovery. It dawned on me that, though not raised in an Orthodox Jewish home, I had still set myself to seek the Living God the way an Orthodox Jew would do.

"In my heart I reasoned that if I could prove that God exists - the God of Israel, the creator of heaven and earth, the one and only God - only then, after finding Him, would I consider Jesus. Only after connecting with the Father would I examine the claims of the Son. Yet God, who looks to the heart and is not impressed with our many words, didn't even 'wink' in my direction! As long as I did not acknowledge my need for a savior, God kept His silence! Truly I was living out the reality of the scripture that says, 'Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also' (1 Jn. 2:23)"¹⁵

Reuven had tried to find a way to God without Yeshua, but failed. He felt trapped, with no way of escape. In what Reuven calls "genuine anger and frustration," he asked God the crucial question: "Do I need Him? Do I need the Nazarene in order to come to You?"

Then for the first time in his life,

Reuven consciously heard God.

Reuven writes:

"Out of heaven came an arrow of revelation piercing through the darkness of the night, the world, and my soul. His Word now sparked my spirit alive with a blaze of truth as He spoke, 'Yes' and 'Amen! You need the Nazarene!'"¹⁶

All men, including Jews, need the Nazarene in order to come to God. This is the reason that Peter, Paul, Barnabas, Apollos, and all the others risked their reputations and their lives to tell their fellow Jews about the Nazarene. Read Romans 10:19 & 11:11, and you will see that it is our duty to follow the Apostles' example, and do what we can to persuade Jews that Yeshua is their Messiah.

There is a big "repentance" movement in Judaism. Religious Jews attempt to get secular Jews back to the Torah. But repentance is only half of the message. Paul testified "both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Yeshua the Messiah" (Acts 20:21). Repentance toward God is not enough. Repentance must be followed by faith in the Lord Yeshua. If repentance does not lead to faith in Yeshua, it is shallow repentance. "For the preaching of the cross is to them that are perishing foolishness; but unto us which are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18). Those Jews who are being drawn to salvation will see the power of God in the message of a crucified Messiah. Those Jews who are perishing will consider the message - and the messenger - foolish.

Telling Jews that they need Jesus will probably make you somewhat unpopular with the Jewish community. To give you an idea of how hostile some Orthodox Jews are toward believers, let me quote from a recent article in the *Jewish Press*. The article tells about some Messianic Jews in Israel who distributed free food and children's games to Israeli victims of the recent war. Orthodox Jews sent out a warning letter to the recipients of this charity. The letter stated: "We must remember that they [believers in

Yeshua] have no desire other than to destroy the Jewish Nation."¹⁷

This sort of false accusation and rejection is the reproach we are called to bear as disciples of Yeshua. Let's not be cowards. When we talk to people, whether Jews or Gentiles, let's not be afraid to tell them what the Scriptures say. We do not need to apologize for the words which God inspired holy men to write by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. If people dislike what the Word of God says, God is big enough and strong enough to take care of Himself, without our having to make apologies on His behalf.

NOTES

¹Ken Garrison, "Jews and Others in Judgment," *The Tzemach Letter*, Summer 2006, p. 4.

²Ibid.

³Mark S. Kinzer, "Rejoinder to Responses," *Kesher*, Issue 20, Winter/Spring 2006, p. 56.

⁴Rich Robinson & Ruth Rosen, "Us and Him," *Havurah*, 6:3, Fall 2003, p. 6.

⁵David H. Stern, "A Response to *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism*," *Kesher*, Issue 20, Winter/Spring 2006, p. 19.

⁶Ibid., p.21.

⁷Garrison, p.4.

⁸Daniel C. Juster, "A Response to *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism*," *Kesher*, Issue 20, Winter/Spring 2006, p. 27.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Mitch Glaser, "A Response to *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism*," *Kesher*, Issue 20, Winter/Spring 2006, p. 30.

¹¹Ibid., p.32.

¹²Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, "Dr. Laura: Fair Weather Jew," *The Jewish Press*, 29 Aug. 2003, p.7, col.3.

¹³Juster, p. 28f.

¹⁴Ibid., p.27.

¹⁵Reuven Doron, *One New Man* (Cedar Rapids, IA: Embrace, 1993), p. 46.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 47.

¹⁷Yad L'Achim: Missionaries Taking Advantage of War," *The Jewish Press*, 25 Aug. 2006, p. 49, col. 1.

SPIRITUAL DRUNKENNESS

Daniel Botkin

*"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit."
-Ephesians 5:18*

In Pentecostal and charismatic circles, some Christians claim that they are sometimes "spiritually drunk" or "drunk on the Holy Spirit." Years ago I heard of a preacher who referred to himself as a "Holy Ghost bartender," claiming he was dispensing "the wine of the Holy Spirit" which made people "drunk in the Spirit." Is this sort of thing Biblical, or not?

There are times when the Holy Spirit truly fills people with a wonderful joy which gives them a powerful emotional lift. This can happen as a result of an intensified awareness of God's presence, or as the result of some powerful act of God. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing" (Ps. 126:1f). The presence and the power of the Lord can put people into a dream-like state and even fill people's mouths with laughter, as Psalm 126 shows. People can become so aware of the presence of God that they become a bit giddy. In *Of God and Men*, A.W. Tozer wrote, "The Spirit-filled man may literally dwell in a state of spiritual fervour amounting to a mild and pure inebriation."

I come from a Pentecostal background and in many ways still consider myself a Pentecostal, so I am acquainted with this sort of experiential faith. Disciples of Yeshua can and should have spiritual experiences which stir them emotionally, and put them in a dream-like state, and occasionally even fill their mouths with laughter. And Tozer was right; it is possible to dwell in a state of mind that amounts to "a mild and pure inebriation." This sort of experience is Biblical, but this is *not* "spiritual drunkenness." Drunkenness is intoxication. Embedded in the word

intoxication is the word *toxic*, which means poison. The "mild and pure inebriation" of which Tozer wrote contains no toxins.

"But doesn't the Bible talk about God putting people into a state of spiritual drunkenness?" Yes, it does. However, spiritual drunkenness is not presented in the Bible as a blessing. It is presented as a curse, a judgment from Yahweh to numb people's spiritual senses and blind them to the truth. "They are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink" (Isa. 29:9). The spiritually-induced drunkenness described here is not Christians staggering around at a Pentecostal Holy Ghost party, drunk on the wine of the Holy Spirit. This spiritually-induced drunkenness is God's judgment, and its purpose is to blind religious hypocrites to Scriptural truth, as the very next verse shows:

"For Yahweh hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets, and your rulers, the seers hath He covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed. And the book is delivered to him that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned" (Isa. 29:10-12).

This spiritual drunkenness numbs the spiritual senses of prophets, rulers, and seers. Neither the learned nor the unlearned can understand the Scriptures. The reason for this judgment is stated in the next verse:

"Wherefore the Lord saith, Forasmuch as this people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour Me, but have removed their heart far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the precept of men. Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise

men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid" (Isa. 29:13f).

