



SNOWFLAKES

Daniel Botkin

This winter has brought a lot of snow here, which has had me thinking about "the treasures of the snow" (Job 38:22). There are some spiritual lessons in the snow that can bring us spiritual treasures if we apply the lessons to our lives.

The whiteness and purity of snow speaks of the holiness that a sinner receives after repentance. After his sin with Bath-sheba, David prayed, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Ps. 51:7). Through Isaiah God pleads with sinners: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith Yahweh: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18).

The process by which snow is formed is a picture of the transformation of a sinner into a saint. For a snowflake to be created, a tiny speck of dust must be drawn up into the heavens. There high above the earth, the conditions in the heavens cause a snowflake to form around the nucleus of the dust particle.

"Dust thou art," God said to Adam. Dust cannot be transformed into snow by remaining earthbound, because it is the atmosphere of the heavens that causes the transformation to take place. A sinner cannot be transformed into a saint if he remains earthbound, because only the atmosphere of the heavenly realm can transform a sinner into a saint. Snow comes only from above. Except a man be born from above, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. The dust is important -- it is the nucleus around which the snowflake grows -- but the dust of the earth and the atmosphere of the heavens must meet together for a snowflake to be born.

When a snowflake is formed in

heaven and manifested on the earth, we see the beauty, the glory, and the purity of the snowflake. The dust is not visible. All that is evident is the beauty and the glory that has formed around the tiny particle of dust. As we are "transformed into the same image from glory to glory," we will manifest more and more of the nature and character of the Messiah, and less and less of our own fallen, sinful nature.

Each snowflake is unique, "no two snowflakes alike," as the saying goes. So likewise every individual saint is unique. Looking closely at the beauty of one single snowflake under a magnifying glass will reveal one sort of glory, but there is a glory of another sort manifested when we see a vast blanket of snow shrouding the earth. When we look at individual snowflakes, we marvel at the detail and the uniqueness of that one particular snowflake. When we look at a blanket of snow, we are not so aware of each individual snowflake. Rather, we are aware of the whole, the combined effect of many snowflakes joining together into one glorious whole. These two types of glory can be compared to the glory of a corporate manifestation of the Body of Messiah that is seen in a local body of believers, and the glory of an individual saint.

Every single snowflake is a creation of God and important to God, but God does not normally create just one snowflake with the intention that it abide alone. When God creates snow, He creates it in quantity so it will cover the earth with beauty and glory. The secret to a snowflake's survival is in joining itself to other snowflakes. If it doesn't, it will not last long. It will be destroyed by the heat of the earth. We must be willing to join ourselves to local bodies if we want to survive and give a corporate manifestation of the Messiah.

In these days, God is transforming a remnant of disciples who are returning to His Sabbath and His Torah. There is not yet a great accumulation of people in this Messianic movement, because this movement back to a Torah-based life in the Messiah is a

fairly new movement. The first few snowflakes of a snowstorm melt and disappear, and no change is apparent at first. So it is with the pioneers and forerunners of any work of restoration that God does among His people. The "forerunner flakes" prepare the ground for the flakes that will come later. And we do look like flakes! We don't go to church on the right day; we celebrate those old holidays in Leviticus instead of Christmas and Easter; we don't have church hog roasts or clam bakes; we even dress and look flaky.

God is gathering His "flakes" into local bodies, and He is doing it without a lot of noisy fanfare. Did you ever hear snowflakes pounding on your roof during a snowfall? Snow accumulates quietly and steadily, and when the night has ended and people open their eyes in the morning, they behold the glory of the snow. A morning is coming when the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth as the snow covers the ground. This glory will not be manifested by lone, individual snowflakes; it will only be manifested by believers joining together in local congregations. Unfortunately, a lot of Sabbath-keepers are fiercely independent and stubbornly resist being a part of any organized local congregation. Nonetheless, this is God's way.

