

TRUE LEGALISM AND CHINESE FOOT BINDING

-Dr. Daniel Botkin-

We who keep the Sabbath and dietary laws and celebrate the Feasts of Yahweh are sometimes accused of legalism. We grow weary of hearing this tired old charge, so we tend to just ignore any accusation of legalism. After all, Torah obedience is not legalism. However, there is such a thing as real legalism. It is described in great detail in Yeshua's denunciation of the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23. A careful reading of this chapter shows that most of their hypocrisy and legalism was due to their convoluted priorities. They focused on the least important of the commandments and neglected the weightier matters of the Torah, namely, "justice, mercy, and faith" (Matt. 23:23).

The Pharisees were sticklers for rules, at least when it came to ritual matters and the lighter commandments. God's rules are important and should be obeyed. However, our rule-keeping should be the result of our relationship with the Lord. If we exalt rules over relationship, our rule-keeping will only condemn us. If we think that our obedience to Torah is the thing that pulls our relationship with the Lord forward, then we are putting the cart before the horse. Rule-keeping does not produce the relationship. It's the relationship that takes us forward and produces the rule-keeping.

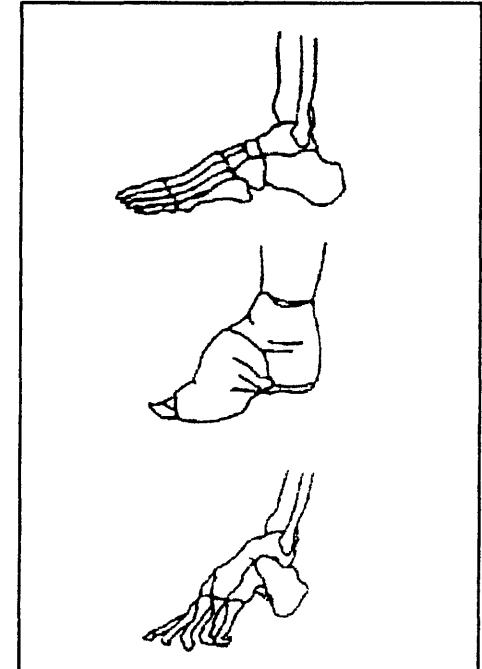
The Lord's harshest words were not addressed to the common sinners, but to the religious hypocrites who were clean on the outside but dirty on the inside: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also" (Matt. 23:25f).

The ideal vessel is clean both inside and outside. When I want a cup of tea, this is the kind of cup I prefer. If necessary, I can drink from a cup that has some dirt on the outside, provided the inside is completely clean. But don't hand me a cup that's sparkling clean on the outside and filthy on the inside.

The Pharisees were also rebuked for

laying a heavy yoke on the people: "For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers" (Matt. 23:4). The Pharisees imposed countless extra-Biblical rules and restrictions on the people. Through pressure and manipulation, modern-day legalists try to impose their own personal rules and convictions on everyone else, making the Torah a burden instead of a blessing.

True legalism is very much like the ancient Chinese custom of foot binding. Years ago in China, men prized small feet on a woman - the smaller, the better. Three to four inches was the ideal length. In order to improve her daughter's chances of getting a good husband, a mother would usually begin binding her little girl's feet at 2 or 3 years of age. Foot binding prevented the feet from growing horizontally, and caused them to grow somewhat vertically. Hidden in the fancy shoes, the end result looked dainty and delicate on the outside. Inside the shoes it was not a pretty picture, though. The feet resembled animal hoofs more than human feet.



The process of foot binding was excruciatingly painful. The smaller toes were broken and folded under the bottom of the feet. Long strips of wet cloth were tightly wrapped around the feet. Each time the strips were changed, they were pulled tighter and tighter. This process of ever-tightening restrictions is a picture of what legalism does. It continually adds more and more man-made "thou shalt nots," and stifles spiritual growth.

The effects of foot binding were awful: broken bones, toe nails digging into the flesh, infections, rotting flesh, deformity, crippling, and a constant putrid odor. What foot binding did to the body, legalism does to the soul.

The Torah as God intended it is "the perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25). When obedience grows out of our love for our heavenly Father, the Torah is a delight. "Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments, for therein do I delight" (Ps 119:35). Legalism is drudgery instead of delight, bondage instead of blessing. Like foot binding, it binds, it stifles, it perverts, it deforms. It fossilizes and cripples the soul, and makes it impossible to walk in the Spirit. Whether it is Pharisaic legalism or Messianic legalism, the results are the same. Let's joyfully obey our Father's commandments and teach others to do the same, but let's be sure we have our priorities right. Let's teach the primacy of relationship over rules, and allow the rule-keeping to grow out of the relationship. □

STAGNATION

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The children of Israel came out of Egypt and crossed the Red Sea on dry ground. Immediately after this great deliverance, the people went into the desert and found no water. Finally, after three days, an oasis was spotted. The children of Israel rushed forward, only to discover that the waters were too bitter to drink. They had come to Marah, the place of bitter waters.

The people murmured against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" Moses cried out to Yahweh, and Yahweh showed him a tree. Moses cast the tree into the waters, and the bitter waters became sweet.

The things written aforetime "were written for our learning," Paul said (Rom. 15:4), yet God's people never seem to learn. "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured," Paul warned (1 Cor. 10:10). Yet God's people continue to murmur and blame someone else whenever they experience bitter disappointments at Marah.

There are two ways we can react to life's bitter disappointments. Our two choices can be seen in the actions of the people and in the actions of Moses. Many believers follow the example of the people who murmured against Moses. They blame someone else for their bitter, stagnant waters. Children blame their parents. ("My life isn't exciting enough. It's my parents' fault!") Wives blame their husbands and husbands blame their wives. ("This marriage isn't turning out the way I had hoped. It's my spouse's fault!") Employees blame their employers. ("My career isn't fulfilling. It's my boss's fault!") Church members blame their leaders. ("My spiritual hunger and thirst isn't being satisfied. It's my pastor's fault!")

When we experience stagnant, bitter waters, we can follow the example of the people who murmured against Moses, or we can follow the example of Moses. We can cry out to the Lord like Moses did, and the Lord will show us a tree that will make the

bitter waters sweet. That tree is the cross of discipleship. "If any man will come after Me," Yeshua said, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23).

Answering this call to active, self-denying, daily discipleship is the only thing that will turn bitter waters sweet. The Lord's call to discipleship is not a call that allows us to be passive spectators. It is a call to daily, active movement. Notice the words which require movement: "come after"; "take up"; "follow." The thing that causes waters to become stagnant and bitter is lack of movement. The thing that prevents and cures stagnant waters is movement. If you feel stagnant, get the waters of the Holy Spirit moving in your life. Start sharing your blessings and joy with others.

"But I don't have any joy to share. I'm suffering from depression."

Quit focusing your attention on the things that depress you, and focus your attention on things above. In the Messiah we have received forgiveness, justification, eternal life, and pleasures we cannot imagine in the age to come. "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2). It's not the things above that depress you, but the things on earth, so look up!

I'm not minimizing the power of depression. I know it is real. There was a period of time in my life many years ago when I prayed each night before bed that God would let me die in my sleep. And each morning when

I awoke, I was bitterly disappointed that my prayer had not been answered.

Sometimes there are legitimate reasons to be depressed, but sometimes depression is just a spiritual attack, a trap of Satan. A few years ago I was in the shower one morning and I started feeling depressed. After a few moments of depression and self-pity, a question occurred to me. "Why am I feeling depressed today, anyway?" I asked myself. "What do I have to be depressed about? I have a relationship with the Lord, and I have a wonderful family. Nobody in the house is sick, we've got food and clothes and a house to live in, and the bills are all paid. Why in the world am I feeling depressed???" When I considered my blessings, I realized that there was no legitimate reason for me to be depressed, so I snapped out of it and had a good day.

Satan uses depression as a trap and self-pity as the bait. The focus of self-pity is self. When you focus on your own personal disappointments and start feeling sorry for yourself, you take the bait. If you swallow it, you will find yourself ensnared in Satan's trap of depression. Satan's goal is to rob you of your joy so that you will feel too depressed to share with others. And if you do not share with others, you will become stagnant, which will make you even more depressed.

If depression won't prevent you from sharing, Satan will try to persuade you to hide your light under a bushel ("I'm too busy earning my daily bread") or under a bed ("I'm too tired"). Or, he will convince you to bury your talent in the earth ("I'd better not take any risks - I might make a mistake"). The servant who hid his talent in the ground did so out of fear of failure. "I was afraid," he explained (Matt. 25:25). These three words could serve as the epitaph on the tombstones of countless believers who do nothing for their Master because they

are afraid to take risks.

There is a time to be still before the Lord and wait in His presence, but there is also a time to move forward. When the waters grow stagnant, it's time to wake up and get the waters moving.

The Prophet Isaiah urged his generation to wake up and smell the coffee, but few listened to him. Isaiah's disappointment is expressed in his lamentation near the end of his book: "And there is none that calleth upon Thy name, and that stirreth up himself to take hold of Thee" (Isa. 64:7).

If the waters are stagnant, we have to take the initiative and stir up the waters by stirring up ourselves to take hold of God. The great multitude of impotent folk who lay around the pool of Bethesda waited for an angel to come down and stir up the healing waters. One man had been waiting thirty-eight years for his healing. Then Yeshua came along one day and said to him, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk" (John 5:8). The man found out that he didn't need to wait for an angel to stir up the waters. By the faith of the Son of God, he could stir up himself, take up his bed, and walk.

Lots of folks feel spiritually impotent, so they just lie around waiting for an angel to stir them up and transform them into super saints. If they had an ear to hear the Lord, they would find out that they don't need to wait for an angelic visitation to stir them up. They can stir up themselves to take hold of God, take up their cross, and walk by faith. Even young disciples can stir themselves up and actively serve the Lord in some way. Paul told young Timothy to "stir up the gift of God" which was in him (2 Tim. 1:6).

"But isn't God the one who stirs up the gift?"

God's role is to impart the gift. It's our job to stir up that gift. Paul didn't tell Timothy to wait for an angel to stir him up. He expected Timothy to do the stirring up. If you want to prevent or end stagnation in your life, take some initiative, stir yourself up to take hold of the Lord, and get the waters moving. □

UNCHAINED ELEPHANTS

Daniel Botkin

CHAINED ELEPHANTS

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

Many believers are like this chained elephant. They unnecessarily remain in bondage because they do not realize that the power of the Holy Spirit has enabled them to break free. They remain in bondage to sinful habits and passions like lust, jealousy, anger, covetousness, and gossip. When they try to overcome these things, Satan tugs at their chain - their old sinful nature - and says, "You'll never change. You've always been this way. It's your natural bent, it's your character and personality type. Just accept it and forget about trying to overcome it."

Even believers who get the victory over present temptations sometimes remain chained to the memories and guilt of their past sins. "Sure, your past is forgiven," the devil tells them. "But you've still got to continue feeling guilty about it and beat yourself up, even though you repented years ago."

This sort of demonic harassment and oppression can spiritually and emotionally cripple a person. If a believer listens to Satan's lies instead of to the truth of God's Word, he will never know that he has the power to break free. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). The Lord wants His disciples to be free - free from the bondage of present sinful habits and free from the memories and guilt of past sins.

THE POWER OF ONE

Let's consider the power of one. One prayer, one act of obedience, one step of faith, one proclamation of God's Word, one ping pong ball. "One ping pong ball? What are you talking about, Daniel?" Let me tell you a true story.

Years ago a boat sank and was stuck in the mud at the bottom of the sea. The owner of the boat offered a generous reward to anyone who could salvage the boat. Several people tried to raise the boat, but failed. Finally, one man came up with an ingenious idea. He ran a flexible tunnel from the

surface to the sea floor, and attached the end of the tunnel to the sunken boat's hull. Then from the surface he fed thousands of ping pong balls into the tunnel, and forced the ping pong balls into the hull of the sunken boat. Eventually, the accumulation of ping pong balls reached "critical mass," and the boat was lifted out of the mud and rose to the surface. (This story appeared in the *Jewish Press* some years ago. According to the *Jewish Press*, the man got the idea from a Donald Duck comic book. My children happen to have the Donald Duck comic with the story that inspired the man to use ping pong balls.)

One ping pong ball by itself could not free the boat from the mud, but the power of one ping pong ball, *combined with enough other ping pong balls*, provided the accumulation of power needed to pull the ship out of the mud.

Maybe one single prayer by itself will not give you the strength you need to free yourself from the sinful passion that

has you stuck in the mud at the bottom of the sea. But if you continue to pray and practice the disciplines which cause spiritual growth - meditation, Scripture study, fellowship, fasting, etc. - eventually you will grow strong enough to break free. There will come a day when you are spiritually strong enough to break the chain that binds you. The day before, you were just a little too weak to overcome, but on this particular day you are finally strong enough to overcome the temptation and be done with it forever! If you give up and resign yourself to a lifetime of weakness and defeat, you will never know when that day of victory arrives. You will be like that elephant that remained chained to his post because he didn't realize he had the power to break free.

Each day of spiritual growth and prayer is one more ping pong ball in the hull of your sunken ship. One day, the final ping pong ball will lift you out of the mud and set you free. If you give up, you might be giving up just one day before the day of your deliverance.

It is important that we see the power of one prayer, one act of obedience, one step of faith, one proclamation of God's Word. Even Yeshua proclaimed God's Word more than one time when He was tempted in the wilderness. Three times He proclaimed, "It is written..." One proclamation of God's Word by itself was not enough to force the Tempter to leave Him, nor were two proclamations. But the third proclamation, combined with the other two proclamations, provided the critical mass necessary to defeat the devil.

In Jeremiah 23:29, Yahweh says that His Word is "like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces." If you have ever broken up rocks or concrete with a sledge hammer, you know that one single blow of the hammer is usually not enough to break the rock. The first few blows usually just bounce off the surface of the concrete. It appears that nothing is happening. The hammer seems to have no effect at all. Below the surface, however, the concrete is starting to slowly crack on the bottom. The foundation is weakened a little more each time the hammer strikes. Eventually, the final blow comes, and breaketh the rock in pieces.

When we are tried and tempted, we have to continue hammering away at the

Enemy with God's Word, just as our Master did in His temptation in the wilderness. We strike with the hammer of Yahweh's Word each time we proclaim "It is written!" If we persevere, the final blow will eventually come and break Satan's power over us.

THE CHAINS OF LOW EXPECTATIONS

The analogy of the chained elephant applies not only to bondage to sinful passions and bondage to memories of past sins. The analogy also applies to the limitations that men and devils impose on us when they express low expectations of us.

At some point in a disciple's life, the Lord gives him a sense of destiny. The disciple has a vision to do exploits that will glorify his heavenly Father. When he tries to move ahead and walk in the vision the Lord has given him, Satan tugs at his chain and says, "Hey, forget it! You aren't capable of doing something like this. You'll never amount to anything more than a pew-warmer in some dry, boring church." If the disciple listens to the devil's (or men's) lies, he will accept the limitations of the chain and resign himself to a meaningless, futile existence in a boring church.

What chain has Satan put around your leg? What has he told you you can't do? "You can't understand the Bible"? "You can't talk to people about the Lord"? "You can't experience the Lord's presence in prayer"? "You can't receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit and experience rivers of living water flowing up from your innermost being"?

The Lord may tell you that you cannot do a particular exploit because He has a different plan for your life. For example, He might tell you that you can't be a pastor in America because He wants you to be a missionary in India. But don't let the devil or men convince you that you are doomed to a meaningless life of defeat. Don't restrict yourself to the limitations of your past, when you were too weak and immature to walk in the Lord's calling for you. And don't limit yourself to people's low expectations of you. Break the chain and prove them wrong. Become an unchained elephant and do exploits that will glorify our heavenly Father. □

THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SON OF GOD

Daniel Botkin

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"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8).

The Sonship of Yeshua of Nazareth is proclaimed throughout the New Testament, but it is especially emphasized by John. It is significant that the Apostle who emphasizes the Sonship of Yeshua also refers to "the beginning" several times in his writings. In his three short epistles, John mentions "the beginning" eleven times. In his Gospel, he begins the story of Yeshua with the same words that introduce the creation story in Genesis: "In the beginning..."

These facts about the Sonship of Yeshua and "the beginning" are significant because God's plan to manifest His Son is declared "in the beginning" of the Bible. In fact, it is declared in the very first word of the Hebrew Bible for those who have eyes to see.

To see this, we must first be familiar with a certain Hebrew verb, and then learn a grammatical rule for forming future verb tense in Hebrew. The verb we need to learn is written **לִשְׁרַת** (*lashiyt*) in its infinitive form. Its general meaning is "to put, to place, to set." This verb can have many shades of meaning, depending on how it is used.

As both a student and teacher of foreign languages, I have discovered that one of the best ways to understand the various nuances and shades of meaning a word can have is to see the word used in a variety of sentences. Here are a few sentences from the Bible where the verb *lashiyt* is used:

Genesis 3:15 - I will put (*ashiyt*) enmity between thee and the woman.

Genesis 4:25 - She called his name Seth (*shet*): For God has appointed



me (*shat-li*) another seed.

Genesis 41:33 - Joseph advised Pharaoh to set a man over Egypt.

Psalm 8:6 - Thou hast put all things under his [man's] feet.

Psalm 110:1 - Sit thou at My right hand until I make (*ashiyt*) thine enemies thy footstool.

Psalm 132:11 - Of the fruit of [David's] body will I set (*ashiyt*) upon the throne.

The KJV also translates our verb with these English words: *appoint, array, bring, put on, show*. From its various uses, we can see that *lashiyt* means "to put," but it is not usually used for common ordinary actions like "put the cup on the table." For such everyday actions, we normally use *lasim*, a different verb that is used in both the Bible and modern Hebrew. The verb we are concerned with suggests setting someone or something in its proper place. It might be better translated "set forth." It might even be translated "manifest" or "reveal." According to Gesenius' Hebrew lexicon, our English verb "to seat" is derived from *lashiyt*. With this fact in mind, we could translate the verb "to enthrone" if the One we are seating is a king.

We now must look at the rule for forming future tense in Hebrew. To change an infinitive ("to put") to future tense, we must first drop the **ל** (*L*-) prefix ("to") in order to get the base form of the verb. The future tense is then formed by adding a one-letter prefix to the base form of the verb.

Each pronoun has its own prefix, so it is not necessary to use the pronoun itself when the verb is expressed in future tense. To express a verb in first-person singular future ("I will..."), we simply add the prefix **א** (*aleph*) to the base form of the verb:

infinitive: **לשִׁירָה** = *lashiyt*

base form: **שִׁירָה** = *shiyt*

1st-person sg. fut.: **אֲשִׁירָה** = *ashiyt* ("I will set, etc.")

This form, **אֲשִׁירָה**, is used in a few of the verses given as examples earlier (Gen. 3:15; Ps. 110:1 & 132:11). These three verses (and the other examples) have very strong Messianic implications. But what does all this have to do with God's declaring His plan to manifest His Son in the first word of the Hebrew Bible? Let us take a close look at that first word.

When a reader opens a Hebrew Bible, the first word he sees is **בְּרָאֹשֶׁרֶת**. He will pronounce it *b'reshiyt* and translate it "in the beginning." This is correct, for it is a compound word made up of the prefixed preposition **ב** (*B'* = "in") plus the word **רָאֹשֶׁרֶת** (*reshiyt* = "beginning"). However, if we look closely at **בְּרָאֹשֶׁרֶת**, we can see another "compound word" that declares God's intention to manifest His Son. We see our future-tense verb **אֲשִׁירָה** (*ashiyt* = "I will set forth") preceded by the Hebrew word **בְּ** (*bar*).

Even Gentiles know that *bar* means "son." We are all familiar with the term *bar-mitzvah*, and Christians who read their Bibles have seen *bar* in the New Testament (Matt. 16:17, "Simon Bar-Jonah," e.g.). Even in the Old Testament *bar* is sometimes used for "son," sometimes in passages with strong Messianic implications. Psalm 2 begins by speaking of those who "take counsel together against YHWH and against His *Mashiach* (Messiah)." It ends by warning us to "kiss/worship the Son (*bar*)."
The Zohar says that

this "Son" is "the Governor of the Universe, the Head of Israel, the Lord of ministering angels, the Son of the Highest, the Son of the Holy and Blessed One, yea the very Shechinah" (Part 3, fol. 307, Amsterdam ed.). Bar also appears in Daniel: "the form of the fourth is like the Son (bar) of God" (3:25); "one like the Son (bar) of Man came with the clouds of heaven ... And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom" (7:13f).