This is the passage Yeshua quoted when He said, "Well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. Howbeit in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men... Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition" (Mark 7:6-9).

Some Christians use this passage to criticize the Jews. "Those hypocritical Pharisees! How could they have been so blind?" Yet many of the Christians who criticize the Pharisees repeat the very same mistake. They teach for doctrines the commandments of men. They lay aside the commandments of God (the 7th-day Sabbath, e.g.) and hold the tradition of men (Sunday morning church). They reject the commandment of God (dietary laws, e.g.) so that they may keep their own traditions (Easter hams and church hog roasts). Christians who repeat these errors of the Pharisees make themselves candidates for the same judgment of spiritual drunkenness of which Isaiah wrote.

Isaiah also wrote a passage about "the drunkards of Ephraim." This throws more light on the subject of spiritual drunkenness:

"Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine! Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand. The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under feet. And the glorious beauty, which is on the head

of the fat valley, shall be a fading flower, and as the hasty fruit before the summer; which when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up" (Isa. 28:1-4).

What physical drunkenness does to the physical senses, spiritual drunkenness does to the spiritual senses. In the above passage, two times "the drunkards of Ephraim" are mentioned, and both times they are mentioned in connection with "the crown of pride." Drunkenness often causes pride. The drunker a person gets, the more self-confident and reckless he becomes. In his drunken state he develops a false sense of security. "I can drive. Gimme those car keys, I don't need no taxi." Spiritual drunkenness often causes the same sort of pride about things in the spiritual realm. "I can preach and teach the Bible, and lead a congregation. Gimme that Bible. I don't need no knowledge about the Torah. I don't need to check the Hebrew or Greek text, or sit under a shepherd first, or be accountable to anyone."

Proverbs 16:18 says, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." This is exactly what happens when the Lord sends a tempest of hail and a destroying storm upon the drunkards of Ephraim who crown themselves with the crown of pride.

Something else mentioned two times in the above passage is the imagined "glorious beauty" of the drunkards of Ephraim. Drunkenness often makes people think that they are far more glorious and beautiful than they really are. The most unattractive slob in the bar will stagger up to the most stunning beauty in the room and flirt with her, because his drunkenness has made him think that he's quite a prize! Spiritual drunkenness can bring on the same sort of delusion concerning one's spiritual glory and beauty. A man who hasn't even overcome his base, carnal passions gets in a state of spiritual drunkenness and imagines that he's a heavily-anointed prophet. *Wow. I must be God's messenger for this generation*, he thinks.

Ephraim's imagined "glorious

beauty" is merely "a fading flower" as far as the Lord is concerned. When God's judgment falls, the glorious beauty that Ephraim imagined about himself suddenly disappears. Just as summer fruits are consumed when they are ripe, so the glorious beauty of Ephraim is consumed when Ephraim is ripe for judgment. The crown of pride and the imagined glory and beauty are exposed for what they truly are. Just as a drunkard realizes he was deceived after he sobers up, so it will be when the spiritual drunkards wake up.

After Ephraim's imagined beauty and crown of pride are thrown down in the mud, the next verse tells of a different crown and of true beauty:

"In that day shall Yahweh of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of His people" (Isa. 28:5).

Please notice who the crown of glory and diadem of beauty are for: "the residue of His people." Several passages of Scripture mention this concept of the residue of God's people. Many times the word is translated "remnant" rather than "residue." Throughout history, God has always had a faithful remnant, a smaller body of people within the larger body of people who claim to worship the God of the Bible. In the days of Elijah it was the 7,000 who refused to bow their knee to Baal. In Revelation 12:17 & 14:12, God's faithful remnant are characterized by two identifying marks: 1) they keep the commandments of God, and 2) they testify that Yeshua is the Messiah. (Sounds a bit like the Messianic movement which is emerging in our generation, doesn't it?)

While the faithful remnant are blessed with the Lord's crown of glory and diadem of beauty, the majority of Ephraim continues on in spiritual drunkenness:

"But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.

For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean" (Isa. 28:7f).

The above passage is a vivid description of the spiritual condition of many churches today, where the leaders have erred through spiritual wine and strong drink. From their pulpits, spiritually drunk leaders vomit out false teachings which are a stench in God's nostrils. The so-called "spiritual food" that they serve their congregations is really filthiness, and there is no place clean.

What causes spiritual drunkenness? The cause of spiritual drunkenness, like its effects, has its parallel in physical drunkenness. Physical intoxication is caused by taking too much toxic drink into the body. Spiritual intoxication is caused by taking too many toxic ideas into the mind. If you have ideas, beliefs, and personal opinions which are serious errors, they can affect your spiritual condition in the same way that wine and strong drink affect your body and brain. Too many wrong beliefs can make you spiritually intoxicated. Some erroneous beliefs are relatively harmless. For example, many people erroneously believe that the Bible says that Eve ate an apple, or that there were three wise men who followed the star to Bethlehem. These ideas, though erroneous, are not toxic. There are some erroneous beliefs, though, that are toxic. These ideas are wine and strong drink which can cause spiritual intoxication. Let's look at some examples of such ideas.

First of all, what is the difference between wine and strong drink? Proverbs 20:1 says, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise."

Some toxic ideas are like wine, "a mocker." These would be ideas and beliefs that cause a person to make a mockery of spiritual truth, to be glib and light, and to dismiss spiritual responsibility as a joke.

Other ideas are like strong drink, "raging." People who are drunk on these ideas do not merely mock, they rage. Unlike the wine-drinkers, they

do not dismiss their spiritual responsibility, they take it very seriously. They feel obligated to convince everyone else to embrace their erroneous pet doctrines, and they rage against those who do not agree with them. While the mellow wine-drinkers don't really care what others believe, the mean-spirited drinkers of strong drink make it their business to rage against those who disagree with their doctrines.

A significant difference between wine and strong drink in a physical sense is in the taste. Wine has a sweet, pleasant taste and is easy to swallow. Strong drink is not sweet and has a very unpleasant taste and is difficult to swallow. It burns as it goes down.

An example of a sweet, wine-like idea is the notion that God will not really send anyone to everlasting fire. This is a sweet, pleasant-tasting idea that people naturally want to swallow. Unfortunately, it is a false idea. (See Matthew 25:41 and many other passages.) And it is a toxic idea, because it puts people into a lazy, do-nothing stupor, like wine does to the body. It diminishes the desire to evangelize the lost.

An example of an idea that is like strong drink is the belief that one's own denomination or organization is the one and only true Church. "We are the one and only true Body of Messiah. People are not really a true part of the Body until they join themselves to one of our groups. Other groups may be sincere, but they are not the true Body. There's only one Body, and we, exclusively, are it."