As snowflakes continue to accumulate and join together in a snowfall, eventually the look of flakiness disappears. People become aware of the whole rather than of the snowflakes as individuals. So it will be in this Messianic movement. As more and more "flakes" continue to accumulate and join together, our flakiness will disappear. We will no longer be viewed as just a bunch of flaky oddballs. We will be seen as a corporate expression of the Body of the Messiah, as a glorious blanket of snow covering the earth with beauty and purity. Many people who formerly viewed us as mere flakes will come to the realization that maybe we're not quite as flaky as they thought. □



THE SEVEN DAYS OF THE WEEK

A Picture of Seven Stages of Spiritual Growth

Dr. Daniel Botkin

"Thus saith God the Lord, He that created the heavens, and stretched them out; He that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; He that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein ... Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them." -Isaiah 42:5 & 9

The above verses suggest that the methods God uses to impart spiritual life to people are patterned after the methods by which He created the heavens and the earth. By looking at how God brought about "the former things" (the physical creation), we can see how God brings about "new things" (the spiritual creation) in the life of a maturing disciple. The first week of creation can be seen as a miniature picture or a skeleton outline of seven stages of spiritual growth that God takes us through as we become the "new creation" of 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

DAY #1: SEPARATION OF LIGHT FROM DARKNESS

Repentance Unto Salvation

At the beginning of the creation week, the entire earth was in darkness and "without form, and void." This describes the spiritual condition of a lost sinner. The sinner is in spiritual darkness and is blind to spiritual truth. His life is without form, and void. From a spiritual standpoint, his life has no order, no direction, no purpose, because he is spiritually dead. He can do nothing to bring himself out of the spiritual darkness in which he dwells, unless the Spirit of God moves to initiate his salvation. This initial preparatory moving of the Spirit in a sinner's life can be seen in Genesis 1:2: "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Even before the earth received any light, God's Spirit was brooding over the darkened waters; even before the sinner receives any spiritual light, God's Spirit broods over the darkened waters of the sinner's soul, bringing the sinner to repentance and preparing him to receive spiritual light.

"And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." When a sinner repents, God speaks to the sinner's heart and says, "Let there be light." The penitent sinner then receives his first glimpse of the true knowledge of God's glory. The Apostle Paul expressed it this way: "For God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Yeshua the Messiah" (2 Cor. 4:6). In this obvious reference to Genesis 1:3, Paul is telling us that just as God spoke light into the physical creation, so He speaks spiritual light into our hearts through the knowledge of the Messiah. Peter also made reference to this analogy

when he wrote that God "hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2:9).

Genesis 1:4 says that "God saw the light, that it was good." This is what God sees when He looks at a sinner who has repented. It is not written that "God saw the darkness." God does not look at the darkness of the penitent sinner's past. He sees only "the light"; He sees only the goodness of His Son who now dwells in the heart of the penitent sinner. Job 38:7 tells us that the angels shouted for joy when God laid the foundations of the earth. When God lays the foundation of the spiritual creation in a penitent sinner's heart, the same thing happens: "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth" (Lk. 15:7).

God divided the light from the darkness and called the light "Day," and the darkness "Night." He does the same thing with people. He separates all of humanity into two categories, which the New Testament calls "children of the light, and of the day" and "children of darkness, and of the night" (1 Thes. 5:5). The apocryphal Book of Enoch also notes this distinction in a reference to God as "the Lord of spirits, who created a division between light and darkness, and separated the spirits of men" (En. 41:6).

It is the sovereign moving of God's Spirit that leads us to repentance, and it is God who speaks light into our sin-darkened soul. We cannot congratulate ourselves for becoming children of the light and of the day, because we did not spiritually beget ourselves of our own will. "Of His own will He begat us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures" (James 1:18).

The first stage of our spiritual growth, "the first day," begins when we are born from above, born anew as children of light and of the day.

DAY#2: SEPARATION OF WATERS ABOVE & BELOW

Baptism and Sanctification

On the second day of creation, God made a firmament to separate the waters below from the waters above. Separation speaks of holiness, of being set apart. Waters speak of baptism, cleansing, and sanctification. This is the second stage of our spiritual journey. It is not enough to just receive the light that was given to us on the first day; we must now "walk in the light" (1 Jn. 1:7). The light was freely given to us: "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light," Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:14. This spiritual awakening and reception of light takes place on "the first day," but Paul does not stop there. He immediately tells us to walk in that light in the very next verse: "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise" (Eph. 5:15). We are fools if we have the light but do not walk in the light.