Taking all these facts into consideration, we can look at בָּרְאַשִׁירָה as two words, and we see God declaring His eternal plan "in the beginning" in the very first word of the Bible:

בָּר - אֲשִׁירָה

"A Son I will set forth/appoint/bring forth/put into position/reveal/manifest/show/seat/enthrone, etc.

The manifestation of God's Son is the final goal to which the prophets point. "All the prophets prophesied not but of the days of the Messiah" (Sanh. 99a). We see Messiah's glory prophesied "in the beginning," even before the creation of the world, for "the world was not created but only for Messiah" (Sanh. 98b).

"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). Satan's work brought death into the world, but God has promised victory over death. "He will swallow up death in victory, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces" (Isa. 25:8). The New Testament tells us (1 Cor. 15:54) that Isaiah's prophecy will be fulfilled by the second manifesta-

tion of God's Son. A rabbinic story from "before the creation of the world" also affirms that Isaiah's prophecy will be fulfilled through the Messiah:

"For it says (Gen. 1:4), 'And God saw the light, that it was good.' That teaches us that the Holy One looked on the Messiah and His work before the creation of the world and He preserved beneath the throne of His glory the original light for the Messiah and His generation. Then said Satan: 'Lord of the world! For whom is that light predestined which is preserved beneath the throne of Thy glory?' God answered: 'For Him, who one day will throw you back with outrage and disgrace.' Then asked Satan: 'Lord of the world, show Him to me!' God said: 'Come and see Him!' As he saw Him, he got alarmed and fell on his face. Fearfully he cried out: 'This is surely the Messiah, Who will cast me and all the princes of the people of the world into Gehenna, as it says (Isa. 25:8), He hath swallowed up death forever, yea the Lord God will wipe away the tears from off all faces.'"

In the above story God tells Satan, "Come and see Him!" In John's Gospel (1:45f), Philip told Nathanael, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Torah, and the prophets did write, Yeshua of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael asked, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip answered, "Come and see!" To readers who have not yet seen the manifestation of God's Son in Yeshua of Nazareth, we extend the same invitation: "Come and see!" □

GATES OF EDEN
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WATER TO WINE

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By the time most of you get this, our congregation will have celebrated New Year's Eve on the evening of March 22. That's when the Biblical New Year starts this year, on the New Moon that marks the beginning of the Hebrew month Aviv (also called Nisan). "This month [the month of Passover, Aviv] shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you" (Ex. 12:2).

The Hebrew word *aviv* is not only the name of the first month; it is also the word for the spring season and for the green ears of grain that appear in the spring. *Aviv* is a word that conveys the idea of new beginnings. Therefore, this "beginning of months" is a good time of year for us to consider Yeshua's "beginning of miracles" - the transformation of water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee.

It is appropriate that Yeshua's very first miracle was the changing of water into wine, because this miracle is an illustration of what He does in people's lives. He takes a person whose life is like bland, boring, tasteless water, and transforms that person's life into something like the finest wine - sweet, rich, aromatic, full-bodied.

"This beginning of miracles did Yeshua in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory, and His disciples believed on Him" (John 2:11). For those who long for Him to manifest His glory, this story tells us some things we can do to put ourselves in the position to receive manifestations of His glory. Let's consider some of the details of the story.

"And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Yeshua was there. And both Yeshua was called, and His disciples, to the marriage" (John 2:1f). Yeshua was called. If we want to experience a manifestation of His glory, we must learn to call upon Him

Why a person with a lesser measure of the Spirit sometimes has more joy than his neighbor. he is filled to overflowing! His neighbor has a greater measure of the Spirit, but is not filled.



and invite His presence into our lives. Polite people don't show up at weddings unless they are invited. We can't expect the Lord to show up and manifest His glory to us if we have not invited Him and earnestly requested His presence. If you don't know how to call upon the Lord and seek His face, read the Psalms. Notice how desperately David and the other psalmists sought the Lord's presence. This kind of sincere, earnest calling upon the Lord will bring manifestations of His glory.

Not only was Yeshua invited, but also His disciples. Yeshua is the Head of His Body, the *ekklesia*. The Head is not separate from the Body. This teaches us that we must be joined in fellowship with other disciples if we want to see manifestations of Yeshua's glory. He was not a solitary prophet wandering the countryside alone. His disciples accompanied Him. *Together*, with one another, they saw His glory. The richest, sweetest wine of the Holy Spirit is experienced not by cranky lone prophets, but by disciples who are in fellowship with other disciples.

When the wedding feast ran out of wine, Mary told her Son, "They have no wine."

"Woman, what have I to do with thee?" He replied. "Mine hour is not yet come."

Mary's response to this cryptic reply was to simply tell the servants, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it."

Mary's words to the servants are words we must heed. Whatsoever He saith unto us, *do it!* If we do not do

what He tells us to do, we have no right to expect manifestations of His glory. This truth was stated by Yeshua on the night of His betrayal: "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself unto him" (John 14:21). The measure of our obedience to Yeshua will determine the measure of glory He will manifest to us.

Yeshua told the servants to fill the waterpots with water. This did not make any sense to them. They didn't know why He wanted them to do it, but they obeyed and filled the pots to the brim. When the servants poured a drink for the governor of the feast, the water had been transformed into wine. The wine was so excellent that the governor could not understand why this best wine was not set out at the beginning of the feast.

The invisible transformation that took place inside those waterpots is a picture of the invisible transformation that takes place in the heart of a person who has been filled to the brim with the waters of the Holy Spirit. The fruit of the vine that comes out of such a vessel is the best fruit there is, because it is the fruit of the Spirit - "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. 5:22f).

As we enter the season of Passover and Pentecost, let's ask the Lord to fill us to the brim and transform our lives into sweet wine. □

A SEA OF INIQUITY

Daniel Botkin

Picture a dry ocean bed, a deep but empty inland sea. From the deepest point in the center of this empty sea, a thick wooden post rises up almost to the top - just about to sea level if the sea were full of water. At the top of the post is a flat board about the size of a door, attached horizontally to the post like a table top on a pedestal. A man is lying on his back, tied to the table top.

All around the edge of this dry sea, multitudes of people come from all directions with containers of water in their hands. Some lug heavy barrels and buckets; some carry bowls or cups; some just bring spoons or eyedroppers with small amounts of water. As each individual reaches the edge, he pours his water into the empty sea. Millions and millions of people come and contribute their measure of water.

Slowly the water level begins to rise. Eventually the water reaches the man tied to the board at the top of the post. More people empty their containers into the sea, and the water begins to cover the man. Soon only his nostrils stick out of the water. He strains his neck and struggles to breathe. Finally, the last container is emptied into the sea. The water covers the man's nostrils and he drowns.

Who killed this man? The last person, the one whose water covered his nostrils? Or the first person, who set the example for all the others to follow? The fact is that all of those who participated in dumping water into this sea bear some of the blame.

Most gospel tracts teach that the first step toward salvation is admitting you are a sinner. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). We certainly need to admit that we are guilty of committing sins, but we also need to see what our sins did. Our sins put the sinless Son of God to death on the Cross. Just as everyone in our story who dumped water into the sea shares part of the blame for the victim's death, so everyone who has ever committed a sin shares part of the blame for the Messiah's death.

"But I've never committed any big,

serious sins, only a few minor ones." That's commendable. Nevertheless, you need to see that you are still partly responsible for killing Him, just like the people who only had teaspoons or eyedroppers in our story. Imagine yourself in this story. Even if you had only contributed a few drops of water, how would you feel when you learned that the man tied to the table was Jesus of Nazareth?

The reality of Jesus' death is far worse than the death of the man in our story, though. The man in our story only experienced a physical drowning in water. Yeshua's death was a spiritual drowning in a sea of iniquity. He bore the punishment for every sin ever committed throughout human history. At His Crucifixion He was drowned in a sea of iniquity so that we can be forgiven.

I doubt that any of us can fully comprehend the depth of His suffering. In this life, we "see through a glass darkly" and "see in part," Paul said. In the age to come, we shall know even as we are known (1 Cor. 13:12). I am sometimes haunted by this. I picture myself meeting the Lord in the age to come. I look around. Paradise is wonderful, but with it comes the full knowledge of the agony that the Lord endured. I know even as I am known. I hear myself say something like this: "Lord, it's wonderful to be here, more wonderful than I ever imagined. But now that I really see what it cost you to get me here, how can I bear it? How can I enjoy Paradise, now that I see the full extent of the suffering You had to go through to bring me here?" Perhaps this is when the Lord will wipe away all tears from our eyes. What other reason would there be for us to weep in heaven, except over the full revelation of what He had to go through to get us there?

Isaiah 53 makes it clear that it was our sins that killed Him. We can get so caught up in showing Isaiah 53 to Jews, to prove that Yeshua is the Messiah, yet fail to see ourselves and our sins mentioned in this chapter. Our sins. Not just the sins of the Jews who yelled, "Crucify him!"; not just the sins of

Pontius Pilate who condemned Him; not just the sins of the Roman soldiers who nailed Him to the tree. Our sins. Yours and mine. By our sins, we all participated in the murder of the Son of God.

When you understand that your sins, whether many or few, whether serious or minor, contributed to His suffering and death, it makes it a whole lot easier to do the will of God. When you realize that you were one of the people who poured water into the sea of iniquity, when you realize what you have done and to whom you did it, and when you realize you have been forgiven for your wicked deeds, then doing the will of God does not seem like an unreasonable response to such amazing grace. On the contrary, it is the only reasonable response.

He endured the Cross "for the joy that was set before Him" (Heb. 12:2). What was this joy that gave Him the strength and resolve to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows, to be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities? His joy came from the knowledge that some of those who dumped their sins on Him would repent and serve Him, and that the Holy Spirit would mold these repentant ones together into a Bride for Him.

What is the joy set before us? I do not know what it is for others, but I can tell you about the joy that is set before me. I know that a measure of Yeshua's suffering was caused by my sins. Even if my sins account for only a small fraction of His pain, I still share part of the blame. Nothing can change that. All I can do is accept His forgiveness and serve Him out of gratitude for His amazing grace. The joy set before me is the knowledge that I have been given a second chance. I can now serve Him and bring Him joy instead of grief. I can trust that the service I now render to Him will make the pain He endured for my sins worthwhile - that He will someday say to me, "The joy you brought Me after your repentance was worth the measure of pain that your sins caused." This is the hope and the joy that is set before me that enables me to endure. □

BURIAL

Part of the Gospel

Daniel Botkin

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel... how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day...." (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

According to the above verses, the three events of history that form the core of the gospel are the death, burial, and resurrection of the Messiah. There have been countless sermons, articles, and books about the death and resurrection of Jesus, but the "burial" aspect gets very little attention, even though it is one of the three events which form the core of the gospel. Let's consider the burial aspect of the gospel and what it means in our spiritual experience.

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Yeshua the Messiah were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Messiah was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3f).

Romans teaches that the Messiah's resurrection is more than just a historical fact to believe. The Resurrection is also something we should experience in our personal walk with the Lord as we "walk in newness of life." But before we experience the Lord's resurrection life and power in our personal walk, we must first experience burial. According to Romans 6:4, our burial takes place when we are baptized.

Water baptism is not the only thing that matters when we are considering burial, though. Of equal importance is *what gets buried* in the baptismal waters. Romans 6:4 says that "*we* are buried with Him by baptism." Our old self, the carnal nature, the sinner who lived and ruled in our body and mind until the day we decided to repent and follow the Lord - this is the person who gets buried on the day of our baptism. A baptism is actually a funeral for a person who has died to sin. The funeral is concluded when the person is submerged (buried) under the waters. Then the funeral is immediately followed by a resurrection, when the

person rises up out of the watery grave to walk in newness of life.

If a person has died to his old sinful life, he needs to get buried - ritually in water, and experientially by the Holy Spirit. This is why the New Testament speaks of the *baptism* of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives us power to keep the old sinful nature submerged and buried, so we can walk in newness of life and be the Lord's witnesses.

Dead people need to be buried. A corpse left to rot in the open stinks. In the Bible, to die without a burial was considered a curse. If a redeemed man does not bury his sinful past - that is, if he mentally re-lives his past and takes pleasure in memories of his past sins - it stinks. Things that are dead and stink need to be buried and forgotten.

The Apostle Paul, when speaking of his sinful past, said, "I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung" (Ph'p 2:8). Things that stink like dung need to be buried. The Torah even includes a commandment to bury one's dung: "Thou shalt have a place also outside the camp, whither thou shalt go forth abroad. And thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon [NASB, 'a spade among your tools']; and it shall be, when thou wilt ease thyself abroad [NIV, 'relieve yourself'], thou shalt dig therewith, and shalt turn back and cover that which cometh from thee [NASB, 'cover up your excrement']" (Deut. 23:12f).

I don't think you will find these verses embossed on any of the inspirational plaques sold at Christian book stores. The passage is too crude to display in homes (except perhaps in the bathroom). Some readers may think it is too crude to even write about. However, it is part of the Holy Scriptures and therefore worthy of our consideration. So let's consider this commandment and see how it relates to the subject of burial.

Some Torah commandments were specifically for the time when the Israelites were traveling through the wilderness and living "in the camp."

The commandment to carry a spade for covering one's excrement was one such commandment. Even though this commandment is situation-specific and we are not (normally) in a situation that requires practicing it, there is still a spiritual lesson to be learned.

The simple lesson is this: Things that stink need to be buried. The sin of our past is dung. It is useless waste which needs to be buried and forgotten so that it will no longer stink up the camp and have a negative influence on us and on those around us. After Paul mentioned the dung of his past, he spoke about "forgetting those things which are behind" (Ph'p 3:13). *Forgetting*. This is our "paddle" or spade for dealing with the sins of our past. Bury them by forgetting them.

Excuse me for being crude, but a point needs to be made. Think of an Israelite in the wilderness who went outside the camp and buried his dung. After he fulfilled the commandment and buried it, what effect did the dung have on him? None! Did he occasionally meditate on the memory of his bowel movement? No! He did not even think about the dung after it was buried. So should it be with our past sins if we have truly buried them.

We should note that the commandment to bury one's excrement specified that the burial take place "outside the camp." While the symbolic ritual of burial by water baptism is usually done in public, the act of getting the memories out of your mind is something that should be done in private, by confessing your sins to the Lord - not by broadcasting your past sins in graphic detail to the entire congregation. I have heard some "testimonies" that sounded almost like pornographic novels. The Apostle Paul briefly mentioned his past sin with just three words ("persecuting the church," Ph'p 3:6). He did not gleefully relate the gory details of his past sins as some people do.

The three historical events which form the core of the gospel are the death, burial, and resurrection of the

Messiah. For those who are in Messiah, these three historical events translate into spiritual experience. As He died, so our old sinful urge dies. As He rose from the dead, so we walk in newness of life. Between death and resurrection is burial. Before we walk in the newness of resurrection life, we must bury our past and forget it.

The Hebrews who came out of Egypt went through a "baptism unto Moses" when they passed through the Red Sea (1 Cor. 10:2). This ritual baptism did them no good without the corresponding spiritual experience of "burying Egypt," though. They did not bury Egypt. They cherished the memory of Egypt in their hearts and carried their slave mentality with them into the wilderness. Their hearts remained joined to Egypt, just as some believers' hearts remain joined to the world of their sinful past. The Hebrews could not return to Egypt, but neither could they go into the Promised Land. That generation that still had Egypt in their hearts had to die off and be buried. We can either bury Egypt and walk in newness of life in the Promised Land, or we can cherish the memory of Egypt and die in the wilderness. Of unfaithful Ephraim, Hosea said, "Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them" (Hos. 9:6). If we do not bury Egypt, Egypt will bury us.

If you have believed and been baptized, your old life was ritually and symbolically buried at your baptism. Now live out the reality of the burial of your old sinful nature. Bury Egypt before Egypt buries you. Leave your old sinful urge buried. A preacher once said, "Be sure to bury the old man face down. That way, the more he scratches, the deeper he'll go."

When you see or hear or smell something that triggers a memory of a past sin you committed, don't re-live the sins of your past and dwell on them with pleasure. Instead, thank God that you are forgiven. Then bury the dung of your past and forget it. Do as Paul did, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before" (Ph'p 3:13). Then "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Messiah Yeshua" (Ph'p 3:14). This was Paul's goal, "that I may apprehend that

THE RAVEN AND THE DOVE

The Apostle Peter said that Noah's Flood is a symbolic picture of baptism (1 Pet. 3:18ff). For Noah and his family, the old pre-Flood world they had formerly known was forever dead and of no use to them. If we have been redeemed, we should be dead to the world and the world dead to us. However, some things live off the dead if the dead are unburied. After the Flood was over, Noah sent a raven out from the Ark. The raven "went to and fro" over the old creation and never returned to the Ark. Noah then sent forth a dove, but the dove "found no rest for the sole of her foot" and returned to the Ark.

How did the raven survive outside the Ark? It no doubt fed itself on the unburied, floating corpses of the old creation. People who are satisfied with the things they can scavenge from this fallen world are like the unclean raven. They feed their hearts and minds on the dead, rotting garbage of a world that lies under the curse of God's judgment. They thrive on garbage such as sleazy romance novels, filthy movies and TV shows, celebrity-worship, and other trash.

The dove could not feed herself on death like the raven did. The dove had to continue to return to the Ark until she found evidence of life from the new creation. Finally she found it - an olive leaf. People who find no rest for their souls in the corruption of this fallen world are like the dove. The only thing that will satisfy them is something from the new creation. Just a green olive leaf is enough. A fresh olive leaf means there is an olive tree, which means there will be olives, which means there will be oil, which means there will be an anointing. Those who live by the Spirit live for the anointing of the Spirit.

Are you living by the old nature of the unclean raven, or by the new nature of the kosher dove? The dove is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. The dove cannot and will not

for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus" (Ph'p 3:12), or, as the NASB translates it, "that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus." Paul knew that the Lord had laid hold of him for a purpose, and Paul was determined to lay hold of

feed itself on the dead, rotting garbage of a world that is at enmity with God. If you feed your mind on the garbage of this world and find your greatest delights in the sewers of the world system, then you are living by the nature of the raven.

"Daniel, I have to admit that I sometimes do enjoy sleazy stuff. Does that mean I'm not really born of the Spirit, that my conversion experience wasn't genuine?" Maybe. Or maybe you have just never learned to stop feeding the old sinful nature and start feeding the new nature. Even for true believers "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh" (Gal. 5:17). Years ago I heard a poem that went something like this:

Two natures live within my breast,
The one is cursed, the other blest.
The one I love, the other hate.
The one I feed will dominate.

There is also a story that illustrates the believer's inward struggle between the flesh and the Spirit. A missionary in the jungle led a native chief to faith in the Savior. After a season of spiritual growth, the missionary asked the chief how he was doing.

"It's like two dogs fighting inside me," the chief said.

The missionary understood exactly what he was going through. "And which dog is winning the fight?" the missionary asked.

"Whichever one I feed the most," the chief replied.

If you feed the unclean raven inside you, the old nature will live and dominate you. Let's starve the raven. Let's be like the dove and seek those things which are a part of the new creation. Then we will find the fresh olive leaf which will bring a fresh anointing of the Spirit, and we can walk in newness of life in the new creation.

-Daniel Botkin

that purpose and fulfill his destiny. The Lord has laid hold of you for a purpose, too. If you want to find that purpose, you have to leave your sinful past buried. Then you can walk in the newness of resurrection life. This is the good news of the gospel. □

THE CRUCIBLE

God's Boiling Pot

Daniel Botkin

In Ezekiel 24, Yahweh told Ezekiel to "utter a parable" to the rebellious city of Jerusalem. The parable involved setting a pot of water on a fire, putting chunks of flesh in the pot, and letting the scum rise to the surface. After the flesh was completely cooked, the bones were removed and burned in the fire. Finally, the pot was emptied and set on the fire so that the final bits of filth and scum in the pot would be burned away.