Many groups, past and present, have made such claims about themselves. It is one thing to believe that your denomination or congregational affiliation or alliance is the best of many legitimate groups in existence. It is quite another thing to believe that *your group is the only legitimate group* in existence. This idea, like strong drink, is very hard to swallow. But once it is swallowed, once a person actually believes this false claim of exclusivity, it is *very* intoxicating. Claims of exclusivity are far more intoxicating than the sweet, pleasant

claims of universal (or nearly universal) inclusiveness, just as whiskey is far more intoxicating than wine.

I have personally talked with people who belonged to groups that made the claim of being the one and only true Body of Messiah. People in these groups are extremely intoxicated, but they are not like those who succumb to a wine-induced, do-nothing stupor. On the contrary, they are usually very devoted, zealous, and passionate. They are people of discipline and action. As Proverbs says, "Strong drink is raging." They rage against other churches and movements. As far as they are concerned, all professing believers outside their imagined "one true Body" are a part of Babylon, even if those believers hold to the same doctrines and exhibit equal or greater commitment to the Lord, and bear more fruit of the Spirit.

Those who swallow the strong drink of exclusivity become intoxicated with the same spirit that prompted John to say, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name: and we forbid him, because he followeth not with us." The Master's reply: "Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us" (Luke 9:49f).

In effect, those who are intoxicated with the strong drink of exclusivity condemn the righteous. Those who are intoxicated with the wine of near-universal inclusion justify the wicked. This is brought out on Isaiah 5:22f:

"Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!"

Those who are drunk on spiritual wine justify the wicked by saying, "He went up to the church altar and said the sinner's prayer years ago. Even though he's living a sinful life now, he's still justified by faith and will go to heaven when he dies." Those who are drunk on spiritual strong drink condemn the righteous by saying, "He's not right with God. If he were righteous, he would see that he needs to join our group. His refusal to join us

proves that he's not right with God."

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." Whether a person is drunk and deceived on the wine of liberalism or on the strong drink of legalism, either way he is deceived. And according to another Proverb, whether he justifies the wicked or condemns the righteous, either way he is an abomination to Yahweh: "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to Yahweh" (Prov. 17:15).

In Leviticus 10:9, the priests were commanded to drink neither wine nor strong drink when they went into the Tabernacle. As a kingdom of priests, we must be very careful about which ideas we swallow whenever we are treading on holy ground. When we consider all the ideas, beliefs, and viewpoints about worship, ministry, and Bible doctrine, we must be careful not to swallow any erroneous, toxic ideas that could make us spiritually drunk and numb our spiritual senses. Instead, we should devote ourselves to the sort of spiritual exercise that will sharpen our spiritual senses, so we can be among those mature disciples "who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:14). □

Q & A

Q: What does the Bible mean when it says "all things are lawful"?

A: This statement appears 4 times in the Bible (1 Cor. 6:12 & 10:23, 2 times in each verse). Some Christians misuse this statement to try to justify their lawless lifestyle. If all things are truly lawful, then a Christian can do whatever he wants, right? It's true that the Bible says "all things are lawful" 4 times. But the Bible also says "There is no God" 2 times (Ps. 14:1 & 53:1). Such statements must be understood in their context. If you ignore what is said immediately before and after a statement, you are apt to misunderstand the statement. In the case of "There is no God," it is immediately preceded by the words "The fool hath said in his heart." So the statement does not mean that there is no God; it is just telling us what the fool says in his heart.

Was Paul, like the psalmist, merely quoting people who were making a foolish, erroneous statement? Punctuation was not used in NT Greek, so there are no quotation marks to tell us if Paul was quoting others who made the statement. However, some Bible translators understand it this way. The NIV puts quotation marks around the statement all 4 times to show that Paul was quoting others, and not making a statement of fact. The New Living Translation not only puts quotation marks, it also introduces the statement with the words "You [may] say..."

Stern's *Jewish New Testament* does the same thing.

The context requires this understanding of the statement. If Paul were making a statement of fact, then he would be blatantly contradicting himself, because in the verses just prior to the statement, he lists several classes of people who will not inherit the Kingdom of God: fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners. If all things are lawful, then fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, etc. have not done anything unlawful. Therefore Paul was not saying that all things are lawful. He was merely quoting people who made that statement, and showing the folly of trying to justify a lawless lifestyle by saying that all things are lawful.

Q: Is Yeshua (Jesus) the archangel Michael?

A: This is a theory popularized by the Jehovah's Witnesses. In the Watchtower Society's *Aid to Bible Understanding* (a 1,696-page, single-volume mini-encyclopedia), the JW's devote half a page to explaining why they believe that Michael is Jesus. Their writing explains their line of reasoning and helps the reader understand how they arrived at their conclusion. However, their arguments are not convincing, at least not to me. They state, "Scriptural evidence indicates that the name Michael applied to God's Son before he left heaven to become Jesus Christ and also after

his return." But they do not say where this alleged "Scriptural evidence" is. They also state, "He [Jesus] also had the personal name Michael," but they offer no concrete proof for this assertion. The basis of their assertion seems to be the fact that the Hebrew name Michael means "Who is like God?" (*Mi* = Who?; *cha* = like; *el* = God). This is a flimsy basis for the theory, though. According to this line of reasoning, we would also have to conclude that the prophet Michaiah and Daniel's friend Mishael were pre-incarnate visits of Jesus, because Michaiah means "Who is like Yah?" and Mishael means "Who is what God is." I consider the JW's idea about Michael to be a fanciful theory without any real Biblical support.

Q: Matthew 2:23 says Jesus lived in Nazareth "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, 'He shall be called a Nazarene.'" Where does the Old Testament say this?

A: The statement "He shall be called a Nazarene" is nowhere in the Old Testament. But notice that Matthew does not say that the statement was *written* by the prophets; he says it was *spoken* by the prophets. Apparently it was an oral tradition (perhaps based on Isaiah 11:1, which refers to a "branch" - *netzer* in Hebrew - which will come from the root of Jesse).

Q: What does the Bible say about infant baptism?

A:

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PO BOX 2257
EAST PEORIA IL
61611-0257

CHRISTMAS, HANUKKAH, OR HUMBUG?

Daniel Botkin

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CHRISTMAS: JUST SAY "HUMBUG"

It is a well-known fact that the Christmas celebration has its roots in ancient pagan sun worship. Any reliable encyclopedia will confirm this. Pagans so highly esteemed the sun god that they set aside the first day of the week to honor the sun and named this day after the sun. Even in English the first day of the week, Sun-day, still bears the name of the sun god.

Each year as winter came upon the ancient pagan world, the days began to get shorter and shorter, and it appeared to the people that the sun god might be leaving them forever. The thought that the sun might abandon the earth and leave all mankind to die in a dark, eternal winter caused the heathens to be dismayed at what they saw taking place in the heavens. Yahweh's people, however, were instructed by Jeremiah to "learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them" (Jer. 10:2).

Every winter the pagans watched the sky with eager anticipation to see what would happen. Shortly after mid-December, they could tell that the days were getting longer, which meant the sun was beginning his journey back to earth. Salvation had come! The good news of the sun god's "rebirth" was celebrated on December 25 as the solar feast of *Natalis Invicti*, the Nativity of the Unconquered Sun.