To walk in the light means to be obedient to the knowledge we have been given. In the New Testament, the first act of obedience after repentance and faith was normally baptism. Baptism, like the firmament in Genesis, is meant to separate. It separates the new believer from the world system of this age. Just as the firmament served as a great gulf between the waters below and the waters above, so in the spiritual realm there is "a great gulf fixed" between the righteous and the unrighteous. (Lk. 16:26) When the newborn child of light undergoes baptism and begins to walk in holiness, he knows by experience what the Scripture means when it says that God "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Messiah Yeshua" (Eph. 2:6). The new disciple becomes more and more aware of the fact that he is no longer a part of the body of the unrighteous, the "waters below." He is now a part of the body of the righteous, the "waters above." He has come to "an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb. 12:22f).

Although he still lives in the world, he is no longer of the world. He has been lifted up, like the waters above the firmament, to see his true nature and his true dwelling place in the Messiah. He has begun to put into practice the instructions of Colossians 3:1-3: "If ye then be risen with Messiah, seek those things which are above, where Messiah sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth, for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Messiah in God."

DAY #3: DRY LAND & SEAS; PLANT LIFE

Thirsting for God and Bearing Fruit

On the third day, God gathered the waters under the heaven unto one place and called these waters the Seas. This caused the appearance of the dry land, which God called Earth. It was out of this Earth that God brought forth "grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself."

The seas and the dry land give us a picture of two

bodies of people who dwell together on this planet. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt" (Isa. 57:20). The dry land is a picture of the righteous who thirst after God: "My soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is" (Ps. 63:1).

These two bodies of people produce two contrasting manifestations. The wicked who are like the troubled sea cast up mire and dirt; the righteous who thirst for God as a dry and thirsty land produce fruit. The details of these two contrasting manifestations can be read in Galatians 5:19-23: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, [etc., etc.] ... But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

In the previous stage of spiritual growth, "the second day," the disciple started to become aware of his true dwelling place in the heavenly realm. Although he has set his affection on things above, his body is still confined to the earth and is vulnerable to the influence of the raging waters of the wicked who surround him. This causes him to thirst for God. As God pours out His spiritual waters upon the thirsty disciple, this produces the fruit of the Spirit -- love, joy, peace, etc.

The reason the disciple can bear the fruit of the Spirit is because he has the Spirit as the Seed in himself. The fruit tree in Genesis is described as "the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself." God places the apple seed inside the apple, the peach seed inside the peach, etc., to enable each kind of tree to yield fruit after its kind. God places the Spirit of Messiah, "the Seed of the Woman," inside the disciple's heart, enabling him to bear the fruit of the Spirit. The New Testament tells us we are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible" (1 Pet. 1:23). John makes reference to this incorruptible indwelling Seed as the power that enables us to overcome temptation: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 Jn. 3:9). The indwelling Messianic Seed causes the disciple to bear the fruit of the Spirit instead of the works of the flesh.

DAY #4: SUN, MOON, & STARS

Being a Light to Those in Darkness

On the fourth day, God caused the sun, moon, and stars to shine in the firmament. After a person has been awakened from spiritual death, enlightened and baptized, and has begun walking in holiness and bearing the fruit of the Spirit, he begins to shine as a light to those in darkness. People who are in darkness begin to notice us, because the fruit of the Spirit is so different from the works of the flesh that are manifested in the lives of the unrighteous. Paul encourages us to be faithful "in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Ph'p 2:15).

Yeshua said, "I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John: 9:4f). Now He tells us, "Ye are the light of the world ... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Mt. 5:14, 16). The sun is the source of light in the physical realm; Yeshua is "the Sun of righteousness" in the spiritual realm (Mal. 4:2). At night the moon receives and reflects the light of the unseen sun. Now that Yeshua, the Sun of righteousness, is no longer in the world, night has come to the spiritual realm. The Body of Messiah now functions as the light of the world by receiving and reflecting His light, just as the moon receives and reflects the light of the unseen sun at night. It does not matter that the moon is smaller, dimmer, and colder than the sun. It does not matter that it has no light of its own apart from the sun. Its job is to "rule the night" by receiving and reflecting the light that comes from the unseen sun.