In this parable the pot is Jerusalem, the fire is the Babylonian army, and the flesh represents the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The vision of a boiling pot symbolizing destruction coming from the north was given years earlier to Jeremiah (Jer. 1:13ff). In the days of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the boiling pot was used as a parable to show how Yahweh was dealing with the rebellious people of Jerusalem. The boiling pot is also a graphic picture of how the Lord deals with His rebellious people today. Let's consider this parable.

The very first words of the parable of the pot are "Set on a pot, set it on" (Ezk. 24:3). If we have rebellion hidden in our hearts, the Lord sets us on the fire. He puts us through fiery trials and testings. He turns up the heat so the scum will rise to the surface. What's really deep inside us comes out and gets exposed. In Ezekiel's parable, pieces of flesh were put into the boiling pot. That flesh is us: "man ... is flesh" (Gen. 6:3). The unregenerated, natural man (an unsaved man who lives by his natural senses) is ruled by his fleshly appetites and desires and cravings. If the flesh demands to be fed and pampered, the natural man feeds and pampers his flesh. If the flesh demands thrills and excitement, the natural man gives it thrills and excitement. If the flesh feels pious and wants a shot of religion to ease a guilty conscience, the natural man takes the flesh to church for an inoculation. At church the flesh gets



a dose of artificial religion that is just enough to make him immune to the real thing. Thus the flesh rules.

Eventually a man comes to a place in his life when he no longer wants to be ruled by his flesh. He repents and turns to the Lord. He knows this is the right thing to do, and he is pleased with the decision he has made. The Lord is pleased, too. There's someone else who is not pleased, though: the flesh. The flesh says, "Now wait just a minute! I'm used to being in charge here and having all my demands met. I'm not going to surrender and relinquish my position!"

We can be a born-again believer and still have filth and scum hidden in our flesh. The impurities in a piece of meat are unseen until the pot is put on the fire, the water starts boiling, the filth is loosened, and the scum rises to the surface. We can have impurities that are only exposed when the Lord puts us on the fire. It was to born-again Christians that Paul wrote these words: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice" (Eph. 4:31). "But now ye put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth" (Col. 3:8).

The hypocritical Pharisees were good at hiding their inward impurities. They were like white-washed sepulchres, clean on the outside but full of dead men's bones and rotten filth on the inside. Inward impurities can be hidden for a season, but when the Lord puts people on the fire and turns up the heat, their favorite pet sins rise to the surface. Like dirt being boiled out of a piece of meat, the impure scum is manifested in deeds such as evil speaking, slander, blasphemy, and filthy communication out of the mouth. It gets exposed for all to see.

Fiery trials not only build character, they reveal character. How do you react when the heat is turned up? Do you draw closer to the Lord and deepen your trust in Him? Or do you express anger, wrath, and malice with words of evil speaking, slander, and filthy communication out of your mouth? The fiery trials reveal what's inside you - either a sanctified heart or filthy scum.

Peter wrote to believers about "the trial of your faith," being "tried with fire," and "the fiery trial which is to try you" (1 Pet. 1:7 & 12). Peter knew from experience what it means to be tried by fire. As a young disciple of Rabbi Yeshua, Peter had the glorious revelation that his rabbi was "the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). Immediately after this ("from that time forth"), Yeshua started telling His disciples that He was going to suffer and be killed. This shocking news was a fiery ordeal for Peter. Peter's emotions started boiling and the scum rose to the surface. He took Yeshua and began rebuking Him, saying, "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee" (Matt. 16:22). Yeshua's reply to Peter was: "Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art an offence unto Me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matt. 16:23).

Peter had a genuine revelation from the heavenly Father, yet he was

still thinking and reasoning as a natural man, from a fleshly perspective. The unwelcome news that his Messiah was going to suffer and die conflicted with his theology. In effect Peter was saying, "But Lord, if You are the Messiah, You can't die! You have to finish Your job! You have to drive out the Romans, regather the scattered tribes, and restore the kingdom to Israel!"

Many times the Lord brings His will to pass in ways that conflict with our natural expectations. Peter knew that his Master was the Messiah, so he naturally assumed that Yeshua would do things according to the prevailing Jewish expectations of the day. Like Peter, we can experience genuine revelation, be full of zeal, eagerly defend truth, and yet all the while be thinking and reasoning as a natural man by viewing the situation from a merely fleshly perspective. Peter's fleshly understanding of how the Messiah would fulfill His role caused Peter to go from being "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona" to "Get behind Me, Satan: thou art an offence unto Me." When the flesh tries to interfere with God's plans, it is an offence unto Him, even if we have good intentions, as Peter no doubt did. When the works of the flesh are manifested in obvious outward sins like sexual immorality, stealing, drunkenness, etc., that is bad enough. But when the flesh asserts itself in a religious situation, that is even worse, because it's more difficult to detect the sin. We can be zealous for truth and do all the outward commandments properly, yet still be infected with inward sins hidden from the eyes of men. That's why the Lord puts us on the fire, to loosen the crud and bring the scum to the surface so we can repent.

Peter got put on the fire again on the night of the Lord's betrayal. "I'll never deny You!" Peter had boasted. To prove his devotion, Peter took out his sword and started swinging when they came to arrest Yeshua. Peter had a lot of confidence in himself. He believed in his own resolve and determination to do the right thing. It was a fleshly confidence, though.

There is a subtle difference between faith and carnal self-confidence, but it is a difference as wide as the sea. A man with true faith knows in his heart of hearts that apart from the grace of God, he could deny the Lord as easily as Peter did. He could even betray the Lord like Judas did. Yet the man with true faith will neither deny nor betray the Lord, because his faith is not in himself nor in his own wisdom and knowledge and experience. His faith is in the Lord alone, and he has no confidence whatsoever in his own flesh. By contrast, a man with carnal self-confidence *does* have confidence in the flesh. Like Peter, he is affected by the "pulling oneself out of the mud by the bootstraps" mentality.

To purge His people from confidence in the flesh, the Lord turns up the heat to its hottest. This is what He did to Peter. Peter was "following afar off," warming himself by the fire. Three face to face encounters with nosy people brought three denials out of Peter's mouth. The third denial was accentuated with cursing and swearing. The hottest trials bring the dirtiest scum to the surface and the dirtiest words from the mouth.

Peter heard the cock crow, remembered the Lord's words, and went out and wept bitter tears of repentance. Peter's fiery trials were not over yet, though. In Acts, Peter was brought before the Sanhedrin, interrogated, threatened, and beaten. Through it all, Peter boldly yet respectfully testified of the Messiah's resurrection. What a contrast to his three-fold denial a short time earlier! No filthy scum rose to the surface this time. What made the difference? Was it because Peter had developed more self-confidence than he had before? No. It was not because Peter had more confidence in himself, it was because Peter had been purged of confidence in the flesh. Now there was no more hasty speaking, no more foolish boasting about what he could do by the power of the flesh.

Peter's final fiery trial came when he was martyred for his faith. According to history, Peter was condemned to die by crucifixion. When the time of

execution came, Peter requested that he be crucified upside down. He said he was not worthy to die in the same manner as his Master. There was no more fleshly boasting now, no more insistence that the Romans be overcome by force, no more claims of never denying the Lord, no more swinging of the sword. Peter surrendered his fleshly body to the will of the Lord in death as he had surrendered his fleshly nature to the will of the Lord in life.

Shortly before his death, Peter wrote these words: "Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Yeshua the Messiah hath showed me. Moreover I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance" (2 Pet. 1:13-15). One of "these things" that Peter listed for his readers to keep in remembrance was the fact that we are "partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (vs. 4). In order to live by the divine nature, we have to be purged of the corruption that is in us through lust. The purging of corruption takes place in the boiling pot, God's crucible.

Years ago a popular gospel tract announced the good news by stating, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." God does have a wonderful plan for your life, and part of that wonderful plan is the crucible: "Set on a pot, set it on, and also pour water into it... Then set it empty upon the coals thereof, that the brass of it may be hot, and may burn, and that the filthiness of it may be molten in it, that the scum of it may be consumed" (Ezk. 24:3 & 11).

The purpose of the crucible is to purify you, not to harden you. If you respond to the heat by hardening your heart, it will be to your own loss and ruin. Your suffering will be in vain and provide you with no benefits. When the fire gets hot and the scum starts rising to the surface, confess your sins and repent. Then let the Lord skim the scum off the surface and purify you. □

PRAYER AS INCENSE

Dr. Daniel Botkin

Most people who study the Bible know that prayer is likened to sweet incense. The connection between prayer and incense is seen in the following verses:

"Let my prayer be set before Thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice" (Ps. 141:2).

"And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand" (Rev. 8:3f).

"And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense" (Lk. 1:10).

THE ETYMOLOGY OF KETORET

I knew about the link between prayer and incense as a young disciple in the early 1970s. When I lived in Israel in the late 1970s, I learned the Hebrew word for incense, *ketoret*. However, it was not until this past winter that I learned something interesting about the etymological significance of *ketoret*. The word literally means "a fumigation." It is derived from a Hebrew word which means "to smoke" or "to drive out."

When we talk about fumigating a place in English, we usually think of bad fumes to drive out cockroaches or other vermin. Prayer works in much the same way. When we pray, fumes are produced. Those fumes sweeten heaven and repulse hell. The demons cry out, "That praying saint smells to high heaven!" And they are right! The fumes of prayer are pleasant to the heavenly Father but obnoxious to demonic powers. Sincere prayer will drive away spiritual pests and vermin. It will fumigate our minds of evil thoughts, suspicions, and doubts. It will fumigate our families of disharmony and strife. It will fumigate our congregations of contentious, fault-finding spirits. When God's people pray, God's house gets fumigated. The unwelcome occupants

are driven away.

Spiritual forces are set in motion when we pray. In the days of the priest Zachariah, God's people were praying while Zachariah was ministering at the time of incense. "And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense" (Lk. 1:11). Things appear when prayer drives away those spirits that blind us to the reality of the spiritual realm. Our spiritual eyes are opened to see things that prayerless people cannot see.

THE PRIESTLY BURNING OF INCENSE

The Apostle Peter says that disciples of Yeshua are "a royal priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:9). The Levitical priests burned incense. We are not Levitical priests, but studying about the duties of the Levitical priests can teach us some priestly principles which can be applied to our lives. The priestly duty to burn incense is described in Exodus 30:7-9:

"And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before Yahweh throughout your generations. Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt-sacrifice, nor meat-offering; neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon."

We cannot fulfill these instructions in a literal way, because 1) there is no Tabernacle or Temple and therefore no functioning incense altar, and 2) none of us is the High Priest. However, the New Testament declares that there is a Tabernacle in heaven, "a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands" (Heb. 9:11). Yeshua is the High Priest of that Tabernacle, and the incense on the altar of that Tabernacle is mingled with the prayers of the saints. If we want our prayers to be mingled with the heavenly incense, we should look at the instructions for the burning of earthly incense, and see what principles can be applied to our prayer life. Let's look at some of the details of Yahweh's

instructions to Aaron.

"EVERY MORNING WHEN HE DRESSETH THE LAMPS"

If you want your prayers to ascend as incense, you should not neglect morning prayer. It is significant that the High Priest "dressed the lamps" in the morning while the incense was burning. The lamps were "dressed" by trimming the wicks. The dirty carbon was cut away so the lamps would burn brightly and clearly. This is what morning prayer does for you. It invites your High Priest Yeshua to cut away the cruddy carbon from your mind. It prepares you for the day so you will shine brightly as you go out into the dark world. If you wake up in a bad mood, morning prayer will fumigate your mind and drive away things like grouchiness, pessimism, and depression. If your mornings are rushed, take at least a few minutes to relax, focus, pray, and commit the day to the Lord.

"WHEN AARON LIGHTETH THE LAMPS AT EVEN"

Incense was also burned when the lamps were lit in the evening. Evening prayer is important because lots of evil is done at night, under cover of darkness. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19). Nighttime is more dangerous than daytime. More crimes and sins are committed at night than in the daylight. The Tempter draws strength from the darkness of night, because he can say, "Go ahead. No one will see you. It's too dark for anyone to recognize you."

Don't go out at night without having your lamp lit by prayer and your soul saturated with the odor of burning incense. And don't go to sleep at night without at least a short prayer to close the day before you close your eyes.

"A PERPETUAL INCENSE"

The burning of incense was to be perpetual. The word perpetual (Hebrew *tamid*) means "always." "Praying

always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit," Paul instructed the saints (Eph. 6:18). "Pray without ceasing," he wrote (1 Thes. 5:17). In other words, never get out of the habit of daily prayer. Don't ever get the ridiculous notion that you have arrived at an exalted level of spiritual maturity and no longer need to pray.

The circumstances of your life may change and give you more or less time to pray. Having to earn a living and raise little children usually reduces the amount of time a mother or father can pray. Getting the children raised and out of the house and retiring from your job can increase the amount of time available for prayer. Whether you currently have a lot of time or only a little time to devote to prayer, pray without ceasing. And pray "always" by staying in a prayerful state of mind all the time. This will keep your life fumigated and free of spiritual vermin.

"NO STRANGE INCENSE"

No strange incense was to be burned on the altar. Aaron did not have the liberty to burn just any old kind of incense that suited his fancy. The incense had to be made and burned according to Yahweh's instructions. In the same way, not all prayers are accepted as sweet incense on the heavenly altar. To use an extreme example, if you are praying for an opportunity to rob a bank or commit adultery with your neighbor's wife, those prayers are "strange incense." If your prayers are contrary to the will of God as already revealed in the Scriptures, those prayers are not a sweet fragrance to the Heavenly Father. They are a stench to Him, and a delightful odor to the demons.

The word *strange* also means "foreign." You do not need to include any Buddhist prayers or New Age prayers to "Mother Earth" in your prayer life. Uttering prayers that are foreign to the Kingdom of God is burning strange incense.

"SWEET INCENSE"

Yahweh told Aaron to burn sweet incense on the altar. There are four ingredients that are necessary to make your prayers sweet to the Lord. These ingredients are holiness (*קדושה*, *kedushah*), purity (*טהרה*, *taharah*),

mercy (*רחמים*, *rachamim*), and hope (*תקוה*, *tikvah*). Put the initial letters of these four Hebrew words together, and you have *תְּקַרְבָּת* - KeToReT, the Hebrew word for incense. The rabbis saw in this acronym a summary of the prerequisites for acceptable prayer. Let's consider each of these concepts.

● **Kedushah:** Holiness. To be holy means to be set apart from the larger body of unredeemed humanity - not set apart geographically, but by the way we live. We are to live differently and not be conformed to the world. True holiness will put the fire of the Holy Spirit in your heart. Without holiness, there is no holy fire in the heart. Without fire, incense does not burn. If it does not burn, it does not ascend and fumigate. It is merely wasted incense because the odor remains locked inside. The odor is never released without the zeal and fire of holiness.

● **Taharah:** Purity. Closely related to holiness is purity. "Blessed are the pure in heart," Yeshua said, "for they shall see God" (Mt. 5:8). A pure heart is free of malice, contempt, and scorn. How can such things exist in a heart that has seen God? Seeds of bitterness cannot take root in a pure heart. In a pure heart there is no soil where such things can grow. A pure heart is an inhospitable environment for poison fruit, but an excellent environment for the fruit of the Spirit. Sweet prayer will arise like incense from a pure heart.

● **Rachamim:** Mercy. A pure heart is also merciful. Any man who prays regularly and knows his own inadequacy no doubt prays for God to be merciful to him. If you want God to be merciful to you, you must be merciful to others. "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Mt. 5:7). The publican's short prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner" was sweeter to God than the Pharisee's long, pride-filled prayer (Lk. 18:9-14). A prayer from a merciful heart is sweet to the Lord. A prayer from an uncaring, judgmental heart is a stench to Him.

● **Tikvah:** Hope. Hope is also a necessary prerequisite for sweet prayer. Love "hopeth all things" (1 Cor. 13:7). The sweetest prayers come from those who

hope for the best - the best from the Lord and the best from people. Prayers that are tainted by scepticism, cynicism, and low expectations do not rise like incense. Such things are fire retardants. If they are mixed in with the incense, it will never burn and ascend from the altar. People with a glum, hopeless attitude toward life resign themselves to a miserable existence, and that is exactly what they get. Their unbelief and pessimism prevent hope from arising in their hearts, so their prayers never arise like incense.

THE SHAPE OF PRAYER

One more thing about incense. When a cloud rises from burning incense, it ascends in no set pattern. No two clouds in the sky are exactly alike, and no two clouds of incense are exactly alike. The shape and direction that a cloud of incense takes is determined by a number of factors: the temperature of the fire, the strength and direction of the wind, the atmospheric conditions, and so on. The shape and direction of our prayers are likewise determined by similar factors: the temperature of the fire burning in our heart, the strength of the Holy Spirit in our walk, the direction the Spirit is moving, and the general spiritual climate in which we live.

The shape of true prayer, like the shape of a cloud of incense, is not predictable. The over-use of pre-written prayers can lead to a prayer service that is entirely predictable - unlike a rising cloud of incense. There is nothing inherently wrong with pre-written prayers, but an over-dependence on prayers done by rote can lead a praying person into a rut. They can deprive the praying person of the spontaneity and joy that are experienced when a cloud of incense takes a surprising shape or an unexpected direction.

If your prayer life is in a rut, set aside some time when you can come into the prayer closet with no pre-conceived notions about how your prayer session is going to proceed. Just ask the Father to ignite your heart with the fire of His holiness (*kedushah*), to purify your heart (*taharah*), and to put some mercy and hope into your heart (*rachamim* and *tikvah*). Then break out into some spontaneous prayer and let the *ketoret* arise and fumigate your life. □

RE-EVALUATING THE WISDOM OF USING EXTRA-BIBLICAL JEWISH TRADITIONS FOR MESSIANIC WORSHIP

Dr. Daniel Botkin

The Apostle Paul warned Titus about the importance of "not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men, that turn from the truth" (Tit. 1:14). There is nothing wrong with using fictional stories ("fables") as parables to illustrate spiritual truths. Yeshua often did this. And there is nothing inherently evil about man-made traditions per se. But if Jewish traditions and fables turn people away from the truth, then there is a problem.

The worst Jewish fable is the one that has been around since the morning after the Messiah's Resurrection: "His disciples stole the body." Some Jewish fables, though relatively harmless, are just plain silly. For example, the rabbis say that Queen Vashti had a tail. Adam had one, too. Adam also mated with other "wives," Neanderthal-like creatures that were not quite human. Here's another one: When Pharaoh's daughter rescued baby Moses, her arm miraculously telescoped and stretched way out to the middle of the Nile River to reach the basket. Furthermore, we are told by rabbis that this is the true meaning of the Bible's statement that God redeemed us "with an outstretched arm." We should not take such far-fetched Jewish fables seriously.

What about following Jewish traditions? Some Jewish customs would be okay except for the fact that they are presented as commandments of God instead of traditions of men. The kindling of Sabbath candles is one such example. When lighting the candles, Jewish tradition requires the recitation of a blessing which states that God "commanded us to kindle the Sabbath lights." But God commanded no such thing. There is nothing in the Scriptures that even suggests that candles should be lit to honor the Sabbath. Orthodox Jewish sources admit that the custom originated as a reaction against the Karaites, Jews who rejected the Oral Traditions of the rabbis. The Bible says not to kindle a

fire on the Sabbath, so the Karaites did not use fire for anything on the Sabbath, even if the fire had been kindled before the Sabbath. The Orthodox understood (correctly, in this case) that it is permissible to derive benefits from a fire on the Sabbath if the fire is kindled before the Sabbath. So to prove that they were not Karaites (and perhaps to spite the Karaites), the Orthodox Jews began the custom of lighting candles just before the beginning of the Sabbath. Now every Sabbath, Orthodox Jews declare that God "commanded us to kindle the Sabbath lights." They do the same thing every winter with the blessing for the Hanukkah candles, stating that God "commanded us to kindle the Hanukkah lights," even though there is no Biblical commandment - not even in Maccabees, the book that tells the Hanukkah story. By making these statements, Jews affirm their loyalty to the Oral Torah - the traditions of the rabbis which were rightly rejected by the Karaites and the Nazarenes. Even the blessing recited after the Torah reading is meant to affirm one's loyalty to the Oral Torah, according to *The Artscroll Siddur*, which says of this blessing: "'Torah of truth' refers to Written Torah, 'eternal life' refers to the Oral Torah."¹

Most people in the Messianic movement desire to worship and practice their faith like the Apostles did. Some believers erroneously assume that this means that we should follow the Torah in the manner prescribed by Orthodox Judaism. However, the Orthodox Judaism of today is not the form of Judaism which existed in the days of the Apostles. The questions we need to ask are not "What do the rabbis teach?" or "How do Jews interpret the Torah?" The questions we need to ask are "What did the Messiah and the Apostles teach? How did first-century Messianic believers worship? What was their view of the Written Torah? What

did they think of the Oral Torah with its man-made traditions?"