To celebrate the glad tidings of the rebirth of the sun god, the heathens used mistletoe, wreaths, yule logs, holly, ham, gift-giving, and, of course, trees cut out of the forest and decked with silver and gold. In light of these facts, the words of Jeremiah sound as relevant to God's people today as they were to the people of Jeremiah's day:

"Thus saith Yahweh, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for

the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers so it will not totter" (Jer. 10:2-4).

A lot more could be said about Christmas, but the above information should give Bible-believers sufficient reason to just say "humbug" to Christmas. For those who need more persuasion to abandon this pagan holiday, there are other books that go into more detail.

HUMBUG TO HANUKKAH?

Hanukkah (Hebrew, "dedication") is a holiday that commemorates the cleansing and rededication of the Temple after Israel's victory over pagan oppression. It is also a good, kosher alternative to replace Christmas. Some non-Jewish believers object to Hanukkah for the following reasons: 1) It is, they say, relevant only to Jews; 2) It was not commanded by God as the other Feasts were; 3) The fact that it begins on the 25th of Kislev connects it with the pagans' December 25 festival. Let us look at these objections objectively.

A Christian who thinks Hanukkah is relevant only to Jews simply needs to be made more aware of what is commonly called "the Jewish roots" of his faith. There are many fine books on the market that teach this truth in great depth. The book I most highly recommend for learning this wonderful truth is called *The Bible*. Other books are also very helpful, of course. Non-Jewish believers who feel awkward about celebrating Hanukkah need to realize that their faith in Israel's Messiah has made them part of "the commonwealth of Israel" (Eph. 2:12). Thus Israel's grand and glorious history becomes part of their own spiritual history. And Hanukkah is an important part of Israel's history.

The fact that Hanukkah was not commanded by God does not make it wrong; it only makes it optional. God is opposed to man-made holidays only if they have their origin in paganism, or if we "teach as authoritative the commandments of men" (Mk. 7:7), i.e., if we teach that the Lord commanded the observance of the day. The Purim celebration was not God's idea, either, yet it is clear from the Book of Esther that God was in no way displeased with the Jews' decision to inaugurate a new holiday to commemorate their victory. The same is true of Hanukkah. If the Lord were in any way displeased with the holiday, we would not read of the Messiah's presence in Jerusalem during Hanukkah. (See John 10:22f, "dedication" = Hanukkah.) There is no connection between Kislev 25 and the pagans' December 25 festival. The Lord chose this time to give His people victory, and Kislev 25 happened to be the date they were able to purify the Temple. As a matter of fact, Kislev is in the Hebrew lunar calendar and December is in the pagan solar calendar, so Kislev 25 rarely falls on the same day as December 25. In the year of the first Hanukkah, Kislev 25 fell on December 15 (New Jerusalem Bible, p.735, fn. 10a). The first Hanukkah was a time of removing all the pagan altars and shrines that had been erected in the Temple area. How ironic that Christians celebrate Christmas, a holiday saturated with paganism, during the very season that commemorates the victory of God's people over the paganism that had saturated Jerusalem!

The Maccabees purged the Temple of paganism and rededicated it to the service of Yahweh. Hanukkah, celebrated in a meaningful way, can provide an excellent opportunity to remind believers to purge their lives of pagan influence and to dedicate their "temples" (their bodies, 1 Cor. 6:19) anew to the Lord's service. □

LETTING GOD BE GOD

Daniel Botkin

Anyone who reads the newspaper or watches the news on TV knows that little children are frequently the victims of horrible abuse and murder. Innocent children sometimes experience atrocities that are as terrifying, as painful, as horrifying as anyone can imagine. I do not need nor desire to state the gory details of any specific case, but let us consider a hypothetical case.

Suppose there is a wicked man who plans to abduct a little six-year-old girl, commit unspeakable atrocities against her, then brutally murder her. The wicked man goes to a park, hides behind the bushes near the playground, and awaits his opportunity. After waiting some time, his opportunity comes. A young mother and her little girl are there by themselves. The mother goes to the car to get something. She has her back to her little girl for only 20 seconds, but that is enough time for the man to snatch the child, put his hand over her mouth, and run into the woods before the mother sees him. The wicked man runs to his car, drives away with his young victim, and takes her to a secluded location. There he abuses her and ends her life.

Now let us suppose that there is another person, a second person, who knows about the wicked man's plans beforehand. This second person knows all the details of the wicked man's plans - the date, the time, and the location of the planned abduction. This second person could prevent this crime from happening, with no danger to himself. He could anonymously inform the police, or he could warn the mother to watch her daughter, or he could just go to the park and sit near the playground so that the wicked man would be discouraged by the presence of a witness. This second person could easily prevent this tragedy from happening, but he doesn't. As a matter of fact, he *is* at the park when it happens, and he *does* witness the

crime, but he keeps himself hidden from the wicked man. He just sits and watches the man take the little girl. He does nothing beforehand to prevent the abduction, and he does nothing to interfere after the girl is abducted.

What would you think of such a person? Most decent people would say that this second man is a cold, uncaring coward, and should be severely punished for his refusal to do something to prevent the crime from happening.

This hypothetical case which I have just described is not exactly hypothetical. It is real. In fact, most people reading this publication probably know this second person. This second person, this unseen witness who is privy to the wicked man's plans beforehand, is none other than Almighty God. He is the one who has foreknowledge and could easily prevent horrible tragedies like this from happening. He is the one who has the power to stop wicked men from carrying out their evil plans, with no threat or danger to Himself, yet He chooses to let little children be abducted, horribly abused, and brutally murdered.

It is without dispute that God knows about the evil plans of men beforehand. "Yahweh knoweth the thoughts of man" (Ps. 94:11). "Yahweh searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all

the imaginations of the thoughts" (1 Chr. 28:9). Other passages of Scripture give additional testimony of God's omniscience, including Hebrews 4:12f, which says that by His Word, God discerns "the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

The One with whom we have to do knows beforehand the plans and intentions of the wicked. And He is powerful enough to stop the wicked from carrying out their plans. Yet He lets the wicked abduct and victimize little children. He lets it happen again and again and again.

If a mere man with foreknowledge deliberately let this happen even once, we would be outraged. We would accuse the man of cold-hearted cowardice, condemn him, and insist that he be severely punished. Yet when God lets tragedies happen, we dare not accuse and condemn Him. Or so we are told. But why not? We would be outraged if a man acted this way. Shouldn't we expect at least as much mercy and care from God as we would expect from a man? Why do we dare not accuse and condemn God in the same way that we would accuse and condemn a man? Because God is not a mere man, that's why. He is God and He is Sovereign. He can do (or not do) whatever He wants. When the righteous suffer, the heathens sometimes say, "Where is now their God?" The psalmist answers, "But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He pleased" (Ps. 115:2f).