The stars are another picture of disciples who shine and give light to those in darkness. While the moon is a picture of the entire Body of Messiah shining together corporately, the stars are a picture of the innumerable disciples who shine as individual lights: "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever" (Dan. 12:3). Some stars are much brighter than others, and so it will be with individual disciples. The New Testament says that "one star differeth from another star in glory: so also is the resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor. 15:41f). Some stars are exceedingly brilliant, while other stars are very dull and dim. Some disciples are exceedingly brilliant, while other disciples are very dull and dim. That's okay, though. Even a dull, dim star provides a measure of light in a dark place, and even a dull, dim-witted disciple provides a measure of light in a dark place. Regardless of the measure of light we have, we let it shine. "Let your light so shine before men," Yeshua said. We don't need to be so concerned with how brightly we shine compared to others. We simply let our light shine.

DAY #5: NEW LIFE EMERGES FROM THE WATERS

Bringing the Lost to Repentance & Newness of Life

On the fifth day, God said, "Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life." The light that we give on the fourth day will eventually result in the impartation of life to others on the fifth day. This is because of the connection between light and life: "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men" (Jn. 1:4). This connection between light and life is also seen in Philipians 2:15f: "...ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life..." Spiritual light begets spiritual life.

The description of "the moving creature that hath life" emerging from the waters gives us a picture of a person coming out of the baptismal waters as "a new creature in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17). This new creature has life because "he that hath the Son hath life" (1 Jn. 5:12).

Genesis also mentions the creation of "fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven" on the fifth day. Here is another picture of the new believer becoming aware of his true dwelling place in the heavenly realm. The "moving creature that hath life" and the "fowl that fly above the earth" on the fifth day can be viewed as a repetition of our experiences of the first day and the second day respectively. Those who receive spiritual life through us go through the same stages of spiritual growth that we went through. And like us, they are expected to bear the fruit of the Spirit and to reproduce: "And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day."

DAY #6: MAN IN THE IMAGE OF GOD, SUBDUING THE EARTH & EXERCISING DOMINION

Bearing the Image of the Last Adam

and Subduing Our Passions & Exercising Dominion

On the sixth day, God created man in His own image and likeness, and told man to subdue the earth and have dominion over it. The goal of our spiritual growth and development is to transform us into the likeness and image of the Last Adam, the Lord Yeshua: "For whom He did foreknow, He did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). This is a gradual transfor-

mation from glory to glory, and it takes place as we continue to focus on the glory of the Lord: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed [Gk., *metamorphe*, 'transformed'] into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18).

"And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening [life-giving] spirit ... The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven ... And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Cor. 15:45-49). As we grow and mature in the faith, we bear more and more of the image of Yeshua, the Last Adam, the new man, and less and less of the image of the first Adam, the old man. As John the Baptist said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (Jn. 3:30).

Even though we have "Christ in us" from the moment we accept Him, the Messianic Seed that is planted in our hearts must grow and develop if there is to be a mature manifestation of Christ. Paul wrote to the Galatians, "I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. 4:19). As we grow more and more into His image and likeness, we learn to "subdue" and "have dominion" over things in the spiritual realm. We learn to subdue our lusts and passions; we learn to exercise dominion over demonic powers that harass and tempt people.

A babe or an immature son is easily tempted. Even the photos of scantily-clad women on magazine covers at a supermarket can cause an immature son to stumble. A mature son can subdue his lust and take dominion over the temptation by simply turning his eyes away. He can even do it if he works in a factory or garage where co-workers hang pornography on the walls of the work area. A mature son can walk through the filthiest, sleaziest places imaginable if need be, and Satan cannot touch him, because he has learned to intercept temptation and resist it. He sees the snares Satan has laid for him and he knows how to avoid them. Satan's plans for him are aborted.