These questions are partly answered in the New Testament. However, there are some details which are not answered in the New Testament, nor even in extra-Biblical historical writings. The period of history between the death of the Apostles and the appearance of the so-called "Church Fathers" is a period which is especially sketchy to say the least. Consider what historians have said about this period of history:

"For fifty years after Paul's life, a curtain hangs over the Church, through which we vainly strive to look; and when at last it rises, about 129 A.D. with the writings of the earliest Church Fathers, we find a Church in many ways very different from that in the days of Peter and Paul."²

"The scanty and suspicious materials of ecclesiastical history seldom enable us to dispel the dark cloud that hangs over the first age of the Church."³

"What happened during this time? Obviously, it was a time of many heresies. The Church Fathers come on the scene in the second century to tell us vociferously who the heretics were and where the 'orthodox Church' was. These men claimed to be the followers of the apostles, but their theology was different and seemed to blend Hellenistic philosophy and Babylonian religious custom with Christianity."

"It was certainly a far different theology from that of the Jerusalem Church which Paul said he had taught the Gentiles to follow (Acts 15:2, 22-28; 1 Thessalonians 2:14). It is interesting that the descendants of the Jerusalem Church, the Nazarenes, were labeled as heretics and persecuted for their regard of the Mosaic law when they were merely carrying

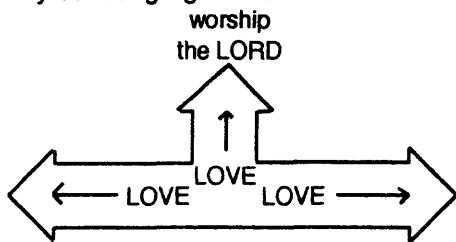
on the tradition of the Church of Peter and James."⁴

A lot of the details of first-century Apostolic worship have been lost to history. However, we do know from the Bible and from history what the Nazarenes generally believed about Yeshua, about Paul, and about the Written Torah and Oral Torah. They believed in Yeshua's Virgin Birth, His Divinity, and His Resurrection. They recognized Paul as a legitimate Apostle and accepted his writings. They believed that the Written Torah should still be followed, but they viewed the Oral Torah as a "very burdensome yoke of Jewish traditions."⁵ Jerome tells us how the Nazarenes understood the prophecy about Jesus ministering in "the land of Naphtali" in Isaiah 9:1:

*"The Nazoreans venture to explain this passage as: When Christ came and His preaching was glittering, especially the land of Naphtali was delivered from the errors of the scribes and Pharisees, and He struck off from its neck the very burdensome yoke of Jewish traditions."*⁶

Some man-made Jewish traditions are harmless. Some are actually helpful, and can be used in a meaningful way to affirm our faith in the Messiah. If a Jewish tradition is not contrary to the Scriptures, it is permissible. However, just because a tradition is permissible and Jewish does not necessarily mean that it has some intrinsic value for believers in the Messiah. If Jewish traditions become a burdensome yoke, then we need to let the glittering Word of Yeshua strike them off from our necks.

As a congregational leader, I use this three-pronged diagram to show why our congregation exists:



evangelize
the LOST

edify the
SAINTS

The two greatest commandments are to love God and to love our fellow man. We love God by worshipping and obeying Him. We love our fellow man by edifying him if he's saved and evangelizing him if he's lost. When we assemble together on the Sabbath, the things we do together as a congregation should somehow relate to our congregation's three-fold purpose.

With these thoughts in mind, I began to question the value of extra-Biblical Jewish traditions some months ago. First, their value in regards to worship. Some Jewish liturgical traditions can be used for worship, but is this the best way to worship the Father? Yeshua said that the Father seeks true worshippers who will worship *in Spirit and in Truth*. The *Spirit* can be quenched by too much prescribed liturgy. *Truth* is not upheld by uttering Jewish blessings that affirm the authority of the rabbis' man-made traditions.

What about edifying the saints? Do man-made Jewish traditions edify the saints? Some of the traditions can, especially if they affirm our faith in Yeshua as the Messiah. But are Jewish traditions the best way to edify the saints? The Bible speaks of other ways to build up the saints: Jude wrote about "building up yourselves on your most holy faith [by] praying in the Holy Ghost" (Jude 20). Paul said, "Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth" (1 Cor. 8:1). The text of 1 Corinthians 14 speaks about edifying the saints by prophesying, by tongues and interpretations, and by other gifts that spontaneously flow as the Holy Spirit moves among the congregation. So it appears that the saints will be edified more by prayer, love, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit than they will be by Jewish traditions.

How about evangelizing the lost? Do Jewish traditions help draw unsaved visitors to the Savior? Or do the Jewish traditions alienate them? Jewish traditions might help Jewish visitors feel more comfortable and at home, but the traditions can alienate and intimidate and bore non-Jewish visitors. I know, because some visitors to our congregation have

expressed such responses, even though the Hebrew liturgy was minimal and an English translation was provided. Furthermore, there have been times when even I have felt bored by too much Jewish liturgy. And I understand the Hebrew.

It is for these reasons that I decided to reduce the amount of Hebrew prayers and liturgy in our weekly Sabbath meetings. We still do the *Shema* ("Hear O Israel...") and the *v'ahavta* ("And thou shalt love..."). The *Shema* reminds us that our God is Yahweh and He is *echad* (one). The *v'ahavta* reminds us that His Torah is encapsulated in His two greatest commandments. Both of these declarations are straight from Scripture, as is the Aaronic Benediction that we use to close our Sabbath service.

We will probably continue to use some additional blessings and traditions for the celebration of the more formal events like Passover and Yom Kippur. But for our regular weekly Sabbath meetings, our Hebrew liturgy has been reduced, because I believe it was irrelevant and counter-productive to our three-fold purpose of worship, edification, and evangelism. Some of our people were using the liturgy as a substitute for spontaneous, Spirit-led worship, uttering no words of worship except for the blessings that were recited by rote. Some of our visitors felt alienated and uncomfortable with the unfamiliar Hebrew liturgy. Furthermore, several of our own people admitted in a survey that they were not edified by it. In an anonymous survey, I asked our people for suggestions for ways to improve our Sabbath services. Several people suggested that we reduce the amount of the rabbinic, the ritualistic, the liturgical, and the traditional. The results of this survey confirmed what I had been sensing for some time. So we reduced the Hebrew liturgy and made more room for Spirit-led praise and prayer and for the spontaneous moving of the Holy Spirit. So far, the results have been wonderful.

I am not suggesting that all Messianic believers must discard all Jewish traditions and liturgy. However, we

should be aware of why the rabbis fixed and standardized the prayers and put them in a *siddur* (prayer book). Rabbi Jeffery Cohen, author of *Blessed Are You: A Comprehensive Guide to Jewish Prayer*, tells when and how and why the Jewish prayers were standardized. Rabban Gamaliel II of Yavneh (A.D. 80-110) was the rabbi primarily responsible for the standardization of Jewish prayers. According to Jeffery Cohen, there were three main reasons Gamaliel wanted to standardize the prayers:

"First, he realized that, with the Temple in ruins, a new spiritual impetus was required, one which the synagogue and daily worship could best provide. Second, his period witnessed an upsurge of Christian missionary activity, coinciding with the composition of the Gospels and their dissemination among Jewish communities...."

"Gamaliel was constantly pestered by minim, members of the new faith who delighted in engaging him in disputation; and he was especially alarmed at the infiltration of new Christians, indistinguishable at that time from their fellow Judean Jews, pressing their prayers and literature onto an unsuspecting Jewry. The simple, uneducated folk could not be expected to distinguish whether a religious text left in a synagogue was Orthodox or sectarian. Neither, given the flexibility and spontaneity allowed in the framing of prayers, could they know whether one called upon to act as reader was a secret adherent of the new faith and was uttering acceptable or unacceptable religious sentiment. Hence Gamaliel's decision to establish, once and for all, a fixed and authorized order of daily prayer...."

"Gamaliel's third reason may have been his wish to stem the disturbing fashion of charismatic or ecstatic prayer that was becoming fashionable among those early Christians and was appealing even to some of his own colleagues and disciples. In the absence of a fixed and regulated liturgy, they were emboldened to give expression to their own, often wild, outpouring of exaggerated body

language and meaningless phraseology, claiming that it was the Spirit that was working on them...."

*"In the light of this potentially dangerous trend - especially given the corresponding spread of mystical and ecstatic prayer in Christian circles - Gamaliel may have felt further impelled to introduce the discipline and rational spirit of an officially sanctioned and statutory order of service."*⁷

The above information was not written by someone antagonistic toward Jewish tradition; it was written by a non-Messianic Jewish rabbi. Nor is the above information taken from some fringe publication. It is taken from a book published by Jason Aronson Inc., a Jewish publisher described in the *Forward* as a "famed publisher" that "publishes many books by current and former Y.U. [Yeshiva University] professors."⁸ This information shows that the three reasons for standardizing Jewish prayers were as follows:

1. To provide a cohesive, fixed form of worship to preserve the unity which had formerly been preserved by Temple worship.
2. To prevent Messianic Jews from uttering any prayers except those prayers which were pre-approved by the unbelieving rabbis.
3. To quench the moving of the Holy Spirit which was being manifested through the Spirit-led prayers of Messianic Jews.

So two of the three reasons the Jewish liturgy was sanctioned and ordered by rabbis who rejected Yeshua was 1) to prevent Messianic prayers, and 2) to quench the spontaneity of Messianic worshippers. Why should today's Messianic believers follow a liturgy that was deliberately composed to prevent Messianic worship? If today's Messianic believers limit their worship to what is found in the Jewish liturgy, they will utter no prayers that honor Yeshua as Messiah, and the moving of the Holy Spirit will be quenched. They will not be worshipping the Father in Spirit nor in Truth.

The most important things to

happen when we gather on the Sabbath are 1) that the Father be loved and worshipped in Spirit and in Truth; 2) that the saints be loved and edified; 3) that the lost be loved and drawn to the Savior. For these things to happen, there needs to be a loving atmosphere where the Holy Spirit is welcome and free to move among us, in the members of the body. Too much tradition and ritual and liturgy can quench and limit the moving of the Spirit.

"But what about Jewish visitors who might show up?" some ask. "Romans 11:11 says we're supposed to provoke the Jews to jealousy. Shouldn't we conduct our Sabbath services like the synagogue for their sake?" Hebrew liturgy and Jewish traditions and rituals might make a Jewish visitor feel more comfortable, but these are not the things that will provoke him to jealousy. A person can only jealously desire something that he doesn't have. A Jewish person already has the traditions and rituals in the synagogue. A Jewish person will not be provoked to jealousy because we have his traditions and rituals; he will be provoked to jealousy because we have his Messiah. We need the presence of the Messiah, manifested by the moving of the Holy Spirit. That is the thing that will draw lost Jews and non-Jews to their Savior, edify the saints, and inspire Spirit-led worship. This is what the Father is after, and this is what I am after. □

FOOTNOTES

¹*Artscroll Siddur*, 3rd ed., ed. R. Nossen Scherman (New York: Mesorah Publ., 2002), 441

²Hurlbut, *Story of the Christian Church*, p. 41. Quoted in Dan Rogers, "The Historic Phenomena and Theology of the Nazarenes and Ebionites," *Giving & Sharing Newsletter* No. 74, Feb. 2004, 16f.

³Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (New York: Random House), ch. 15, p. 382. Quoted in Dan Rogers article.

⁴Rogers, p. 17

⁵See Dan Rogers article and Ray Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988).

⁶Rogers, p. 18.

⁷Rabbi Jeffery Cohen, *Blessed Are You: A Comprehensive Guide to Jewish Prayer* (Northvale, NJ/London: Jason Aronson Inc., 1993), 35-37.

⁸Aronson To Sell Division," *Forward*, 20 Feb. 2004, Newsdesk, p. 3.

THE LEGALIST, THE LIBERAL, & THE FAITHFUL DISCIPLE

Daniel Botkin

Some Christians mistakenly believe that God's grace and God's law are contrary to one another and mutually exclusive. The law - especially Old Testament law - is seen as the enemy of God's saving grace. The argument usually runs something like this: "The Torah - the law - was just for the Jews of Old Testament times. We Christians don't have to follow Old Testament laws, because we're under grace. We're under the new covenant."

What these Christians miss is the fact that the Torah is a very important part of the new covenant. If you don't think so, notice how God describes what the new covenant is supposed to do to a person: "I will make a new covenant... this shall be the covenant that I will make... I will put My law [Torah] in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts" (Jer. 31:31-33; quoted in Heb. 8:8-10).

The new covenant does not terminate God's Torah; it transfers God's Torah from the external tablets of stone to the internal fleshly tablets of the heart. We have the same Ten Commandments (which are a 10-point summary of the entire Torah), but now they are written "not in tablets of stone, but in fleshly tablets of the heart" (2 Cor. 3:3). According to both the Old Testament and New Testament, this is what is supposed to happen to people who are under the new covenant.

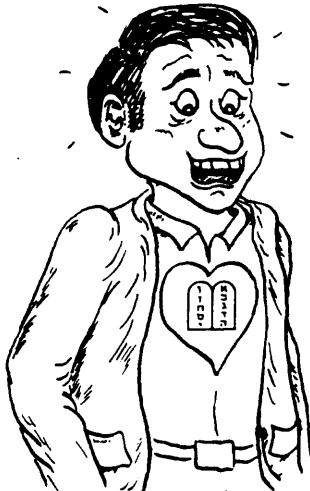
**OLD COVENANT
"UNDER THE LAW"**
(under *indictment*, accused
of breaking the law)

The law is *outside* the
person, *hanging* over him

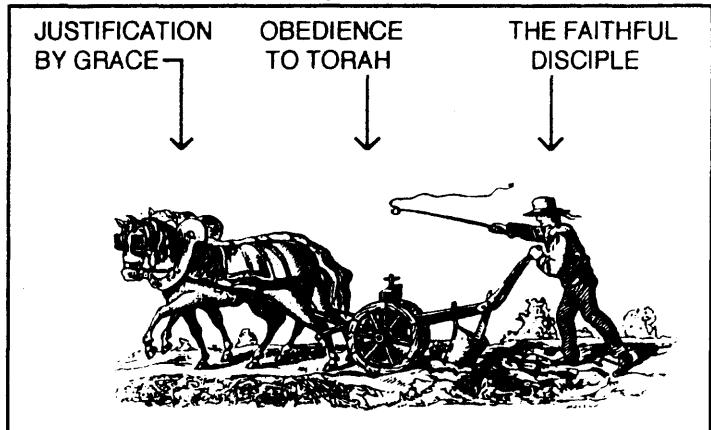


**NEW COVENANT
"UNDER GRACE"**
(acquitted; free from
charge of law-breaking)

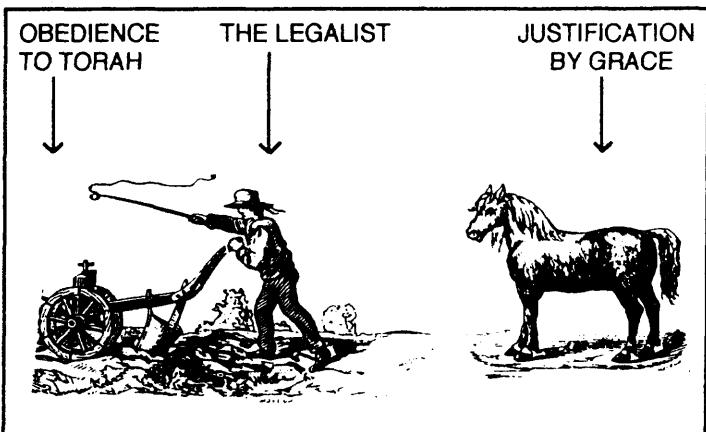
The law is *inside* the
person, written on the *heart*



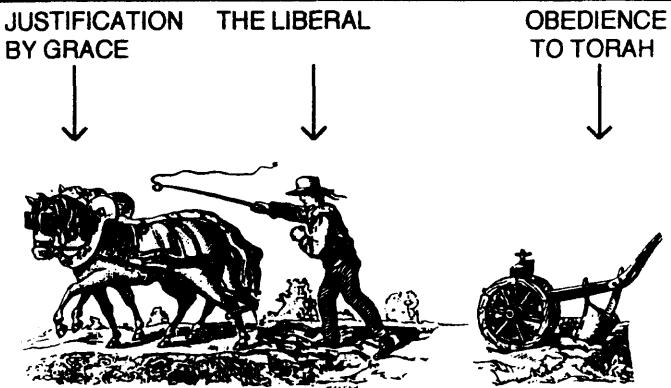
Genuine faith in Jesus will result in a change in the believer's nature and constitution. The faithful disciple will have an internal desire to obey God's laws - not because he *has to*, but because he *gets to* and he *wants to*!



The faithful disciple drives the plow of obedience, but he lets the grace of God provide the strength that pulls the plow forward. He knows that his obedience must be harnessed to and dependent on the grace of God. It is the grace of God that has taught him to *obey*: "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" (Titus 2:11f).



On the other hand, there are those who emphasize and obey only the external letter of the law, and reject the internal spirit of the law as the motivating and empowering factor. Focusing only on external obedience, and neglecting faith-based justification as the inward motivating power, results in legalism. It puts the plow of obedience before the horse of grace. Then the horse just gets in the way, so it is left behind. The legalist abandons grace and tries to obey by his own will and effort. Progress is very slow and difficult, and he won't reap much of a harvest. He will be lucky to even get the field plowed in time to sow the seed.



The liberal has a much easier time in the field, because he abandons the plow of obedience. Like the legalist, he's very active. But instead of driving the plow of obedience, he runs all over the field driving nothing except the horse of grace forward. "We're not under the law!" he shouts, cracking his whip. "We're under grace!" But because he has abandoned the plow of obedience, he bears no lasting fruit. He accomplishes nothing of eternal value. All he does is demonstrate that his faith is dead, for "faith without works is dead" (James 2:20).

When the Lord returns, He will ask the liberal why he didn't use the plow, and He will ask the legalist why he didn't use the horse. Let's be sure we are using both the horse and the plow. And let's be sure we have them in the correct order and harnessed snugly together.

"No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).

"Remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32).

Fallow Ground

"Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns" (Jer. 4:3).

Fallow ground is unused, fruitless ground. It is unplowed, undisturbed, and never changes. Some people's hearts are like fallow ground. They no longer bear fruit and they have grown cold and hard, like unplowed soil. The fallow life remains the same year after year. No real spiritual progress is made. The fallow fellow is a shallow fellow. He is satisfied with his fruitless, unproductive life. He is not bothered by his barrenness.

He may have borne some spiritual fruit in the past, but now he is content to live on the memories of past accomplishments and victories. Using nostalgia as a substitute for obedience stinks, like yesterday's manna, but the fallow fellow doesn't mind. He has no vision and no goals for the present or future, except for his own survival and comfort. He doesn't want the gospel plow digging into his hard heart and disturbing his life. He already has his life planned out, and he won't have the Lord interfering with his plans.

Like it or not, the Lord *will* interfere with his plans one way or another. "Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none," the Lord says. "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" (Lk. 13:7).

The Lord has been known to curse barren fig trees before, so He might cause this fallow fellow to just wither up and die prematurely. Or, if the fallow fellow is fortunate, there might be someone to intercede for him, like the vine-dresser in the parable. "Lord," the vine-dresser pleaded, "let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it. And if it bear fruit, well. And if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down" (Lk. 13:8f).