There are times when God allows innocent children to be terrorized and brutally murdered. I cannot explain why. I do not judge people who doubt God's love and God's Word - or even His existence - after suffering some terrible tragedy. I do not judge people whose faith is shaken after some tragedy, because I might react in the

same way, or even worse, if I had to go through what they have experienced. I would like to think that my faith would remain unshaken. However, I'm not presumptuous enough to say that nothing could shake my faith. I do not know how I would react if one of my children were abducted and murdered.

When discussing the question of why the innocent suffer, people often refer to the story of Job. Job was "perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." When God boasted about His servant Job, Satan said that Job's faithfulness was due to nothing more than the fact that God blessed and protected Job. Satan said to God, "But put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face." In answer to this challenge, God allowed Satan to afflict Job. In a single day, all of Job's flocks and herds were stolen, most of his servants were murdered, and all ten of his beloved children were crushed to death when the house fell in on them. After that, Job was smitten with sore boils from head to foot. Job was left with nothing except a bitter, nagging wife (who advised him to just curse God and die) and three "friends" ("miserable comforters" who insisted that Job's suffering was surely the result of some secret sin). After a lengthy theological discussion between Job and his friends, Yahweh spoke to Job, restored his health and his wealth, and gave him ten more children.

"Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James 5:11). This is James' comment on the story of Job. I understand what James means when he mentions "the patience of Job." And I realize that the Lord was "very pitiful, and of tender mercy" toward Job after the end of Job's afflictions. But to be honest, it seems to me that the Lord would have shown more pity and even more tender mercy if He had let Job's ten children live. Surely God, with His

infinite wisdom and knowledge, could have figured out some way to accomplish His purposes in Job's life without letting Satan kill Job's children. Job's flocks and herds could be replaced with other animals, but his ten children could not be replaced, not even with the ten Job had later. Why did God allow Satan to crush all ten of Job's children to death?

The Book of Job does not answer this question. The Bible does say that "Yahweh answered Job out of the whirlwind" (Job 38:1). But when you read God's "answer," it is mostly just a series of questions. God asks Job questions about the wonders of nature - questions about oceanography, meteorology, astronomy, the animal kingdom, etc. No explanation is given about the loss of Job's children. They are not even mentioned.

When we suffer, God "answers" us, but He doesn't answer our questions. He answers our need. Our need is to have an epiphany, an encounter with God that causes us to say, as Job said, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5f).

Yahweh spoke to Job out of the whirlwind. If you have ever been in a tornado, you know that tornadoes are very noisy. They sound like a train, but much louder. The world in which we live is very noisy. There are many voices swirling around us, all of them competing for our attention - voices of advertisers and advisors; voices of politicians and pundits; voices of enemies, friends, and family; voices of demons and illicit desires; voices of our own imagination and wishful thinking. In this swirling mass of noisy confusion, it can be extremely difficult to discern the one voice we long to hear, namely, the voice of God. How can we possibly hear His voice if we are in a whirlwind?

Oddly enough, we do not hear His voice by distancing ourselves from the whirlwind. "Yahweh answered Job out of the whirlwind." If we want to hear His voice, we sometimes have to be in the center of the whirlwind, in the very

eye of the storm. Inside the whirlwind, all the other voices are silenced so that we can hear the voice of the Almighty.

"But how can the voices of the whirlwind be silenced inside the whirlwind? Wouldn't it be even noisier in the center, surrounded by all those voices?" Believe it or not, if you could step inside a noisy tornado, you would experience an eerie silence inside the funnel. This is not just a scientific theory. Years ago a friend of mine told me that his dad knew of a man who experienced this and lived to tell of it. A tornado descended on the man. He saw debris swirling all around him, but the diameter of the funnel cloud was big enough that he did not get sucked into it. He said it was strangely silent. After a short time, the tornado lifted and left him unharmed. A recent newspaper article in the *Peoria Journal Star* (10/5/06, p. C10) describes a similar incident that took place in 1948. During a tornado a man named Captain Roy S. Hall saw a curved, concave surface with vertical oscillation descend around him. He realized he was inside the funnel of the tornado. The newspaper article says that Hall "marveled at the total silence - contrasting to the dramatic noise during the tornado's approach." Hall also reported that inside the whirlwind there was "a bright center like a fluorescent light fixture."

It was a great wind that caused the house to collapse on Job's children, and it was from a whirlwind that God spoke to Job. We can enter into that quiet place in the eye of the storm by heeding the instructions of our Master: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Matt. 6:6). Our reward may not come in the form of answers to our questions. The Father might just reply to our questions with questions of His own, as He did with Job. But if we seek Him in secret, He will answer our need, even if He leaves our questions unanswered. □

THE PREEMINENCE OF YESHUA

Daniel Botkin

Over the past several years, more and more Christians have been learning about the Hebrew roots of their faith. As the Hebrew roots and Jewish background of the New Testament faith are explored, the New Testament Savior is seen in a new light. The Savior is viewed less and less as a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant named Rev. Jesus Christ, and more and more as a Jewish rabbi named Yeshua. And indeed, that is what He was, a rabbi. However, He was far more than a mere rabbi. I get concerned when I hear some people in the Messianic movement say things which give people the impression that Yeshua was a typical first-century Jewish rabbi. He was a rabbi, but He was not ordinary. He was extraordinary.

Yeshua was certainly a typical first-century Jew in some ways. He dressed and looked like an ordinary Jew. There was no halo floating above His head. He ate, worked, and went to the synagogue every Sabbath like other Jews. Ethnically and culturally He was like other Jewish men. Yet He was set apart from all other men, even from all other first-century Jewish men. Outwardly He looked like a typical Jewish rabbi, but inwardly He was not a typical rabbi. He was the sinless Son of God, the only begotten of the Father, the Word incarnate. As a result, He had a unique connection to the Father. He was in a category all His own.

The content of Yeshua's teachings included some elements of typical first-century Jewish thought. Yet His teaching was unlike that of anyone before Him. "And it came to pass, when Yeshua had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine; for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:28f). "And all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth" (Lk. 4:22). "And the

Jews marveled, saying, 'How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?'" (Jn. 7:15). "Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, 'Why have ye not brought him?' The officers answered, 'Never man spake like this man'" (Jn. 7:45f).

Even noble Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, had difficulty understanding the depth of Yeshua's teachings. "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" Yeshua asked him (Jn. 3:10).

Yeshua was not only a rabbi, He was also a prophet. In some ways He was similar to the previous Hebrew prophets, yet He was in a category that was unshared with any other prophet. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds" (Heb. 1:1-1f).

Like Moses, Yeshua was Israel's Redeemer, yet He was far greater than Moses. "For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house" (Heb. 3:3).

Yeshua was greater than all human messengers, and was greater even than the angelic messengers. "Being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For

unto which of the angels said He at any time, 'Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee'? And again, 'I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son'? And again, when He bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, He saith, 'And let all the angels of God worship Him.' And of the angels He saith, 'Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire.' But unto the Son He saith, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom'" (Heb. 1:4-8).