"When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin," James wrote (James 1:15). Lust must be conceived in the mind, and it is very difficult for lust to find fertile soil in the mind and heart of a mature son, because the mature son has overcome "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 Jn. 2:16). The mature son may still have some blind spots and some flaws, but he has overcome. He still faces temptations, but the on-going, agonizing battle between his flesh and his spirit is, for all practical intents and purposes, over. The mature son has learned to subdue his passions and exercise dominion. He does this not by sheer human will power, but by drawing strength from the Messiah who indwells him. Because he has learned to draw on the life and power of Christ in him, resisting temptation is no longer the struggle it formerly was. The mature son has learned to enter into that spiritual rest which is pictured by the Sabbath, which brings us to the seventh day.

DAY #7: THE SABBATH

Ceasing From Our Own Works & Entering Into His Rest

When the Bible says God "rested" on the seventh day, it does not mean He rested because of weariness. The Hebrew word used here, *shavat*, is the verb form of *shabbat* (Sabbath), and means cessation -- God ceased creating not because He was tired, but because "the heavens and the earth were finished."

The Sabbath is a picture of the inward rest that Yeshua offers: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Mt. 11:28f).

Hebrews chapter 4 teaches us that the Sabbath serves as a prophetic picture of this inward "rest unto the soul" that Yeshua's disciples can enter into: "There remaineth therefore a rest [Gk. *sabbatismos*, 'a Sabbath rest' (NIV, NASB, et. al.)] to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest...." (Heb. 4:9-11).

This spiritual "rest" is not a cessation of spiritual activity. It is a ceasing from "our own works" -- i.e., trying to serve God by our own human will power -- and learning to let His power do the work in us and through us. We are still involved in activities of a spiritual nature, but it is now the Messiah in us who empowers us to walk in the Spirit and serve God. This is something we grow into as a result of spiritual exercise, which is why we are urged to "labour therefore to enter into that rest." Yeshua said, "I will give you rest," but He also said that "ye shall find rest unto your souls." The rest is freely given, but we will find it only by bearing His yoke and laboring to enter into that rest. His yoke is easy and His burden is light, but He did not say that the yoke and the burden are nonexistent. There is a yoke to bear and a burden to carry if we want to find the rest that He gives.

God blessed and sanctified the seventh day, and He blesses and sanctifies mature sons who labor to enter that place of spiritual rest that the Sabbath points us to. Many Christians want to throw away the keeping of the weekly seventh-day Sabbath because it is a prophetic picture of the inward "rest unto the soul" that Jesus gives. "Jesus is our Sabbath-rest now," they say. "The Sabbath was just a symbol or type of the spiritual rest we have in Christ. We don't need the symbol anymore, now that we know the deeper meaning of the Sabbath. We don't need to keep the Fourth Commandment in a literal way anymore."

That makes as much sense as saying, "Jesus is our Bridegroom now. The husband-wife relationship was just a symbol or type of Christ and the Church. We don't need the symbol anymore, now that we know the deeper meaning of the marriage relationship. We don't need to keep the Seventh Commandment, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery,' in a literal way anymore."

Ridiculous, of course, but if "the deeper meaning of the

Sabbath" gives us the right to throw away the literal keeping of the Fourth Commandment, then "the deeper meaning of the marriage relationship" gives us the right to throw away the literal keeping of the Seventh Commandment. The fact of the matter is that the deeper meaning of marriage gives us all the more reason to obey the Seventh Commandment. Just as the deeper meaning of marriage gives us all the more reason to keep our marriages holy, so the deeper meaning of the Sabbath should give us all the more reason to keep the Sabbath holy. In the Peshitta text (ancient Aramaic version), Hebrews 4:9 says: "It is therefore the duty of the people of God to keep the Sabbath." Why? Because of what the Sabbath represents.