If the Lord came into His vineyard seeking fruit from you, what would He find? Would there be enough fruit to justify your existence? Or would the Lord find you just taking up space in His vineyard, consuming water and nutrients from the soil but giving nothing in return? If so, let the gospel plow dig into your heart and break up your fallow ground and expose your roots. Then fertilize your field with some faith, sow some seed, and start bearing fruit.

"Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit: so shall ye be My disciples" (John 15:8).

THE BREVITY OF LIFE

Daniel Botkin

"...we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away... So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." -Psalm 90:9-12

The older I get, the more aware I become of how brief our earthly life is.

"But Daniel," some might say, "you're two-score and fifteen years old. Doesn't life seem longer to you now than it did when you were a child? You've got over half a century of memories to look back on now. Doesn't that make life seem longer than it used to seem?"

It seems like life should seem increasingly longer as we accumulate more years. After all, there's no getting around the fact that ten more years of life makes our lifespan ten years longer than it was ten years ago! A person would think that this would make life seem longer, but it doesn't do that for me. For me, it does the exact opposite. It makes life seem shorter.

I know it does this for others, too. When I was about 21 years old, I read something about a woman in her nineties. When someone remarked to her that she had lived a lot of years, she replied, "Yes, and they have flown by so fast!"

I was a bit puzzled by her statement because I couldn't relate to it. I was finishing my last year of college and couldn't wait to get out. Time seemed to be dragging on forever. I couldn't believe how slowly the years were crawling along. Now that I'm older, I can't believe how swiftly the years pass.

Aging brings with it an ever-increasing awareness of the brevity of life. Perhaps this is because the closer we get to the day of our death, the more conscious we become of

how long eternity is. Even if we live to be 969 years old like Methuselah did, that is nothing compared to eternity. Compared to eternity, even Methuselah's lifespan was a very brief moment - less than a blink of the eye compared to eternity.

We may live a full, successful life and impress the people of our generation. We might achieve fame and fortune and god-like celebrity status in the eyes of the world. But it is just a quick flash, like a 4th of July fireworks display, then we are gone.

Fireworks on the 4th of July remind me of the brevity of life. Consider how the stages of a firework rocket resemble the stages of life. First, the fuse is lit - the baby is conceived and the spark of life begins. There's a little fizz - the baby develops in the womb and kicks, and eventually starts to make his way down the birth canal. When the spark reaches its destination, there is a small explosion to launch the rocket and get it on its way - little Junior bursts out of his mother's womb and is launched into the journey of life. After that, the rocket swiftly rises upward - "Little Junior is growing up so fast," people say. "He's really shooting up!" Then the rocket explodes in a bright flash and spreads its sparks across the sky - Junior achieves his goals and makes himself known throughout his sphere of influence. Everyone who sees

Junior's brilliant accomplishments cries, "Ooo!" with great admiration.

Just like fireworks, though, even the brightest and flashiest people soon age and fade away. As quickly as they rise to glory, their sparks begin to fade. When the very last ember sputters and dies, they are gone without a trace of their existence remaining except for a wisp of smoke, and that soon dissipates. In like manner, we die and disappear, leaving nothing but a hazy, smoky memory of our existence in the minds of those who knew us. And when these people die, all the memories of our existence will die with them. Eventually, there will not be a single living soul on this planet who personally knew us and has a memory of us, even if we achieve great fame. Nobody alive today can say, "I knew Abraham Lincoln. I enjoyed being in his company." Any knowledge we have of Abraham Lincoln is second-hand knowledge about him. All that is left of Abraham Lincoln are his bones and some artifacts, papers, and monuments. No memories of the man himself exist in the minds of anyone on earth, because all those who knew him are gone. The same will someday be true of us.

"My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle," Job said (Job 7:6). Each day we live brings us another day closer to the day of our death. We all have an appointment with death, an appointment we cannot cancel. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment, so Messiah was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:27f).

Life is brief and death is certain. Our eternal status and condition and dwelling place will be determined by what we do during this brief lifetime of threescore and ten years. Let's make it count for eternity. □

THE DECLINE AND RESTORATION OF SPIRITUAL TRUTH

Dr. Daniel Botkin

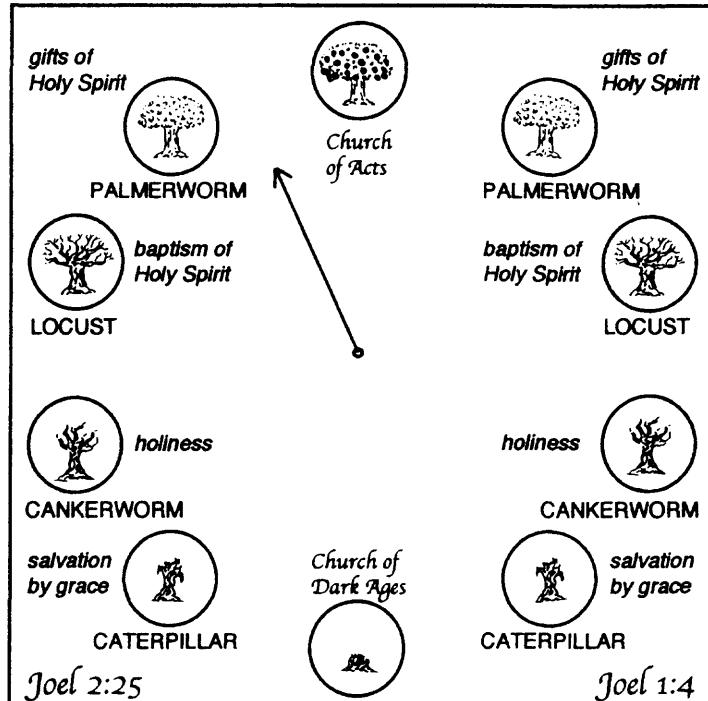
The history of the Messianic faith (commonly called Christianity) could be described as a history of decline and restoration, descent and ascent, loss and recovery, waning and waxing, death and resurrection. In the Book of Acts, the Messianic Community (commonly called the Church) is seen in its original exalted position. But as the Church descended into apostacy, it gradually lost the power and the glory which the first generation of disciples experienced. Like the waning moon, the light grew dimmer and dimmer until the Church entered that period of history known as the Dark Ages, when the Lord could have said to the Church-at-large, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead" (Rev. 3:1).

With the advent of the Protestant Reformation, though, a remnant of the Church slowly came back alive, and a little bit of light began to shine again. The Church started to ascend and recover some of the things that had been lost in earlier centuries.

I believe that the Messianic Community (i.e., the faithful remnant, not Babylon, the apostate church) will eventually be restored to the stature of the original "glorious church" which we see in the Book of Acts. The final generation of faithful Messianic disciples may actually experience even more glory than the first generation did. This can be inferred from Haggai 2:9 if what is said of the two temples is also true of the temple of living stones which makes up the Body of Messiah: "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former." It can also be inferred from Hosea 6:3 if what is said of the former and latter rains is also true of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as living water: "[Yahweh] shall come unto us as the latter and former rain unto the earth."

As a young disciple in the 1970s, I read a booklet by Aimee Semple McPherson. The subject of the book was the cycle of loss and recovery in Church history. As a visual aid, the book included a diagram, reproduced here as best as I can remember it (though the details are sketchy). It is based on Joel 1:4 & 2:25: "That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten.... And I [Yahweh] will restore unto you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you."

The original, immediate context of these verses in Joel is in relation to a heathen nation coming against Israel. "He hath laid my vine waste," Yahweh says, "and barked My fig tree: he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white" (Joel 1:7). Just as pagan Babylon stripped the land of Israel like a plague of locusts, so did the spirit of Babylon strip the Messianic Community of its original glory. If the Israelites of old could believe Yahweh's promise to restore that which Babylon stripped away, why should we Messianic Israelites not believe that He will likewise restore everything which the spirit of Babylon stripped away from the original Messianic Community? Let's



believe and work toward the restoration of all things! "Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time" (Acts 3:19-21 NASB).

One thing that is presently being restored to many lovers of Jesus is a revelation of His Hebraic identity. Yeshua, as Messiah son of Joseph, experienced what another Joseph experienced in Egypt centuries earlier. In Egypt Joseph was stripped of his Hebrew identity, clothed with Gentile garments, and given a Gentile name, Zaphnath-paaneah. As a result, his own flesh-and-blood brothers did not even recognize him. In the same way, Yeshua was stripped of His Jewish identity by anti-Semitic Church Fathers. He was dressed in Gentile garments, so to speak, and given a Gentilized name, Jesus. As a result, His brothers according to the flesh have not recognized Him as their promised Messiah. But thank God, that is changing! As Yeshua's Hebrew identity is being restored, more and more Jewish people are recognizing Him as their long-lost brother, the One who, like Joseph in Egypt, has been exalted among the Gentiles as God's appointed Deliverer for both Jews and Gentiles.

Many people in the church world oppose this current restoration of Yeshua's Hebrew identity, because it has significant practical ramifications which affect the practice of our faith. Let me explain why.

Yeshua's saving presence is truly in the Church, and He truly saves those who look to Him for salvation, even if they

think of Him as a fellow-Gentile and call Him by His Gentilized name, Jesus. However, the true Person of Yeshua is hidden, buried underneath centuries of Gentile Church traditions. In order to see more clearly and more fully who He really is, these Gentile Church traditions must be swept away. Included in these traditions are some highly-valued practices such as the Sunday "Lord's Day," Christmas and Easter, and the erroneous teaching that God's dietary laws are no longer important - in short, the erroneous teaching that Jesus abolished the Torah. When these erroneous Gentile traditions are swept away, a lover of Jesus is left with the glorious alternative to these things, namely, the Biblical 7th-day Sabbath, the Biblical holy days, and the Torah as a moral guide for God's redeemed people. Churchmen oppose the restoration of Yeshua's Hebrew identity because this restoration brings with it the restoration of these Torah-based practices. And that is more than most churchmen can handle.

Restoration of spiritual truth has always been opposed by religious people. Protestant Reformers were tortured and burned at the stake by Roman Catholic authorities for teaching salvation by grace through faith. Anabaptists were drowned by Protestants and burned alive by Catholics for teaching that adults should be baptized after coming to repentance and faith. Quakers were persecuted and ridiculed for quaking with the fear of God. Methodists and Salvation Army workers were mocked and ridiculed for their holy standards and their zeal for the Lord. Pentecostals were mocked and ridiculed for speaking in tongues and exhibiting emotion when expressing their love for the Lord. The Messianic Jewish movement of the 1970s was opposed by churchmen who saw it as a threat. Now the Messianic Israel movement, and the entire general Messianic movement, is being opposed by some church people who see it as a threat.

Restoration always has its opponents. This is true of the restoration of spiritual truth, and it is true of the restoration of famous works of art, too. Let me tell you about a case in recent history which demonstrates some

interesting parallels between the restoration of spiritual truth and the restoration of famous works of art. Michelangelo's fresco on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel is regarded by many as the greatest artistic masterpiece of Western Civilization. For hundreds of years, art historians wrote about the dark, somber tones Michelangelo used to paint the fresco. H.W. Janson's *History of Art*, a standard text book used by art students, stated that Michelangelo "restricted his palette to 'stony' colors." Other historians said that Michelangelo used dark, grim, moody colors because he was a dark, grim, moody person, the stereotypical "tormented genius." One historian acknowledged Michelangelo's superb drawing skills, but said he was "the weakest of colorists."

In 1980, nearly five centuries after the fresco's completion, the Vatican started a project to clean the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Coats of glue and varnish from previous centuries were flaking off and taking bits of the fresco with them. Ross King, author of *Michelangelo and the Pope's Ceiling*, describes the project as "a multimillion-dollar operation that would involve dozens of experts and take twice as long as Michelangelo had needed to paint the fresco in the first place."

The restoration involved using "high-tech wizardry" and "old-fashioned elbow grease" to clean away the grime that had accumulated over the previous five centuries. There was soot from candles, incense, and oil lamps; there were accumulations of salt that had seeped in through leaks in the roof; there were glues and varnishes from previous attempts to preserve the fresco. All this had to be slowly, carefully, painstakingly removed.

After nine years of work, the restorers were finally ready to clean away the last layer of grime and reveal what Michelangelo himself had really painted. A sponge was dipped in distilled water. One of the restorers wiped away the last layer of soot from the right toe of the Prophet Jonah, and behold, the toe was bright pink! As the restorers continued their work, they discovered to their amazement that Michelangelo did not really paint his masterpiece in dark, grim, somber

colors as had been supposed. On the contrary, the fresco was filled with brilliant blues, yellows, reds, greens, oranges, and pinks!

When the true colors of Michelangelo's work were revealed, "all hell broke loose," according to an article in *Life* magazine at that time. There were anti-restorationists who wanted to deny the facts. They insisted that it simply couldn't be true. Michelangelo must have painted over those bright colors, they said. He couldn't possibly have meant for it to be so different from what we've always known! One anti-restorationist said that "the soul of the fresco has been stripped away." Another called it "an artistic Chernobyl." Yet another compared it to the space shuttle disaster. "I'll have to look at it with dark glasses from now on," one lamented.

The restoration of Yeshua's true identity as a pro-Torah Jew likewise causes "all hell to break loose" among those who oppose the restoration of spiritual truth. When the grime and scum of centuries of Gentile Church tradition are wiped away, Yeshua is seen for who He is. He is not the Jesus of church tradition who spoke of the Torah in dark, grim, somber tones. Rather, He is Rabbi Yeshua of Nazareth, who spoke of the Torah in bright, happy, positive tones. He fulfilled the Torah not by abolishing it, but by filling it full of meaning and revealing it in all its brilliant, glorious colors.

The anti-restorationists can oppose this. They can go into a state of denial and say that it just couldn't possibly be true. They can lament the loss of their Gentilized, Torah-abolishing Jesus. They can put on their dark glasses of erroneous doctrines to shield their eyes from the Messiah's true colors. But regardless of their attempts to deny or hide the Messiah's true colors, His true colors are there for all those who have eyes to see.

If you truly love Him, ask the Heavenly Father to help you see through the grime of Gentile traditions. You will experience a wonderful epiphany of glorious color and find yourself embarking on a wonderful journey of discovery. You will feel like you have been born again - again! □

Raphael's Portrait of Pope Julius II

THE BEARDED POPE

The pope who commissioned Michelangelo to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel was Pope Julius II. One of the most radical, un-pope-like things Julius did was to grow a beard. Ross King, author of *Michelangelo and the Pope's Ceiling*, writes about the reaction to Julius' beard. "The cardinals and ambassadors were wide-eyed with disbelief. A pope with a beard - no one had ever seen such a thing."

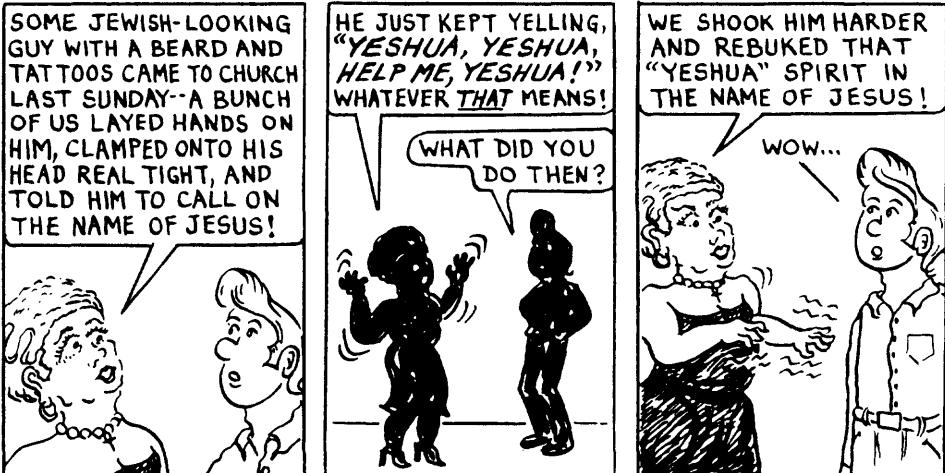
Beards were acceptable on artists like Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci. "But Julius was going against papal tradition - and even against canon law - by growing his facial hair," King writes. "In 1031 the Council of Limoges had concluded after much deliberation that St. Peter, the first pope, had shaved his chin, and his successors were therefore expected to follow his clean-shaven example."

In contrast to what the Council of Limoges decreed in 1031, Clement of Alexandria, who lived in the second century, wrote this about beards: "God planned that woman be smooth-skinned, taking pride in her natural tresses, the only hair she has, as the horse in its mane. But man He adorned like the lion, with a beard... To seek beauty in hairlessness is sheer effeminacy, if done by men" (*The Fathers of the Church*, Vol. 23, pg. 214f).

So it appears that Julius was more in line with the early Fathers of the Church - at least in regards to beards!

REVEREND TWISTRUTH & HIS DISCIPLES

by Daniel Botkin



MY FRONT PAGES

Daniel Botkin

Jewish But Not Jews

People who meet us for the first time usually notice that our outward appearance is a little different (head coverings and long dresses on women; fringes and beards on men). If a conversation about our faith develops, people usually ask the inevitable question: "Are you Jewish?"

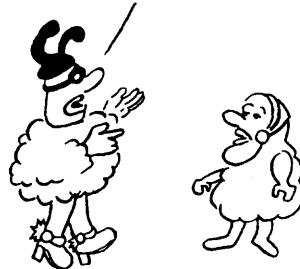
My response to this question has usually been, "No, we're not Jewish, but..." and then I go into an explanation of our faith, an explanation that is very brief or very lengthy, depending on the level of interest the person exhibits.

Some of the young people in our congregation recently pointed something out to me about this question of Jewishness, though. They reminded me that the *-ish* suffix in English can mean "like" or "similar to." For example, the word *bluish* describes a color that is not exactly blue, but blue-like. Other examples of *-ish* words are *childish*, *foolish*, *boyish*, and *goyish*. A childish person is not necessarily a child. A person who does something foolish is not necessarily a fool. A girl can exhibit boyish behavior, and a Jew can exhibit goyish behavior. A Jew might say of a fellow Jew, "He's so goyish." And yet he is not a goy (Gentile). He just behaves like a goy; he is goy-like.

So if we consider the word *Jewish* to mean "Jew-like," then yes, we Messianic disciples are "Jew-ish," even if we are not Jews. We are Jewish because our faith and our lifestyle are very Jew-like. We worship the God of the Jews, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We believe in the same Ten Commandments as the Jews. We honor the same Sabbath and celebrate the same holy days. We believe in the same written Torah, even though we differ with the Jews (as they differ among themselves) on exactly how some of the commandments are supposed to be carried out. We are disciples of the most famous Jewish rabbi who ever lived, Yeshua of Nazareth. Most Jews

(Remember the "Blue Meanies" from *Yellow Submarine*?)

ARE YOU BLUISH?
YOU DON'T LOOK BLUISH...



do not believe in Jesus, of course. But our faith in Yeshua as the Jewish Messiah does not make us any less Jewish. On the contrary, if it were not for our faith in Him, we would not be Jew-like at all! We would probably still be pagans like our ancestors, or perhaps adherents of some religion that is not Jew-like at all. And if we let the Bible define who is a Jew in God's eyes, we will see that a person can be a Jew inwardly, even if he is not a Jew physically:

"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter: whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2:28f).

According to the Bible, disciples of Yeshua are Jews inwardly, whether they descend from the tribe of Judah, or from one of the other tribes of Israel, or from 100% pagan stock. We do not replace the physical Jews, but we can state with full assurance that we are "Jewish" (in the sense of being Jew-like), even if we are not Jews physically.

We are Jewish because we are Jew-like. If the expression of our faith is not Jew-like, then we are not Jewish. Nor are we very Christian, because Biblical Christianity is wrapped up in the Person of the Jewish Messiah, Yeshua of Nazareth. □

ETYMOLOGY OF THE WORD JEW

Many people think that the words *Israel* and *Jews* are synonymous and used interchangeably in the Bible, but this is not always true. Originally, a Jew (*yehudi*) was a person who belonged to the tribe of Judah (*yehudah*), either by birth or by conversion. The term *Israel* refers not just to the single tribe of Judah only, but to all twelve tribes. Tribally speaking, all Jews are Israelites, but not all Israelites are Jews. Tribally speaking, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, and several of Israel's Prophets were not Jews. Even the Apostle Paul was not a Jew tribally speaking, because he was not of the tribe of Judah. He was of the tribe of Benjamin: "of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews" (Ph'p 3:5). Yet ethnically, etymologically, and religiously speaking, Paul could refer to himself as a Jew: "I am a man which am a Jew" (Acts 21:39).