Yeshua was not a typical first-century rabbi. He was raised in the first-century Jewish world, but He did not fit in the first-century Jewish world. His teachings and the way He practiced His faith made Him a misfit and often put Him at odds with the Jewish world in which He lived. (If you doubt this, take a look at the accusations in the box on the next page.)

Yeshua did not fit in the first-century Jewish world. If He were to come back today, He would not fit in the twenty-first-century Jewish world, either. In the entire collective body of all living Jewish people, He would find a very small percentage of Jews who take their faith seriously. And even among those who do take their faith seriously, He would find much of the same hypocrisy that existed among first-century religious Jews.

If He came back to the Church today, He would not fit in there, either. For one thing, He would show up for worship on the wrong day. He would arrive at church on Saturday instead of Sunday, and would wonder why there was no Sabbath service that day.

Those of us who theologically dwell somewhere between the church and the synagogue ("too Jewish for the church, and too Christian for the synagogue") should perhaps ask ourselves whether or not He would fit in our world. If He came to worship with us on Shabbat, we would be

assembled on the right day. But would He find among us the same hypocrisy and lukewarmness that He found among Jews and Christians of the first century? Merely keeping the Sabbath on the right day does not guarantee the absence of hypocrisy and lukewarmness.

"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head" (Lk. 9:58). These words were spoken to a man who approached Yeshua and eagerly volunteered to follow Him whithersoever He would go. The simple, literal meaning of Yeshua's statement was that He had no certain dwelling place, that He stayed in different houses as He traveled from place to place. But the statement also has a deeper meaning which relates to the Body of Messiah, the *ekklesia*, the collective Body made up of His disciples. In a spiritual sense, the Son of man still has nowhere to lay His head. He still waits for a collective body of people who will not only verbally acknowledge Him as Head of the Body, but really let Him be the Head. He waits for a body of people who will totally yield to His headship, and let Him be Lord and Master of their lives.

Viewing Yeshua as a typical first-century Jewish rabbi will not bring about this kind of submission. The study of first-century Jewish history is important because it provides a historical context for the study of the New Testament. But in our zeal for studying the Hebrew roots of our New Testament faith, we must never forget the uniqueness of our Rabbi, Yeshua, "who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature. For by Him were all things created, that are in the heaven, and that are in the earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the *ekklesia*: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:15-18). □

SQUARE PEG IN A ROUND HOLE

False Accusations Brought Against Jesus By His Fellow Jews

Compiled by Ralph Woodrow

CRAZY, INSANE: "He is mad" (John 10:20).
DOUBT CAUSER; NEGATIVE: "How long wilt thou make us doubt?" (John 10:24).
BLASPHEMER: "We stone thee for blasphemy" (John 10:33).
BASTARD: "Where is thy father?" (John 8:19).
KEEPER OF BAD COMPANY: "Why eateth your master with publicans and sinners?" (Matthew 9:11).
UNGODLY: "This man is not of God" (John 9:16).
SINNER: "We know this man is a sinner" (John 10:33).
DECEIVER: "He deceiveth the people" (John 7:12).
DIVIDER, DIVISION-MAKER: "...a division among the people because of him" (John 7:43).
DEMON POSSESSED: "Thou hast a devil" (John 7:20).
A PERSECUTION COMPLEX: "Who goeth about to kill thee?" (John 7:20).
PROVOKER TO ANGER: "Are you angry with me, because I have made

a man every whit whole?" (John 7:23).
UNRECOMMENDED BY RELIGIOUS LEADERS: "Have any of the rulers of the Pharisees believed on him?" (John 7:48).
LIAR: "Thou barest record of thyself, thy record is not true" (John 8:13).
SUICIDAL: "Will he kill himself?" (John 8:22).
BOASTER: "Whom makest thou thyself?" (John 8:53).
BEELZEBUB: "They have called the master... Beelzebub" (Matthew 10:25).
UNEDUCATED: "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" (John 7:15).
LOW CLASS: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46).
FALSE PROPHET: "Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet" (John 7:52).
HALFBREED: "Thou art a Samaritan" (John 8:48).
DISHONORABLE: "Ye do dishonor me" (John 8:49).
A MERE LABORER: "Is not this the carpenter?" (Mark 6:3).

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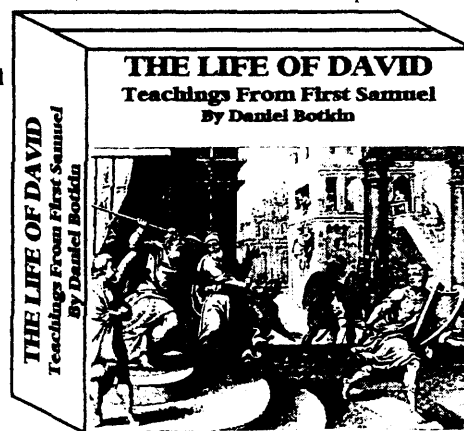
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RIGHTEOUSNESS, PEACE, & JOY IN THE HOLY GHOST

Daniel Botkin

"So, what kind of church do you go to?"

If a person belongs to a well-known denominational church, this question is easy to answer. The believer simply says that he's a Baptist, or a Methodist, or whatever. Even if the believer belongs to a non-denominational Bible-believing church, he can give a short, simple answer: "I belong to a non-denominational Bible-believing church."

For those of us who are in Messianic congregations, it is not so easy to adequately answer the question with a short, simple reply. We can just say that we are Messianic, of course. The only problem with this is that some people have never even heard of Messianic congregations. Others have heard the term but do not know what it means. So we have to explain.

Where do we start, and how much detail should we include with our explanation? We should start by making it clear that we follow the Messiah Yeshua, Jesus of Nazareth. After that is clarified, we usually feel the need to explain some of the distinctives of our faith, some of the things which make us different from typical Christians. So we talk about things like Torah and tzitzit, shofars and Shabbat, mezuzahs and menorahs. We talk about the Festivals and dietary laws and other laws which are neglected by most Christians.

These laws are important, because they are commandments of God, and not merely man-made traditions. Those of us who have re-established these neglected commandments into our faith have been richly blessed, and we want other people to experience this wonderful joy that we have found. In our zeal and eagerness to share our newly-discovered treasures, we sometimes emphasize the Torah so much that it scares people off.

The Torah occupies a prominent place in our faith. God's command-

ments are meant to be obeyed by His people. However, when we are trying to persuade people to embrace our Scriptural way of life and worship, there is a better way to appeal to them than telling them about all the Torah laws they should follow. Years ago at a Messianic conference, Angus Wootten pointed this out. Angus said that if you wanted people to immigrate to America, you would not appeal to potential immigrants by telling them about all the laws that they will be expected to obey in America. Rather, you would appeal to them by telling them about the wonderful benefits of American citizenship.

Angus Wootten is right. Could you imagine trying to recruit potential immigrants to America by saying, "You should come to America, because we've got laws! We've got all sorts of laws. We have federal laws, with an IRS department to regulate the federal income tax you'll have to pay. We've got state laws that will mandate your children's educational requirements and tell you how to drive your car. We've got a state tax department, because you'll have to pay state taxes on your income, too. And we've also got local laws - city and county zoning laws, building codes, business restrictions, and laws that require you to pay annual property taxes on your house and on any other property you own. We've got thousands of laws. And you'd better obey 'em! 'Cause if you don't, we've got local police, state police, and the FBI to enforce the laws. And we've got judges and courts and prisons to punish law-breakers. Yes, you should come to America, because we have laws!"

If that were the only thing that a potential immigrant heard about America, he would probably not be interested in becoming a citizen. Yet some Messianic believers use a similar approach when trying to persuade people to embrace the Messianic way of life. "You should

come to our Messianic congregation. We've got all sorts of laws. We have moral laws, civil laws, and ceremonial laws. We've got laws to govern your sex life, laws to regulate the appointments on your calendar, laws which prescribe which holidays you'll celebrate, laws that restrict your diet, and laws that tell you how to dress. We've got laws that tell you what you must do, what you can do, and what you must not do. Yes, you should come to our congregation, because we have laws!"

That sort of approach usually appeals to neither saint nor sinner. A better way to appeal to potential recruits is to emphasize the benefits. If you wanted to draw potential immigrants to America, you could say to them, "One important benefit of American citizenship is the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. And we have laws to guarantee these rights." In a similar way, we might try to persuade people to embrace the Messianic way of life by saying something like this:

"We've noticed in Matthew chapter 5 that Jesus said to not even think that He came to abolish the Law. This was His very first statement about the Law, and the very first thing the New Testament says about the Law. Therefore we look at the Torah in the light of what Jesus said. As a result, we walk in the commandments of the Torah, and are richly blessed. We find it a great joy to follow Jesus in a way that honors the Torah. Psalm 119:165 says, 'Great peace have they that love Thy Law.' Our way of life and worship brings us great peace and great joy."

The phrase "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" is not a Biblical quote, but these words do echo Biblical principles. There is a three-part phrase in the Bible which is very similar to this phrase. Romans 14:17 speaks of "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

It is significant that the phrase

"righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" is preceded by another statement. The full verse says, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." There are laws in the Torah about meat and drink, and our Heavenly Father wants us to obey those laws. The Apostle Paul is not saying that those laws can be discarded. He is just saying that the kingdom of God is not primarily about dietary laws. Rather, the kingdom of God is primarily about righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

You should obey your Heavenly Father's dietary laws. But if you become preoccupied and obsessed with the fine details of dietary laws to such an extent that it causes you to lose sight of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, then your priorities are out of order. You need to focus more on righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and less on the details of dietary laws, yet without discarding the dietary laws.

We are living epistles, Paul said. (See 2 Corinthians 3.) There are some people who will never crack open a Bible. For those people, you may be the only Bible they will ever read. When people read you, what message does your life broadcast? What most impresses people about you and/or your congregation? Is it your rules, or is it your righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost?

I teach people in our congregation that we should obey the commandments of the Torah. However, I also tell our congregation that I don't want people's main impression of us to be "Those people have laws! They've got all sorts of laws...." I don't want us to be known primarily as "the church that meets on Saturdays, can't eat pork, dresses modestly, and celebrates Jewish holidays instead of Christmas and Easter." These are some of our important distinctives, and I do want people to be aware of these things. But my hope is that people's impression of us will not merely be "Those people have laws." Rather, my hope is that people will say, "Those folks in the Messianic congregation have righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. And I've got a hunch that it's a result of the way they follow Jesus and do all that Torah stuff that other churches don't do. Maybe I should look into it...." □

GOING DOWN TO EGYPT

The children of Israel talked about going back to Egypt whenever things got difficult in the wilderness. Later in Israel's history, the Prophets warned the Israelites to *not go down to Egypt*. (See Isaiah 30 & 31; Jeremiah 42-44.) Egypt is the place where God's people were oppressed and enslaved by the world. In spiritual experience, it is the antithesis of the Promised Land, the place of God's blessing.

In a recent Torah study at our congregation, we were discussing Abram's journey down to Egypt during a time of famine in the land of promise. When Abram arrived in Egypt, he instructed his lovely wife Sarai to tell the Egyptians that she was his sister (a deceptive half-truth). Abram feared that the Egyptians might kill him and take Sarai if they knew she was his wife. The Egyptians ended up taking Sarai anyway, but God intervened and everything came out all right.

In our study, the question was raised about the propriety of Abram's deception. Was Abram motivated by a desire to protect his wife (which might justify telling a deceptive half-truth)? Or was he motivated primarily by a desire to save his own skin?

It is not our place to judge Abram's motives. The bigger question is whether or not Abram should have gone down to Egypt in the first place. The only reason he went there was because of the famine. There is no indication that Abram consulted the Lord about going down to Egypt. Isaiah wrote about people "that walk to go down to Egypt, and have not asked at My mouth; to strengthen

themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt." Isaiah said that for such people the strength of Pharaoh will be their shame, and their trust in the shadow of Egypt will be their confusion.

The main lesson that I see for us in this story is to not go down to Egypt, not even in times of famine. If God has called you to a specific place, stay there for as long as He wants you there. If you start feeling spiritually famished, don't go down to Egypt. Don't abandon your calling and go to the world to find something to fill your spiritual hunger.

When God's people experience disappointment and difficulties in their walk, they often turn to Egypt for solace and comfort. They immerse themselves in worldly pursuits and activities to numb the pain and to take away the boredom. The worldly activities might not be inherently sinful, but if they are used as a substitute for the joy of the Lord, then we are going down to Egypt.

When Abram went down to Egypt, it put him in an awkward position. He felt pressured to compromise his integrity by telling a deceptive half-truth. If we go down to Egypt and try to blend in with the world, we will likewise find ourselves in positions where we feel pressured to compromise our integrity. It would have been better for Abram to have remained in the Promised Land and trust that God would sustain him during the famine. It is far better for us to remain faithful to our calling and trust God to sustain us during times of spiritual famine.

-Daniel Botkin

LIVING LIKE SOLDIERS & ATHLETES IN TIMES OF APOSTASY

Daniel Botkin

APOSTASY

The word *apostasy* is a fairly common theological term. According to Webster's, the word has been around in English since at least the 14th century, even though the word does not appear anywhere in the 1611 KJV. The English word *apostasy* is simply a transliteration of the Greek New Testament word *apostasía* (ἀποστασία). Strong's Concordance defines *apostasía* as "defection from truth." The Gingrich Shorter Lexicon defines it as "rebellion, abandonment, apostasy."

These short definitions raise some questions, namely: From which elements of truth do apostates defect? What exactly is it that apostates rebel against and abandon?