Etymologically, the word *Jew* (*yehudi*) literally means one who praises. When Leah gave birth to her fourth son, she said, "Now will I praise [אָזֶה אָזֶה, 'odeh] Yahweh: therefore she called his name *Judah* [יְהוּדָה, *yehudah*, 'praise']." (Yes, Judah's name was and is pronounced *yehudah* in Hebrew. Contrary to what some Hebrew-illiterate Sacred Name cranks will tell you, it is not supposed to be "YAHudah." *Yahweh* is the direct object of the verb *'odeh* in Leah's statement. It is separate from the verb, not a part of the verb itself, nor of the name formed from the verb.)

Etymologically speaking, anyone who offers praise is a *yehudi* (or, if female, a *yehudiah*) - "a praiser." So if you are a praiser of Yahweh, you are a Jew etymologically, even if you are of pagan stock.

THE WILTING SUKKAH

THE SEASONS OF LIFE & GROWTH

Daniel Botkin

A sukkah is a booth, a temporary shelter covered with leafy branches. The sukkah is usually associated with the Feast of Tabernacles, when we dwell in sukkot (the plural of sukkah) to commemorate the Israelites' dependence on God in the wilderness: "that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt" (Lev. 23:43).

The sukkah reminds us of God's care for His people in the wilderness. By extension, the sukkah also reminds us of God's care for us through our entire cycle of life, from birth to death and resurrection. Both Peter and Paul referred to our mortal physical body as a "tabernacle" (2 Cor. 5:1 & 4; 2 Pet. 1:13, KJV). What happens to the sukkah in the course of the week-long Feast of Tabernacles is a prophetic picture of what happens to our mortal bodies over the course of a typical lifespan.

I think of this every year when we put up our large congregational sukkah at the campground that we rent for the feast. We start by erecting a frame made of two-by-fours. Then we wrap the sides and roof of this skeletal structure with twine. Each section is then like a giant loom, with the twine serving as the warp. We weave leafy branches and other natural materials into the twine to fill in the walls and roof. Finally, we cover the floor with a thick layer of straw and decorate the sukkah with colorful things like gourds, fruit, flowers, and Indian corn.

Our completed sukkah always looks fresh and beautiful at the beginning of the feast, like a newborn baby. But during the course of the week-long feast, our sukkah gradually withers. The bright colors fade a little bit each day. The green leaves begin to dry

and wrinkle up. As some leaves shrink and others fall off, the sukkah loses its original beauty. As more and more gaps and holes appear in the walls and roof, it becomes more and more apparent to us that the sukkah is indeed a temporary shelter, and the end of the feast is near. After the feast is finally over, we strip the booth of its remaining leaves and branches and burn them. Then we disassemble the frame and store it away until the next year, when it will be resurrected, re-assembled, and clothed with a fresh, new covering.

All of this is a vivid visual reminder of our mortality and of our Heavenly Father's care for us. His care for us starts in our mother's womb when we are "made in secret and curiously wrought" (Ps. 139:15). Our Maker weaves our substance together to make a fleshly covering for the skeletal frame of our earthly tabernacle, and then we are born into the world. As time goes by, the beauty of our youth gradually fades. We get wrinkled and dried up, like an aging sukkah in the wilderness. More years pass, and the infirmities of old age remind us that our mortal bodies are indeed mortal, and the end of life's feast is near. Finally, we die. Our bones are laid to rest and are stripped of their covering. But there will someday be a resurrection. Our bones will be raised up and re-assembled, and we will be clothed with immortality.

I am reminded of these things every year as I watch our sukkah lose its original freshness and beauty, as it withers and wrinkles and fades. I am reminded that my earthly tabernacle is also withering and wrinkling and fading away. It's not depressing, though, because there will be a resurrection. This is the hope that renews our inward man. "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16).

THE FOUR SEASONS OF LIFE

The sukkah takes a week to show us a prophetic picture of the mortality of our earthly tabernacle. For those who do not celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, our Heavenly Father provides

the same prophetic picture in nature, by means of the four seasons.

Picture an outdoor scene in the springtime. The apple trees and cherry trees are covered with buds and blossoms. Flowers are beginning to push up out of the earth, and the first green blades of grass appear. The birds are building nests where they will soon lay their eggs.

Now picture the same scene in mid-summer. The trees are full of green leaves and the fruit is growing. Next to the thick, green grass, the flowers are now in full bloom, revealing rich, brilliant colors. The baby birds have hatched and are growing their feathers.

When autumn comes, our outdoor scene has changed even more. The fruit has ripened and been harvested. The leaves on the trees are turning red, yellow, and orange, and the foliage on the ground is drying to a beautiful tan color. The birds have matured, and some of them are flying south.

Finally winter arrives. The trees are bare, but they are not ugly. Their dark, gnarled branches stand out against the deep blue sky to reveal a different sort of beauty. The ground is entirely covered with a blanket of pure white snow which glitters and sparkles in the sunshine. Winter birds perch on snow-covered branches. After winter ends, springtime will come again.

The seasonal transformations we have just observed in our outdoor scene reflect the transformations that we experience as we pass through four stages of life. In the springtime of our life, we are newborn babies and grow into toddlers. In the summer of life, we become children who pass from adolescence to puberty. In the autumn of life, we are mature adults. In the winter of life, we are senior citizens, what the Bible calls elders. Eventually we die, but death will be followed by a springtime resurrection.

One Jewish view of the afterlife is that in the age to come, we will pass through the different stages of life each day. Every morning we will experience the carefree joys and delights of childhood. In the afternoons we will enjoy the vigor and vitality of youth. In the evenings we will be occupied with the deep wisdom and understanding

that comes with maturity. Then the next morning, we will start all over again with the carefree joys of childhood.

The Bible does not say whether or not this is how our days will pass in the age to come. It sounds like a pretty good plan to me, but we will see what happens when we get there. In the meantime, the wilting sukkah and the changing seasons remind us of our mortality and the stages of growth we pass through.

FOUR STAGES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

In addition to the four stages of physical growth seen in the four seasons, the Bible also speaks of four stages of spiritual growth. The Bible mentions those believers who are "babes." Spiritual babes can be any age, physically speaking. Babes are believers who are spiritually immature. They are described as "carnal," i.e., concerned with fleshly and worldly matters, and ruled more by their fleshly nature and natural desires than by the Holy Spirit. They are marked by "envying, and strife, and division." They "walk as [mere] men" because they have not yet learned to walk by faith instead of by sight. They are "dull of hearing" and have to be fed "with milk and not with meat," because "strong meat belongeth unto them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Babes are described in 1 Corinthians 3:1-4 and Hebrews 5:11-14.

With proper spiritual nourishment, a disciple gradually matures. Psalm 131 is the testimony of one who has grown out of the baby stage: "Yahweh, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child."

The other three stages of spiritual maturity are mentioned in 1 John 2:12-14. John specifically designates three groups to whom he is writing: "little children," "young men," and "fathers." These are the three levels of maturity that we should pass through after we grow out of the baby stage of our faith. As little children, we know that "our sins are forgiven" and we "have known the Father." As young men (or women), we are "strong" and "the word of God abideth" in us and we "have overcome the wicked one." As fathers (or mothers), we "have known Him that is from the beginning."

After John addresses each of these three groups, he gives instruction which applies to all: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (1 John 2:15-17).

Like a wilting sukkah and like our mortal bodies, the world passeth away, and the lust thereof. May this Feast of Tabernacles remind us of the mortality of "our earthly house of this tabernacle" and of the Lord's promise of a resurrected body, "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. 5:1). □

WRESTLING WITH THE MAN

Daniel Botkin

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"And Jacob was left alone: and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." -Genesis 32:24

People who know the Scriptures are familiar with the story of Jacob's night-long struggle with a man at Peniel. This was Jacob's second major spiritual experience. The first had occurred twenty years earlier at Beth El, when "he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it" (Gen. 28:12). The Lord spoke to Jacob then, and Jacob "awakened out of his sleep." He experienced the fear of God, and made a vow to serve the Lord. But this first encounter with the Lord at Beth El was not the face-to-face, life-changing, name-changing encounter that Jacob needed. Without question, Beth El was a genuine spiritual experience, but it was, after all, only in the form of a dream. And in the words of singer-songwriter Michael Card, "God remains a dream to those who sleep on holy ground." A second major encounter was needed to awaken Jacob from his spiritual sleep, and it came in the form of a divine wrestling match twenty years later at Peniel.

During the twenty years between Beth El and Peniel, Jacob served Laban. Jacob was still God's chosen man during those years of exile, and, as a result, he enjoyed a measure of God's protection and blessing. However, all these years, Jacob was essentially in hiding, avoiding confrontation - confrontation with his brother Esau, with God, and with himself. Jacob's refusal to face up to the truth resulted in a self-imposed bondage to Laban, a master who deceived him, changed his wages ten times, and took advantage of him.

The rabbis teach that the experiences of the fathers foreshadow those of the children. In other words, the events in the lives of the Patriarchs are repeated in future generations, in the history of the nation that descended from the Patriarchs. The accounts we read in Genesis serve as a prophetic outline of significant events in the future of the nation. The long history of Israel's sufferings and glory can be seen, in a nutshell, in the lives of the Patriarchs. The experiences of the Patriarchs are the seed from which the tree of Israel's history grows.

When we look at Israel's twenty centuries of exile among the nations, we can see some striking similarities to

Jacob's twenty years of exile in the house of Laban. Laban means "white" in Hebrew, which is appropriate when we consider the fact that Jacob's twenty years with Laban were twenty years of whitewashing over the deception he had perpetrated on his father and his brother. Like Jacob, Israel in exile ends up serving "Laban," a religious system that merely whitewashes over sin instead of removing it. "Laban" may wear any number of labels (Orthodox, Conservative, Reform) or no label at all; it may be designed by others or by oneself, but it has this characteristic: It allows a person to whitewash over his sins and avoid confrontation, rather than face up to the truth.

The rabbis who first conceived the idea of building a fence around the Torah no doubt had good intentions, and today's rabbis who continue to maintain that fence no doubt have good intentions too. Unfortunately, this fence that was intended to be a wall of protection for Israel has instead become a whitewashed wall, and given birth to a form of religion that allows its followers to whitewash over their sins instead of getting to the root of the sin problem and dealing with it. The Lord tells us through Ezekiel why His hand is against those religious leaders who maintain this whitewashed wall:

"It is definitely because they have misled My people by saying, 'Peace!' when there is no peace. And when anyone builds a wall, behold, they plaster over it with whitewash; so tell those who plaster over it with whitewash, that it will fall. A flooding rain will come, and you, O hailstones, will fall; and a violent wind will break out. Behold, when the wall has fallen, will you not be asked, 'Where is the plaster with which you plastered it?' Therefore, thus says the Lord God, 'I will make a violent wind break out in My wrath. There will also be in My anger a flooding rain and hailstones to consume it in wrath. So I shall tear down the wall which you plastered over with whitewash and bring it down to the ground, so that its foundation is laid bare; and when it falls, you will be consumed in its midst. And you will know that I am the Lord'" (Ezk. 13:10-14).

Jacob built a wall around his conscience to shield himself from confrontation, and he spent twenty years maintaining that wall, plastering over it with whitewash as he served Laban. But the Lord brought Jacob's wall down and laid its foundations bare at Peniel, where Jacob's defenses were stripped away and his true nature exposed. The Lord will do the same thing to those descendants of Jacob who use the whitewashed wall to hide themselves from the truth that God wishes to reveal to them. "The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place" (Isa. 28:17). The foundations of the heart are laid bare at Peniel.

Jacob's journey to Peniel began when the Lord spoke to him and told him to leave Laban. The descendants of Jacob who now serve a religious system that whitewashes over sin need to hear the Lord's call to abandon "Laban," and begin their journey toward their Peniel experience. They must come to the realization that "Laban" is not their true Master. Their true Master is a Man that they will be forced to come to grips with at Peniel. "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day."

One rabbinic teaching claims that the "man" that confronted Jacob was the spirit of Esau, the elder brother whom Jacob had been avoiding for twenty years. The Man with whom Jacob's descendants must wrestle is not Esau, though; the Man that today's Jews must confront is Yeshua of Nazareth, the elder Brother whom they have been avoiding for twenty centuries.

Jacob was on his way back to the Land, but he had to come to grips with a certain man at Peniel. He had to

come out of his spiritual exile as well as his geographical exile, and so it is with Israel today. As Jacob wrestled with a man, so must Jacob's descendants wrestle with the identity of the Man Yeshua. Jewish people must stop avoiding the issue, and ask themselves some honest questions about Yeshua of Nazareth. Who was He, really? What is the significance of His appearance in history? Is it possible that Israel's leaders were wrong, and that He really was and is the Messiah and Son of God? Am I willing to just let the rabbis make such an important decision for me, and never prayerfully investigate the claims of Yeshua for myself?

"Jacob was left alone" to wrestle with the man, and so must today's Jew be willing to separate himself from the majority of his peers in order to come to grips with the identity of the Man Yeshua. Like Jacob, today's Jew must refuse to let go "until the breaking of the day," when God's glorious light dawns, and the blessed revelation of Yeshua's identity as Messiah and Son of God is imparted by the Holy Spirit.

The revelation of Yeshua as Messiah and Son of God is the face-to-face, life-changing experience that every individual needs. "And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved" (Gen. 32:30). The face of God can only be seen in the face of His Son. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," Yeshua said. "I am in the Father, and the Father in Me" (John 14:9f).

As Israel continues to come out of her geographical exile, today's Jew must hear God's call to abandon the whitewashed wall that has kept Israel in a spiritual ghetto for twenty centuries. Only by journeying to Peniel and wrestling with the identity of the Man Yeshua will anyone be able to say, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." □

THE DEBAUCHING OF THE MESSIANIC MOVEMENT

Some of the Problems & Some Suggested Remedies

Dr. Daniel Botkin

In his book *The Essentials of Prayer*, E.M. Bounds made an observation which those in the Messianic Movement need to take to heart.

Bounds wrote: "The craftiest wile of Satan, if he cannot prevent a great movement for God, is to debauch the movement. If he can put the movement first, and the spirit of the movement in the background, he has materialized and thoroughly debauched the movement. Mighty prayer only will save the movement from being materialized, and keep the spirit of the movement strong."

The Messianic Movement is a great movement for God. Satan cannot prevent this movement - it's far too late for that! But Satan can debauch the Messianic Movement and make it ineffective and irrelevant if we let him. To debauch means to seduce from chastity; to lead away from virtue or excellence. A synonym for debauch is to debase, which means to cause the loss of position, worth, value, or dignity. The Apostle Paul expressed concern for these kinds of things in his second letter to the Corinthians: "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Messiah. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Messiah" (2 Cor. 11:2f).

The Messianic Movement is important to me, and probably to most of my readers. But let me ask you a question. When you hear the term "Messianic Movement," which of the two words is more important to you? The "Messianic" part of the phrase had better be far more important than the "Movement," because without the Messiah, we will no longer have a "Movement" - because He is the driving force behind the Movement.

As E.M. Bounds observed, if we focus on "the Movement" first, and put

the spirit of the Movement (namely the Messiah) in the background, then Satan will have successfully debauched the movement. If we have a "Messianic Movement" with the Messiah in the background, then we will have a Messianic Movement in name only. It will be "Messianic" in name only because the Messiah will be shoved to the background and be only incidental to the movement, rather than essential. It will be a "Movement" in name only because it will no longer be moving forward and making progress. If it continues to move at all, it will just be in circles, like the path of the unfaithful generation that wandered forty years in the wilderness.

We need to learn some lessons from history so that we do not make the same mistakes that believers of past movements made. George Santayana said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Most believers have probably heard this oft-quoted statement, and probably agree with it. *And yet... And yet they know next to nothing about the history of the Church, and the various revivals and movements which have taken us to where we are now, spiritually speaking. (Yes, church-haters, we do have church leaders of the past to thank - or blame, as the case may be - for where we are today.)*

One important lesson that can be learned from even a superficial knowledge of Church history is this sad fact: Virtually every movement or revival that was inspired by the Holy Spirit started out with the glorious blessing of God, then gradually waned because of sin, apathy, compromise, fanaticism, or a combination of such things. After a generation or two, the movement fossilized into its debauched condition, which barely resembled its original condition.

Consider a few of the major movements in Christian history. The

Protestant Reformation produced fiery Reformers who were willing to die for their faith - and many did, often under the most horrific conditions imaginable. But go to a so-called Reformed church today. Where is the zeal and the spirit of the Reformers in these churches? It's not there.

Consider John Wesley and the early Methodists and the zeal they had for holiness and godly living. Then go to a Methodist church today. Don't expect them to still hold to Wesley's standards, though. There's even a chance that the minister may be a practicing sodomite or lesbian, and proud of it.

Think of William and Catherine Booth and the early Salvation Army. I read a biography about William Booth many years ago and was surprised to learn that the first generation of Salvation Army warriors were fiery evangelists who struck fear in the hearts of hypocrites and shook their world. Now when most people think of the Salvation Army, they think of used furniture stores or bell-ringers raising donations for the needy at Christmas time.

Read about the beginnings of the Pentecostal movement at the beginning of the 20th century, then visit a Pentecostal church today. A few Pentecostals still have the fire and the fear of God, but don't be surprised if you see strange fire and no fear of God. And don't expect them to dress modestly like the early Pentecostals did.

Study any past movement or revival in Christian history, and you will find this pattern repeated. Some groups manage to maintain the original standards and zeal a bit longer than others, but virtually every movement eventually succumbs to the downward pull. Even groups which manage to maintain the outward forms are an empty shell, devoid of the spirit that energized their ancestors. Satan successfully debauches every great

movement for God, because he persuades people to put the movement first and the spirit of the movement in the background. Then things like apathy, sin, and compromise creep in. The people lose the original vision, and throw off restraint.

Is the Messianic Movement doomed to follow this same pattern? Will Satan successfully debauch the Messianic Movement and make it ineffective and irrelevant? Will the Messianic Movement fossilize in a debauched condition and become just another museum piece in a glass display case?

These should be serious questions for those of us who identify with the Messianic Movement. From what I know of the Messianic Movement, I do not believe it is currently in decline - at least not irretrievably so - but I know that Satan is doing his worst to debauch the movement. Let me share a few examples of the debauching that is taking place.

One obvious example is debauching in the form of strife and division. Division is just as rampant among Messianics as it is among Protestant Christians - perhaps even more rampant. Division is not always bad if it is done in the right way and for the right reasons. (See page 13.) However, much (perhaps most) of the division which takes place among Messianic believers is not done in the right way, nor is it done for legitimate reasons. Divisions take place over petty, trivial disagreements (disagreements over things which are far less important than maintaining the unity of the body), and divisions take place in anger, resentment, and rage.

If Satan cannot cause strife and division in a local body or in an organization, he often debauches the group in another way. He draws the people off into some form of extremism. This has been happening in the Messianic Movement in recent years. Some philo-Semitic groups are drifting off into rigid, extra-Biblical Jewish traditions and kabbalistic superstitions. Some Sacred Name groups have drifted off into linguistic superstition, fearing to say any English word that

VISION

"Where there is no vision, the people throw off restraint" (Prov. 29:18 RV).

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). Yes, and thank God, help others to see Him.

The need of the hour is vision, and vision we must have ere long, or break upon the jagged rocks of infidelity and materialism towards which we are being driven by the fiercest gale that has troubled these waters for many years.

OUR AGE IS GOING BLIND!

The black clouds of our own dissipations are shutting out the light! The ceaseless whirl, and hurry, and rush of life is robbing us of God! It is time to heed the warning. Lord have mercy upon us and give us vision.

GIVE THE MINISTRY VISION!

Help those of us whom Thou hast called to be watchmen, amid the closing scenes of this awful age of God-forgetting, to live in the mountains so close to Thine heart that we will see from Thy viewpoint! *Set our hearts on fire! Make us courageous! Help us to rebuke folly, unmask hypocrisy, and show up carnality!* Don't let us pander to the worldlings, no matter what their profession or position! Save us from soft sentimental preaching; unctionize us until the people will go out from under our ministry, feeling that they have listened to "a man sent from God."

GIVE THE MONEY-MAD VISION!

That haggard, wrinkled, worried crowd who are burning up with lust for gold. They cannot sleep. They have no time to pray. They struggle in a nightmare of stocks and shares and mortgages. Their nerves are gone, their health is gone, and God is gone! The only worship they know is the worship of gold. O Lord waken them up, before their miserable lives burn out, and they fall into a terrible hell.

might possibly have some ancient linguistic connection to the name of a pagan god - or even if it just happens to sound similar to the name of some pagan deity. Thus, because there is a Hindu religious festival called *holi*, which sounds similar to the word *holy*, these superstitious believers feel

GIVE THE GREAT CROWD OF PLEASURE-SEEKERS AND FASHION-LOVERS VISION

Those who have shrivelled their souls to a mere nothing by an endless study of proprieties and fashions, and etiquette and styles. They are a thousand times more worried about their complexion than they are about their sins, more interested about the latest fad than they are in *Redemption*.

What a spectacle they will present in the judgment, when death will have unravelled them down to character. All the trappings gone! When death shall have scattered their trivialities amid the mould of the graveyard, and they must face God, *burned out*, prayerless unholy things, who danced and giggled, and flirted their souls away.

OH! MY GOD! GIVE US VISION! SWING US BACK TO THE THINGS OF VALUE! Clear the fog off the hills of our highest levels of living, and help us climb! Climb until we have found the light as Thou art in the light. Climb until we are more hungry for God than we are for fame, or money, or a good time.

AND DEAR GOD, GIVE US VISION QUICKLY!

Don't let us wait too long before we begin to look and listen. Don't let us wait until our ears are deafened by the world's selfish din. Don't let us wait until our eyes are blinded by the glare of passing pomp and folly before we strive to see and hear things of supreme worth. Help us to pause amid the hurried rush, and listen to the call of things more real.

Help us now to betake ourselves to prayer, and stay there until the scales fall from our eyes, and the hardness melts from our hearts. Until God, and heaven, and hell, and holiness become real, until we are made simple enough again to hear *Thy* voice.

We shall doubtless be put down as dreamers, fanatics or fools by the mad mob who have eyes but see not, and ears but hear not, but OH! MY GOD! GIVE US VISION!

-Author unknown. Printed in 1938.

obligated to say "set apart" instead of "holy." (Don't let them know there was an Egyptian god named Set, though. If you do, they'll have to come up with a linguistically kosher substitute for "set apart.") Other Messianic groups are neglecting the weightier matters of Torah ("justice, mercy, and faith,"

Matt. 23:23) and are focusing more on trivialities, "straining at gnats." Any form of extremism or fanaticism discredits the Messianic Movement in the eyes of intelligent, thinking people who might otherwise be open to our message.

The most damnable debauchery that is taking place in the Messianic Movement is the seduction of professing believers by Satan's ministers, the Jewish anti-missionaries. I have personally heard of scores of people in the Messianic Movement who have been persuaded by the anti-missionaries to deny Yeshua as the Messiah. Some of these damned souls convert to Orthodox Judaism. Others just create their own home-spun version of Israelite faith, based on their private interpretation of the Tenach (Old Testament).

Without a doubt Satan is debauching the Messianic Movement. What can we do to remedy the situation? For one thing, we can make sure that we do not put more emphasis on the Movement than we do on the Messiah, who is the spirit behind the Movement. When Paul wrote to the Colossians about some professing believers who were drifting off into man-made traditions and weird forms of mysticism, he said that these people were "not holding the Head" (Col. 2:19). The NASB translates it "not holding fast" to the Head. Above all else, we must hold fast to Yeshua, the Head of the Body, even if the Messianic Movement fizzles out and/or fossilizes into a debauched denomination.

How do we hold fast to the Messiah? What does it mean, in practical terms, to focus on the Messiah? To answer this question, we need to consider the word *Messiah*. As most readers know, this word is an English transliteration of the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew word *Mashiach*, which means "anointed." An anointed one is the recipient of something (normally oil) which is poured out onto the recipient, thereby authorizing him to do a specific task. The anointing of priests and kings with oil in the Bible was a prophetic picture of the future anointing of the High-Priest King

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT SPEAKING IN TONGUES

Mark 16:17 "And these signs shall follow them that believe... they shall speak with new tongues."

Acts 2:4 "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

Acts 10:44-46 'The Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the word... on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.'

Acts 11:15-17 "And as I [Peter] began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that He said, 'John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' Forasmuch

then as God gave them the like gift as He did unto us, what was I, that I could withstand God?"

Acts 19:6 "And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied."

1 Cor. 14 "For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God... He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself... I would that ye all spake with tongues... For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also... I thank my God, I speak in tongues more than ye all... Wherefore brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues."

Messiah with the Holy Spirit.

If we want to focus on Yeshua as the Messiah, the "Anointed One," then we need to focus on the anointing of the same Holy Spirit that anointed Yeshua. Think about it. If you want to focus on Jesus as your Shepherd, you need the mentality of a sheep. If you want to focus on Him as your Friend, you need the mentality of a friend. If you want to focus on Him as your Bridegroom, you need the mentality of a bride. If you want to focus on Him as the Anointed One, you need to have the mentality of an anointed one. And the only way to have the mentality of an anointed one is for you to become, on a smaller scale, an anointed one yourself! How do you do that? You "wait for the promise of the Father... For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit... ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me..." (Acts 1:4f & 8).

These were Yeshua's final instructions before He left this earth. "And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9). The disciples tarried in prayer for ten days, then the Day of Pentecost arrived. The Holy Spirit fell,

accompanied by fire, and transformed all 120 of the praying disciples into anointed ones. Some Messianic believers are resistant to the anointing and the moving of the Holy Spirit. The subject of speaking in tongues is an especially controversial topic. It shouldn't be, though, because it's in the Bible. (See box above.) The anointing of the Holy Spirit is one thing that will help us hold fast to our Anointed One.

If we are going to focus on the Messiah more than on the Movement, we need to hold fast to the Head, and to the basics of discipleship as well. When people hear the expression "Messianic Movement," they usually think of things like the Hebrew language, Jews, Sabbath, Torah, Israel, etc. All these things are important, but if we forget the basics of discipleship - things like loving one another, dying to self, humility, prayer, Bible study, and outreach - we might find ourselves beguiled by the serpent's subtlety and our minds corrupted from the simplicity that is in Messiah. In other words, debauched. Let's remember E.M. Bounds' warning and his recommendation: "Mighty prayer only will save the movement from being materialized, and keep the spirit of the movement strong." □

THE ARTIST'S ROLE IN SOCIETY

From an Etymological-Hebraic Perspective

Daniel Botkin

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Art has powerful potential for good or for evil because art can present ideas in persuasive ways, and ideas, when acted upon, can change the course of history. For this reason the serious artist has a serious responsibility. The seriousness of the artist's role in society becomes even more apparent when one looks at the subject from a linguistic perspective.

Let us examine an ancient word, a word which is perhaps the oldest linguistic term used to refer to an artist. The word to which I refer is the ancient Hebrew word for artist, *aman*.¹ The etymology and linguistic implications of this word can give us some ideas about the role of the artist in ancient times. This can help today's artist determine if he is faithfully fulfilling the role which artists were originally intended to fulfill.

The ancient word for artist, *aman*, is spelled with the letters *Aleph, Mem, Nun*, A-M-N. Speakers of English may notice a similarity to *Amen*, a Hebrew word which has found its way into English via the Bible. This similarity is no coincidence: Both words are derived from the same verb, and both words are spelled with the same three Hebrew letters, ימָן.²

The general meaning of the A-M-N verb is to support something, to give firmness and stability to something. The utterance of the word "Amen!" does this very thing. Whether in a religious or non-religious setting, the word *Amen* is an expression of affirmation and verification of ideas. In the same way, the *aman* (artist) uses his talents to express affirmation and verification of ideas which he wants to communicate. As we shall see, there is a vital link between art and ideas.

There are several other Hebrew words derived from this A-M-N root. (I know of eight used in the Bible and twenty used in modern Hebrew.) These words all share similar mean-

ings. With a little study and thought, some of these words can reveal what was expected of the artist in earlier centuries.

Ideas that are prevalent in the definitions of these related A-M-N words are concepts such as faithfulness, fidelity, and truth. This suggests that in ancient times the work of the artist/*aman* was expected to be imbued with noble qualities such as faithfulness and truth. The artist/*aman* of modern times should likewise be faithful in depicting his subjects in a truthful manner. This does not mean that the artist must use a photo-realistic style, nor does it mean that the artist cannot take artistic liberties and change visual and historical details when such changes serve a purpose. The artist/*aman* is free to practice what poet Robert Penn Warren called "tampering with non-essential facts."³ However, the artist/*aman* should strive to portray and promote *ideas* which are faithful and true.

Other A-M-N words related to *aman/artist* suggest ideas of support, security, and stability. One of these words, *omnah*, means "a pillar." How are artists related to pillars? The arts can and do have a very powerful influence on society, so in this sense the artist is one of the "pillars of society." Because the arts can influence society for good or for evil, the artist has a serious responsibility to function as a strong pillar that upholds things that are good and true and noble. When the pillars begin to weaken and crumble from corruption, the entire structure is endangered.

It is believed by some linguists that the Hebrew A-M-N words are the source of Greek M-N words which have to do with thought and memory: *mneia* ("recollection"), *mneme* ("memory"), *mnemon* ("mindful"), *mnestis* ("remembrance"), etc. These Greek words are linked to English M-N words such as *mnemonic*, *mental*, *amnesia*, and even perhaps *man*

(since rational thinking is what distinguishes man from other creatures).

This information brings us back again to the vital link between art and ideas. This link between art and ideas is also expressed in the Hebrew Scriptures, where Betzalel is described as an artist whose God-given talents included not only the ability to work with metals, stones, and wood, but also the ability "to think thoughts"⁴ The *Hertz Commentary* adds these remarks:

"In all true art, there is a vital underlying *thought*, and artists have accordingly been among the greatest thinkers of mankind. An eminent painter of the nineteenth century has well expressed it: 'My intention has not been so much to paint pictures that will charm the eye as to suggest great thoughts that will appeal to the imagination and the heart, and kindle all that is best and noblest in humanity. I even think that, in the future, art may yet speak, as great poetry itself, with the solemn and majestic ring in which the Hebrew prophets spoke to the Jews of old, demanding noble aspirations, condemning in the most trenchant manner private vices, and warning us in deep tones against lapses from morals and duties'" (F.W. Watts).⁵

Betzalel is the most famous of the few artists mentioned in the Bible. The name Betzalel means "in the shadow of God."⁶ The fact that the artist stands in the shadow of God should give today's artist even more reason to take his calling seriously.

NOTES

¹Also pronounced *oman* in modern Hebrew.

²The slight difference in pronunciation is due to the vowel sounds which are indicated by diacritical marks placed below the letters.

³Kevin Stein, *Private Poets, Worldly Acts* (Ohio University Press, 1996), 4.

⁴Exodus 35:32, literal translation.

⁵Pentateuch and Haftorahs, ed. J.H. Hertz (London: Soncino Press, 1988), 375.

⁶Be = "in"; *tzal* = "shadow"; *el* = "God."

SO YOU THINK YOU'VE COME OUT OF BABYLON

But Has Babylon Come Out of You?

Daniel Botkin

Some people view the entire church system and everything in it as "Babylon." Messianic believers, Sacred Name believers, and others often claim that they "came out of Babylon" when they abandoned the pagan-derived traditions of Mainstream Christianity and embraced a faith which honors both the Messiah and the Torah. There is certainly an element of truth to this claim. However, some of those who think that they have "come out of Babylon" need to think again. Why do I say this? Because the name *Babylon* (*bavel* in Hebrew) means "confusion": "Therefore is the name of it called Babel [*bavel*]: because Yahweh did there confound [*ba'al*] the language of all the earth" (Gen. 11:9).

OUT OF CONFUSION INTO CONFUSION

If *Babylon* means "confusion," then it follows that those who have come out of Babylon should be far less confused than those Christians who have not yet heard God's call to "Come out of her, My people" (Rev. 18:4). If coming out of Babylon means coming out of confusion, then those who come out should no longer be confused, right? Yet based on the phone calls, letters, and visits that I get from people on my mailing list, I have to admit that some of the most confused people I know are believers who think that they have come out of Babylon, the place of confusion. By their own admission they are confused about the details of Sabbath keeping. They are confused about the Feasts and New Moons. They are confused about the use of Hebrew terms and names. They are confused about the dietary laws. They are confused about congregational government and authority and submission. They are confused about the spiritual status of born-again Christians who are still in Mainstream Christianity. Some are even confused about their own spiritual standing before God, and they question whether they are truly

accepted by Him.

Why is there so much confusion among people who have allegedly come out of Babylon, the realm of confusion? There are a number of reasons. Let's look at a few.

LACK OF KNOWLEDGE

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge," Yahweh said through the Prophet Hosea (Hos. 4:6). One source of confusion is simple lack of knowledge - knowledge of the Scriptures and experiential knowledge of the One who inspired the Scriptures. If believers would quit wasting so much time in front of their computer screens and TV sets, and spend more time studying the Scriptures and drawing near to the Lord in prayer, much of their confusion would vanish. This may sound like a simplistic solution to the problem of confusion, but in many (perhaps most) cases it is all that is needed to take care of the problem.

It is amazing how an hour or so of uninterrupted solitude with the Lord

helps to put things in perspective. I do not struggle with confusion, but I am a man with a lot of responsibilities. I have a wife and six daughters still at home, I lead our local congregation, I write and publish this bimonthly magazine, I operate our outreach center and art gallery, and I create and exhibit my artwork. Fulfilling all these responsibilities takes a great deal of time. Sometimes I get very bogged down with so much work. I feel pressured and overwhelmed by deadlines that are fast approaching. At times like these, I have to just walk away from the work and take some time out to be alone with the Lord - even though logic screams, "You don't have time to get alone with the Lord right now!" I have to remind myself that I don't want to be like Martha, "cumbered about much serving," but like Mary, who chose the "one thing that is needful" when she simply "sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word." (See Luke 10:38ff.) After a season of fellowship with the Lord, my soul is restored, and I return to my work with renewed energy and a peaceful mind.

This kind of intimate experiential knowledge of God which drives away stress and pressure will also drive away confusion. Spending time alone with the Lord may not clear up your confusion by answering all your questions. It may just put things in perspective and get your priorities in order and show you that your unanswered questions are not really that important.

LACK OF HERMENEUTICS

Hermeneutics is a theological term which refers to the art, the science, or the rules of Bible interpretation. Many believers are confused because they do not know how to correctly interpret Scriptures. A person does not need to go to a Bible school or seminary to learn hermeneutics. A person does not even need to know that the word *hermeneutics* exists. But good hermeneutics is something that he had

better use if he wants to correctly interpret the Scriptures.

The Creator has chosen to communicate the knowledge of His character, of His personality, and of His will for man primarily through the Word - and that necessarily involves language.

The Bible is God's linguistic revelation of Himself to man. It is important that we approach the Scriptures with a desire to understand this written linguistic revelation in the way He intends for us to understand it. Because the Bible is a linguistic revelation, it is necessary to be aware of linguistic principles and phenomena when studying the Scriptures.

Language is far more complex than most people realize. The language of the Bible includes all the complexities of language: grammar, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, lexicon, orthography, etymology, idioms, ambiguity, inference, etc. A person does not need to know the formal definitions of these words, but he must be aware of these linguistic phenomena, and of how they work, if he wants to correctly understand God's linguistic revelation to man.

This is why study aids are so important - aids such as concordances, Bible dictionaries, lexicons, interlinear Bibles, etc. It is also the reason why Bible teachers are important. When Philip asked the Ethiopian eunuch if he understood the passage of Scripture he was reading, the Ethiopian replied, "How can I, except some man should guide me?" (Acts 8:30f) Some of today's pride-filled Messianic believers would have told Philip, "No, I don't understand it, but I'll figure it out by myself. Give me a little time, and I'll read something into the text and come up with my own personal interpretation." God has set teachers in the Body to guide the saints in their study of the Scriptures. A lot of confusion would depart if the confused saints were more teachable and not so self-reliant.

LACK OF ORDER AND LACK OF GOOD LEADERSHIP

The Apostle Paul told Titus to "set in order the things that are wanting [lacking], and ordain elders in every



The Uni-Tea Song

The Uni-Tea Song was sent in by Michael Mastropaolo. It can be sung to the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star."

All across this mighty nation
There is spiritual constipation.
Why can't we just get along?
Hey, that's why I sing this song!

Ho Ho Ho, Hee Hee Hee,
Let's all come to unity.
It's as easy as can be,
If you'd just agree with me!

Fourteenth? Fifteenth? Pre-existence?
Should we practice armed resistance?
Use the barley, use the sun,
Ask the Jews or anyone?

When was Adam made of earth?
Was there really virgin birth?
How to interpret prophecy?
Don't ask him, come ask me!

Ho Ho Ho, Hee Hee Hee,
Let's share a cup of Uni-Tea.
It's as easy as can be,
If you'd just agree with me!

Some would claim they're on the level,
When they say there is no devil.
Others start their Sabbath day
At six or dawn - it's just their way.

Dark of moon or crescent seen,
The first of every month we glean
Should we keep it, maybe so -
Don't jeopardize the status quo.

Ho Ho Ho, Hee Hee Hee,
Let's drink a toast to unity.
It's as easy as can be,
If you'd just agree with me!

We dance for joy and shout with glee,
Because we're not a Pharisee -
We'd never swear, we'd never cuss,
Humble? Meek? Yes! That's us!

Ho Ho Ho, Hee Hee Hee,
You can't get drunk on Uni-Tea.
It's as easy as can be,
If you'd just agree with me!

Divorce, remarry, never wed?
Should your woman bare her head?
While old men posture, puff and squawk,
The women aren't allowed to talk?

How can all this make us grow?
Is it really just for show?
Preoccupied with petty strife?
Let's emphasize eternal life!

Ho Ho Ho, Hee Hee Hee,
Don't spill your cup of Uni-Tea.
It's as easy as can be,
If you'd just agree with me!

Some have come from far away
To seek good fellowship today.
Please don't argue, just debate.
State your case and then just wait.

His understanding you might gain.
Don't give him grief, don't give him pain.
Be courteous and thoughtful too -
And maybe he'll agree with you!

Ho Ho Ho, Hee Hee Hee,
Let's all practice unity!
It's as easy as can be,
If you'd just agree with me!

city" (Tit. 1:5). Many of the confused believers I hear from do not belong to stable, orderly congregations that have qualified leadership. Lack of congregational order and lack of qualified leadership is another cause of confusion. The opposite of confusion is clarity. Where clarity exists, there is order, harmony, and unity. Where confusion exists, there is disorder, disharmony, and disunity. Before the

confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel, the people were able to build together in an orderly, harmonious manner under Nimrod's authority. Inspired by Nimrod, the people had a clear vision and purpose, and they were able to work together toward their goal. Their misguided building project was working so well that Yahweh had to intervene to put a stop to it. "This they begin to do," He said, "and now

nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do" (Gen. 11:6).

Like the Babylonians of old, the Babylonians in today's church world are often misguided in their mission, but they have more order, harmony, and unity in their local congregations than most Messianics do. The disorder, disharmony, and disunity that exists in many Messianic congregations often exists because there are no qualified men who are willing to lead the congregation.

Sometimes there may be a man who is qualified to lead, but he is prevented from doing it because of an unqualified, domineering "Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence" (3 John 9). You know the type. He's neither called nor qualified to lead, yet he insists that the congregation embrace all his personal pet doctrines. He is of the "my way or the highway" mentality. People often yield to his wishes - not because he has spiritual authority, but because he is pushy and intimidating. People with the spirit of the domineering Diotrephes need to be prayed out of the congregation - or, if necessary, kicked out - so that things can be set in order and God's appointed leader can lead. People who submit themselves to a godly shepherd rarely suffer from the confusion that is typical of so many Messianic believers.