The word *apostasía* occurs in only two places in the Greek New Testament, but both passages help to clarify what apostasy is. The first time the word is used is in Acts 21:21. The Apostle Paul had just returned to Jerusalem, and he was informed that some people had been spreading false rumors about him. One of the false rumors was that Paul was teaching his disciples to "forsake Moses." The words translated "forsake" are *apostasian apo*, "fall away from." The second time the word is used is in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, where Paul warns the Thessalonians that there will be "a falling away." The phrase "a falling away" is a translation of the single word *apostasía*. The NASB translates it as "the apostasy" and provides a footnote, "Or, *falling away from the faith*."

Apostasy is certainly falling away from the faith; however, the use of the word in Acts 21:21 helps us understand exactly which elements of the faith apostates fall away from. In Acts 21:21 apostates are those who "forsake Moses." The context of 2 Thessalonians 2:3 also helps us understand exactly which elements of the faith apostates fall away from. Paul

goes on to describe what the "falling away" will entail. Among other things, the apostasy will include "the mystery of iniquity," literally, "the mystery of lawlessness (*anómias*)," translated in the Jewish New Testament as "separating from Torah."

So the New Testament use of the word *apostasía* helps us understand what apostasy was in the minds of the New Testament writers. It was a defection from the Torah, a forsaking of Moses. It was rebellion against and abandonment of the Law of God. In view of what the Church did with the Torah after the death of the Apostles, I'd say that the "falling away" is not some future end-time event, but rather is something which began many centuries ago. Paul remarked in the 2 Thessalonians 2 passage that the mystery of lawlessness was "already at work" at that very time. Here near the end of his life, Paul saw the leavening of lawlessness beginning its corrupting influence in the Church.

TRUTH, A NECESSARY ANTIDOTE TO APOSTASY

In his final letter to his young disciple Timothy, Paul gave instructions for living in times of apostasy. Paul warns Timothy that "perilous times shall come," and he describes what men will be like during these perilous times: "lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud," etc., etc. (See 2 Timothy 3.) And Paul is not only speaking about men outside the Church, he is also describing men who are *inside* the Church, for he describes them as "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" and as "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 3:5, 7).

Coming to the knowledge of the truth (and, of course, walking in that truth) is a very important key to living in times of apostasy. Three other times in 2 Timothy Paul emphasizes the importance of Scriptural truth:

● "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2:15).

● "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Messiah Yeshua. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (3:15ff).

● "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (4:2-4).

Paul also tells Timothy to pass on the Scriptural truths he has learned to other faithful men, so that they can pass them on to others: "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2:2).

Then Paul lets Timothy (and us) know that living in times of apostasy requires a disciple to live like a soldier and an athlete: "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Yeshua the Messiah. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully" (2:3-5).

LIVING LIKE AN ATHLETE

When Paul writes about striving for masteries and being crowned, he is using language that describes athletic competition. As a matter of fact, the

Greek word translated "strive" is *athle* (αθλη), the source of our English word *athlete*. The NASB translates it this way: "And also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules."

Yes, there are rules for God's people; we must "strive lawfully" by obeying God's laws if we expect the Lord to reward us for our service to Him. In an athletic competition, athletes lose their prizes if it is discovered that they broke the rules. Apostates who transgress the rules of God's Torah will likewise suffer loss of rewards at the Judgment Seat of Messiah. "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward" (2 John 8).

Athletes have to follow the rules, but merely following the rules does not guarantee victory. Athletes also have to exercise, train, and stay in excellent physical and psychological shape if they want victory. If we want victory in our spiritual endeavors, it is not enough to merely obey the rules of the Torah. We also have to engage in spiritual exercise to keep our spiritual senses sharp and keen. We have to take time to pray, to read and study the Scriptures, to meditate deeply on God's truth, and to diligently seek the Lord, for "He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6).

Another area of discipline for athletes is diet. This too has its parallel in the life of a disciple. And I am not just talking about dietary laws that pertain to food that you feed your body. We should certainly abstain from eating pork and shellfish. This is part of "striving lawfully." But we should be equally cautious about what we feed our spirit and our mind. Sinful thoughts are poison, and should be avoided altogether. Some thoughts are not inherently sinful, but are merely of no significant spiritual value. They do to the spirit what Twinkies do to the body. Twinkies won't kill you, and in moderation may not even do you any permanent harm. But they are just filler and are of no significant nutritional value. Just as Twinkies

merely please the tastebuds and take up space in the stomach, so some non-sinful (but worthless) thoughts merely please the imagination and take up space in the mind. If you let your mind absorb too much spiritual junk food, it will make you spiritually weak and flabby.

LIVING LIKE A SOLDIER

Paul urges Timothy to "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." This (and other passages where Paul speaks of warfare) raises a question: Should our local congregations be run like an army camp, with commanding officers and ranks? Should each "soldier of Jesus Christ" render unquestioning obedience to the officers over him? Should the individual disciple let all of his decisions be made for him by someone else who happens to be in authority over him? Some Christian groups and cults operate this way. The individual is told by his elders where he must live, what time he must get up in the morning, what sort of work he can and cannot do, which literature he can and cannot read, how he must spend his money, and, in some cases, whom he can or cannot marry.

Elders certainly have the right and duty to confront blatant sin and to make sure things are done decently and in order during worship time. But do elders have the right to make decisions for their disciples in the realm of non-sinful questions such as where to live, how to spend their time and money, etc.? When Yeshua heard His disciples arguing about positions of authority in the Kingdom, He called them to Himself and said, "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant, even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:25-28).

It is clear from this passage that

Yeshua's Kingdom does not operate by little lords bossing around their underlings. That is the way of the Gentiles. Peter tells elders to lead by example, not by being lords over God's heritage (1 Pet. 5:3). Yet there is a need for submission to leadership in the Body, for Peter adds, "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder" (vs. 5). Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves." In God's Kingdom there is (or at least there should be) submission to people in leadership. However, it should be a voluntary submission due to respect for God's delegated authority, not a forced submission due to rank.

As leader of our congregation, I make decisions that affect the general direction and vision for our congregation. I determine how our meetings will be conducted. I oversee things that are done in the name of the congregation. But I do not have the right (nor the desire) to make all the personal decisions for the individuals in my congregation. If I happen to think that a particular individual would be better off with a different job or a different car or different living quarters, I can certainly make suggestions and offer advice (even unsolicited advice). I can urge, encourage, and even persistently annoy a person if I think it is something urgent enough. But I am not a policeman or a military D.I. (Drill Instructor) standing over recruits, forcing them to comply with my wishes. I cannot use my position to force people to endure hardness as a good soldier. I can tell them what God expects of them in regards to endurance and self-discipline, but I cannot force people to endure hardness and to live a disciplined life.

No one, not even the Lord, will force you to endure hardness and live a disciplined life. You are the one who must do it. Self-discipline is exactly that: discipline that you do yourself. And as someone once pointed out, the two most difficult things about self-discipline are self and discipline. But self-discipline, along with truth, is necessary for living victoriously in these times of apostasy. □