MAJORING IN MINORS

Confusion results when people focus more on "the least of the commandments" than they do on "the weightier matters of the Torah" (Matt. 5:19 & 23:23). When a Christian discovers that the Torah is part of his spiritual heritage, he naturally begins to look into those parts of the Torah which he had formerly neglected. Some (though certainly not all) of these things are not part of the weightier matters of the Torah.

All of the Torah is important, but some commandments are more important than others. Yeshua spoke of "the weightier matters of the Torah" and He also spoke of "the least of the commandments." It is probably impossible for anyone to rate all the commandments according to their

relative importance. However, the Scriptures provide some general guidelines to help us determine how weighty a commandment is. Yeshua used the words "judgment, mercy, and faith" to tell us what characterizes the weightier matters of the Torah (Matt. 23:23). Therefore, if a commandment involves judgment (i.e., justice), mercy, and faith, it should be regarded as one of the weightier matters of the Torah. If the death penalty is prescribed for breaking a particular commandment, common sense tells us that this commandment is more important than commandments for which a lesser penalty is prescribed. Commandments for which no penalty is prescribed would be even less important.

When people begin to neglect the weightier matters of the Torah in order to spend a lot of time trying to figure out the exact details of the lighter matters of the Torah, confusion results. One reason people get confused trying to figure out the exact details of the lighter commandments is because some of these lighter commandments are somewhat ambiguous. Even Orthodox Jewish rabbis, who read the Scriptures in the original Hebrew, have not always agreed with each other about the meaning of some of the commandments. The fact that Jewish history records many cases of rabbis' dissenting opinions is proof that some of the commandments are vague, and their meaning is open to debate.

This does not mean that the lighter, ambiguous commandments should just be ignored. However, the amount of time and attention we devote to studying the fine details of a particular commandment should be in proportion to its relative importance in the big picture. The old cliché about someone who "can't see the forest for the trees" is an accurate description of some myopic believers who get their eyes locked onto a few minor details and lose sight of the Lord's bigger concerns.

SIFTING THROUGH THE RUBBLE

When believers leave the Mainstream Church to embrace a Messianic faith which honors the Torah, they are confronted with issues which were

formerly of little or no concern to them. In most typical churches, Christians do not have to deal with questions about Sabbath keeping, calendar controversies, dietary laws, etc. Such matters are thought to be obsolete under the new covenant. Christians in most churches are not expected to do such things, so there is no need to figure out how to do them. It is only after we leave the Mainstream Church that we have to determine God's will in these matters. Much of the confusion in the Messianic movement is the result of trying to meet that challenge.

Those of us who have left Babylon in order to return to "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3) are like the Jews who left Babylon to return to Jerusalem after the end of the 70-year exile. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah describe the trials and triumphs of the faithful remnant of Jews who were willing to abandon the comfort and familiarity of Babylon to return to the holy city of their forefathers. When they arrived back in the Land, they found Jerusalem still in ruins because of the sins of their forefathers. The stones of the holy city were scattered and the gates were burned with fire. The returning exiles had to sift through the rubble to get down to the old foundations. They had to raise up the stones and sort them out to rebuild Jerusalem. It was kind of like putting a jigsaw puzzle back together again.

When we leave spiritual Babylon and return to the original Messianic faith, we experience on a spiritual plane what the returning Jewish exiles experienced on the physical plane. We have to sift through the rubble of centuries of church traditions, and we have to sort out various creeds and doctrines. We dig into the Scriptures and history in an effort to get down to the original foundations of the faith. At times it feels like we are trying to reconstruct a theological jigsaw puzzle. And in a sense, we are.

The Jews under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah persevered and prevailed. If we persevere under the capable leadership of men who are called and anointed to lead, we will prevail, too. □

BOOK REVIEW

They Speak With Other Tongues by John Sherrill. Chosen Books, Grand Rapids, MI. 190 pages.

Gates of Eden reader Iris Cox (whose testimony appears on the previous page) sent me a copy of John Sherrill's book *They Speak With Other Tongues*. First published in 1964, this book is a classic in Pentecostal circles - over 2.5 million sold worldwide. Now this book is available again, in a special 40th anniversary edition.

The author, John Sherrill, began research for the book as a skeptical, stuffy Episcopalian (his words) who was intrigued by reports of modern-day Christians speaking in other tongues, a practice formally known as glossolalia. His research included not only historical research on the subjects of glossolalia and Pentecostalism, but also interviews and testimonies from scores of Christians who practiced speaking in tongues. Over time, Sherrill's skepticism gradually faded, and he eventually received the Pentecostal experience and began practicing glossolalia.

The book includes not only the history of Sherrill's personal testimony, but also a brief history of the 20th century Pentecostal movement - one of the most colorful and exciting chapters in Church history, in my opinion. Sherrill writes about the major figures in the early Pentecostal movement - people like Charles Parham, Agnes Ozman, and William Seymour.

The book includes some information about the amazing Azusa Street Revival that broke out in Los Angeles in 1906. During his research, Sherrill had the privilege of corresponding with one of the few eyewitnesses to the Azusa Street Revival who were still

alive at this time. This eyewitness related one incident that was typical of Azusa Street. This incident took place when a man, a stranger, went upstairs to the prayer room, where several people were praying. As soon as he entered the room, a teenage girl arose and pointed at the man and spoke in tongues for some minutes. Afterwards, the man spoke to the crowd.

"I am a Jew," he said, "and I came to this city to investigate this speaking in tongues. No person in this city knows my first or my last name, as I am here under an assumed name. No one in this city knows my occupation, or anything about me. I go to hear preachers for the purpose of taking their sermons apart, and using them in lecturing against the Christian religion. This girl, as I entered the room, started speaking in the Hebrew language. She told me my first name and my last name, and she told me why I was in the city and what my occupation was in life, and then she called upon me to repent. She told me things about my life which it would be impossible for any person in this city to know."

"Then," the eyewitness reports, "the man dropped to his knees and cried and prayed as though his heart would break."

Sherrill writes about the phenomenal growth of the early Pentecostal movement, and about the fierce opposition and persecution against Pentecostals - persecution which came from other Christians, not from the non-Christian world. The opposition and persecution resulted in a wall of separation between Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal Christians. To the Pentecostals, the Christian world consisted of "us" and "them."

This wall of separation started coming down in the middle of the 20th century, primarily due to the actions of one man, David du Plessis. A Pentecostal minister from South Africa, du Plessis was led by the Holy Spirit to approach "them" - church leaders in the non-Pentecostal Christian world - and present the case for the Pentecostal experience in a tactful, non-condemning way. The Lord opened doors for du Plessis to address church

leaders from many different denominations. When du Plessis was speaking to a group of clergymen at the headquarters of the Episcopalian Church, one of the priests got a little rankled and said, "Mr. du Plessis, are you telling us that you Pentecostals have the truth, and we other churches do not?"

"No, that is not what I mean," du Plessis answered. Then he explained what he meant. "We both have the truth. You know, when my wife and I moved to America, we bought a marvelous device called a Deepfreeze, and there we keep some rather fine Texas beef."

"Now, my wife can take one of those steaks out and lay it, frozen solid, on the table. It's steak, all right, no question of that. You and I can sit around and analyze it: we can discuss its lineage, its age, what part of the steer it comes from. We can weigh it and list its nutritive values."

"But if my wife puts that steak on the fire, something different begins to happen. My little boy smells it from way out in the yard and comes shouting, 'Gee, Mom, that smells good! I want some!'

"Gentlemen, that is the difference between our ways of handling the same truth. You have yours on ice; we have ours on fire."

If you feel like your heart has been on ice, reading this book with an open mind can help set your heart on fire. Too many believers approach their faith and the Scriptures like the people in du Plessis' analogy. They sit around and analyze the frozen steak. They analyze the details of the Scriptures, but they never experience the fire of the Holy Spirit which makes the Scriptures come alive. The sweet aroma remains locked inside the frozen steak. The Pentecostal experience brings us the fire we need. -DB

THE SERIOUSNESS OF SEXUAL SIN

Daniel Botkin

"Flee fornication," Paul wrote. Then he added, "Every sin that a man doeth is without [outside] the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body" (1 Cor. 6:18). This may not prove that sexual sins are more serious than non-sexual sins, but it certainly proves that sexual sins are in a unique category. Unlike other sins, they are sins against one's own body.

When the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they were between two kingdoms, the kingdom of Egypt and the kingdom of Canaan. Yahweh warned them not to practice any of the forms of sexual perversion that were practiced in Egypt or Canaan. "After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do; neither shall ye walk in their ordinances" (Lev. 18:3). Yahweh reminded them that they had seen vile, wicked, perverse abominations in the past, where they had come from, and He warned them that they were going to see vile, wicked, perverse abominations in the future, in the land where they were going. They were warned not to do these abominations.

The rest of this chapter, Leviticus 18, lists several examples of sexual perversion practiced by the Egyptians and Canaanites. These acts fall into six categories: incest (sex between family members and/or close relatives), sex with a menstruous woman, adultery, offering children (who are conceived by sexual union) to Molech, homosexuality, and bestiality (sex with animals). Every one of these forms of sexual perversion were practiced by the Canaanites: "For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled" (Lev. 18:27).

The Canaanites were not the only ones in the ancient pagan world who did such things. Various forms of sexual perversion were accepted in

other pagan cultures, too. In Egypt it was common for brothers and sisters to marry each other. In Persia it was believed that a man could please the gods by marrying his own mother or sister or daughter. The Greeks and Romans also accepted various forms of perversion. These pagans were not wild, uncivilized tribes of grunting cavemen. They were people who lived in civilized, cultured nations which operated by the rule of law. As a matter of fact, their laws permitted and protected rather than prohibited acts of sexual perversion: "neither shall ye walk in their ordinances," the Israelites were told. In other words, don't follow the pagan ordinances which permit and protect these acts.

As America becomes more and more secular, there is more and more pressure from the ungodly to pass ordinances to permit and protect acts of sexual perversion. Of course the hot topic now is so-called "gay marriage." Of course there is no such thing, just as there is no such thing as a married bachelor or a single husband. A homosexual union may be called marriage by human governments, by educational institutions, and by Hollywood, but that does not make it marriage. God calls it an abomination, and that is what it remains, regardless of what any human ordinance says. Man-made laws cannot overturn God's laws. "Ye shall do My judgments, and keep Mine ordinances, to walk therein" (Lev. 18:4).

There have always been some sex perverts in every nation, even in America. America was founded on Biblical principles, though. As long as these general Biblical principles were upheld, sexual perversion, though present to some degree, was frowned upon by the general population and kept in the closet. When discovered, it sometimes led to severe punishment. (See the excerpt from William Bradford's writings on the next page.) As America has drifted away from its

original foundation of Biblical principles, the perversion has come out of the closet and demanded acceptance.

I still remember the first time I heard of homosexuals "coming out of the closet." It was around 1970, when I was an art major at Illinois State University. A girl came through the art building distributing flyers advertising a "gay liberation" event at a neighboring university. I read the flyer with a bit of amusement and a lot of amazement. I could hardly believe that these people were actually going public and openly admitting that they were queers. And even though I was not yet a born-again Christian, I was somewhat bothered by the fact that the neighboring university sponsoring the sodomite event was Illinois Wesleyan University, a school which was allegedly a Christian university.

That was over 30 years ago. Now we are not just expected to let them come out of the closet; now we are expected to call these abominable unions "marriage." Where will it stop? What's next? Laws to legitimize incest and bestiality? "Oh, Americans would never accept anything as perverse as incest and bestiality." Maybe not today, but what about 40 years from now? Forty years ago if a prophet had said that homosexuals would someday be working to pass laws legalizing homosexual "marriage," and would actually persuade some politicians that this is a good idea, that prophet would have been ignored or ridiculed. Forty years ago it was not even acceptable for young couples to live together before marriage. Back then, it was called "living in sin." Now it's just called "living together."

If America does not wake up and repent of its perversity, terrible things are in store for our nation. Consider Yahweh's warning to Israel, and take it as a warning to our nation: "Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you. And the

land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants. Ye shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations; neither any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you: (For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled) that the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you" (Lev. 18:24-28).

On the other side of the coin of perversity is the perverse idea that all sex, even between married couples, is an evil that God tolerates only because it is necessary for the continuation of the human race. Sex was God's idea from the very beginning, though. "Be fruitful and multiply" was the very first commandment given to the man and the woman. God created sex, and He deliberately made it enjoyable. He is not opposed to people enjoying the pleasures of physical sensations within the boundaries of His Torah. He created taste buds so we would enjoy food, and He designed our bodies in a way that makes sex enjoyable. However, just as the foods we enjoy are limited by the dietary laws, so sexual pleasures are limited to the marriage bed. "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4). Sex is a wonderful thing when it is confined to the marriage bed, but a terrible thing anyplace else - just as rich, dark soil would be a blessing in your garden, but a curse on your living room carpeting.

"But why would the Creator give us sexual desires, then restrict sex to marriage?" God designed and created all of the universe, including our bodies, to function in harmony with His Torah. The purpose of God's limitations and restrictions is not merely to deprive us of pleasures we deserve. This is the lie the serpent used in the Garden. The purpose of God's restrictions is to give us fullness of life. "Ye shall therefore keep My statutes, and My judgments: which if a man do,

How the Pilgrims Handled Perverts in Early America

From the writings of Pilgrim father William Bradford, second governor of Plymouth colony. From *Book II, Chapter 32. Anno Dom: 1642*

There was a youth whose name was Thomas Granger. He was servant to an honest man of Duxbury, being about 16 or 17 years of age. (His father and mother lived at the same time at Scituate.) He was this year detected of buggery [sodomy], and indicted for the same, with a mare, a cow, two goats, five sheep, two calves and a turkey. Horrible it is to mention, but the truth of the history requires it.

He was first discovered by one that accidentally saw his lewd practice toward the mare. (I forbear particulars.) Being upon it examined and committed, in the end he not only confessed the fact with that beast at that time, but sundry times before and at several times with all the rest of the forenamed in his indictment. And this his free confes-

sion was not only in private to the magistrates (though at first he strived to deny it) but to sundry, both ministers and others; and afterwards, upon his indictment, to the whole Court and jury; and confirmed it at his execution. And whereas some of the sheep could not be so well known by his description of them, others with them were brought before him and he declared which were they and which were not. And accordingly he was cast by the jury and condemned, and after executed about the 8th of September, 1642.

A sad spectacle it was. For first the mare and then the cow and the rest of the lesser cattle were killed before his face, according to the law, Leviticus 20:15 ["And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death: and ye shall slay the beast"], and then he himself was executed. The cattle were all cast into a large pit that was digged of purpose for them, and no use made of any part of them.

he shall live in them" (Lev. 18:5). Even the prescribed seven-day abstinence during the woman's menstrual period is designed for life. It increases the likelihood of conception (and therefore the continuation of life) by making sure that the woman's ovulation occurs during the "permissible days." It increases life's sexual pleasure by scheduling a monthly "honeymoon" for the married couple. It may even help prevent cervical cancer, according to a study at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York comparing Jewish women (who practice abstinence during the menstrual period) with non-Jewish women (who should, but do not always practice abstinence during the entire period).

Our Heavenly Father knows what He's doing when He restricts and limits behavior in any area, including the area of sexual activity. He designed and created our bodies, our minds, and our emotions. He knows a

lot more about these things than we do. He knows what is best for us.

Unfortunately, rather than trust the wisdom of our loving Heavenly Father, many people listen to Satan. "I'm the expert on sex," Satan says. "Let me take charge of that area of your life. I'll give you some real thrills!"

People may get their cheap, temporary thrills, but they will eventually pay for their sins. The payment will be exacted in the form of emotional wounds, unwanted pregnancy, divorce, heart-broken children, prison, AIDS, and death. And if there is no repentance, it will not end with death, because there is a second death that awaits the unrepentant. "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire... the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Rev. 20:14f; 21:8). □

מַעֲזֵץ צָרָר MAOZ TZUR ROCK OF AGES

Daniel Botkin

Maoz Tzur is the name of a well-known Jewish hymn that is sung during Hanukkah. It celebrates the Maccabees' victory over their enemies. The English translation of the title, and of the opening words of the song, is "Rock of Ages." The Rock extolled in this hymn is Israel's God - strong, steadfast, immovable through the ages.

God is also referred to as Israel's Rock several times in *Ha'azinu* (Deuteronomy 32). "He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He" (vs. 4). Deuteronomy 32 includes rebukes to Israel for lightly esteeming the Rock of his salvation and for being unmindful of the Rock that begat him (vss. 15 & 18). Of the heathen it is said that "their rock is not as our Rock" (vs. 31). No doubt the Jewish writer of *Maoz Tzur* had Deuteronomy 32 in mind when he wrote the hymn.

Christians are more familiar with the Christian hymn *Rock of Ages*. The Englishman who wrote this hymn went by the shortened name Gus - which is understandable, since his full name was Augustus Montague Toplady. As a child, he was spoiled by his mother. As an adult, he was disliked by his relatives and described as "sick and neurotic" by his acquaintances.

Gus, a Calvinist, was a contemporary of John Wesley, and despised Wesley's Arminianism. Gus wrote of Wesley: "I believe him [Wesley] to be the most rancorous hater of the gospel-system that ever appeared on

this island." Another time he wrote: "Wesley is guilty of satanic shamelessness, of acting the ignoble part of a lurking, shy assassin."

The first verse of the *Rock of Ages* hymn was actually written for the express purpose of insulting Wesley's Arminian theology:

*Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy wounded side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Save from wrath and make me pure.*

Strangely enough, Wesley had written something very similar 30 years earlier: "O Rock of Salvation, Rock struck and cleft for me, let those two Streams of Blood and Water which gushed from Thy side bring down Pardon and Holiness into my soul."

Gus died at 38 years of age. His hymn *Rock of Ages* has been called the best known and best loved hymn in the English language. It has been translated into dozens of languages all over the world. It was the hymn that the British Prime Minister Gladstone requested to be sung as he lay dying. Prince Albert repeated a line from the hymn over and over again as he neared death. A famous London singer was scheduled for throat surgery which, according to the doctors, was going to take away his ability to speak. Before the surgery, he wanted to sing a song for the very last time. He chose to sing *Rock of Ages*. When a ship was sinking in the Bay of Biscay in 1866, the Armenian Christians on board sang *Rock of Ages* as the ship went down.

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee," the hymn begins. What does it mean to hide oneself in the cleft of the Rock? The Rock is Messiah (1 Cor. 10:4); the clefts are His wounds. Before Moses could behold the glory of Yahweh, he had to stand in the cleft of the Rock (Ex. 33:22). Before we can see the glory of the Lord, we have to enter into the cleft of the Rock. We do this by entering into "the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable

unto His death" (Ph'p. 3:10).

Entering into the fellowship of His sufferings is not merely meditating on His sufferings. Entering into the fellowship of His sufferings requires suffering on our part, too, because the result of entering into the fellowship of His sufferings is that we are made conformable to His death. We have to die to our own will, and this dying to self will involve suffering. Our sufferings may be light or heavy, internal or external, but they will be real.

In the Song of Solomon, the Bridegroom says to the Bride, "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice: for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely" (Song 2:14).

The Bride's voice is its sweetest and her face its loveliest when she is hidden in the clefts of the Rock, in the wounds of Messiah. These wounds are "the secret places of the stairs." We are not building a stairway to heaven, we are ascending a secret stairway to heaven, like the angels in Jacob's dream (Gen. 28:12). The wounded One Himself is the stairway that grants us access to heaven. We who hide ourselves in the wounds of Yeshua are the "angels" (i.e. messengers) who ascend and descend upon the Son of man (John 1:51).

There is no ascending without suffering, for it is His wounds that grant us the right to ascend. If we are hidden in His wounds, we will experience the wounding of our own hearts ("Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy soul also"), because entering into the fellowship of His sufferings makes us conformable to His death. □

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THE ADOPTION

A Short Story by Daniel Botkin

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

"Monica! Wait!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Daniel Botkin

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

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

"Jewish?! Life is strange, Monica."

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

"What did you do?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Shalom, Clare." *

WHO SAID THAT?

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

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

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

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