CLOSING REMARKS

Although the seven days of the week in Genesis provide an outline of seven stages of spiritual growth, the reader should not assume that going through these seven stages is a one-time experience in the life of a disciple. Rather, the progression of the seven stages functions in a repetitive cyclical fashion, similar to the four seasons. We grow and mature in different areas at different times. When the Lord deals with us in each particular area of our lives, He seems to follow this pattern. He starts by the moving of His Spirit, then He enlightens us (day #1), separates us (day #2), makes us fruitful (day #3), makes us shining examples (day #4), uses us to impart life to others (day #5), brings us to maturity in that area (day #6), and then we find rest unto our souls when we finally have victory in that area of our life (day #7).

POSTSCRIPT

If any readers are familiar with the writings of St. Augustine, they might be asking themselves, "Did Daniel read *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, and did he plagiarize this study from Augustine's work?"

The answer to the first part of that question is yes; the answer to the second part of the question is no. I originally put most of this study together sometime in the mid-1970s, when I had been saved for around two or three years. It came about as a result of my meditation and prayerful study of Genesis chapter 1. It was some years later when I happened to read Augustine's *Confessions*. I was pleasantly surprised (yea, sore amazed) to see that Augustine related the seven days in Genesis to stages of spiritual growth and experience in a way that was remarkably similar to the study I had put together. (I must admit that a couple of Augustine's comments did throw a little more light on a couple minor points in my study.)

"Thou hast formed us for Thyself,
And our hearts are restless
Til they find rest in Thee."

-Augustine

GOD'S WAYS AND GOD'S THOUGHTS

Dr. Daniel Botkin

"He made known His ways unto Moses..." (Psalm 103:7)
"How weighty also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God!" (Psalm 139:17)



Teaching English to hundreds of foreign students has taught me some important lessons about God's ways and God's thoughts. I taught English as a foreign language for seven years. My pupils were young and old, rich and poor, black and white, Jews and Gentiles, immigrants, tourists, and college students. A typical class sometimes consisted of pupils from as many as a dozen different countries and cultures. The students' differences did not matter in the classroom, though. What mattered was the one thing that united all the students: a desire to learn the English language.

Anyone who has ever learned a foreign language well enough to actually use it knows that it requires time, determination, and intense mental concentration during the study of the target language. Some foreign students come to America with the mistaken notion that they will learn English by osmosis. They believe that being in an English-speaking environment will automatically guarantee success. Students with this attitude put very little effort into their language learning. In class they mouth the words without thinking of the meaning. When the teacher speaks, they hear the teacher's voice but they do not really listen. Sometimes they fall asleep in class. They do very little homework and rarely use English outside the classroom. The students who believe in this "language-learning-by-osmosis" theory pick up a few English words and phrases and manage to understand a little spoken English. But in real-life situations that require the actual use of English, they simply cannot function. They have absolutely no degree of fluency, and it is only with extreme difficulty that they can utter a statement that is coherent

to a native speaker of English.

When I think of language learning, I see some interesting parallels to the way we learn spiritual truths. When we come together with God's people in a church or synagogue, we are like students coming to learn a foreign language, because the worship of God requires the learning of His ways and thoughts, which are like a foreign language to man: "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith Yahweh. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8f).

Learning God's ways and thoughts, like learning a foreign language, requires time, determination, and intense mental concentration. Yet many people seem to believe in "religion by osmosis." They think that just being in church or synagogue will automatically guarantee all the understanding and learning of God's ways that they need. Like some of the students I taught, these worshippers mouth the words of the hymns and prayer books without thinking very deeply about the meaning of the words. They let their minds wander as they passively listen to the sermon, much like pupils who gaze out the window during the teacher's lecture. Some fall asleep during services. They do no homework -- no private prayer or Bible study. And like foreign students who rarely use English outside the classroom, these people rarely speak of spiritual things outside the walls of the church or synagogue.

The funny thing about language learners who believe the osmosis theory is this: Even though Americans are unable to understand their speech, these students can often understand each other. On several occasions a pupil in my classroom would ask me a question which was totally unintelligible to me. After asking him to repeat the question four or five times, I would

hear another student say to me, in a condescending tone of voice, "He said..." and then proceed to explain the first student's question. Every time this happened, I knew what the students were thinking: "I understood Hiroki's question the first time he asked it. Why couldn't the teacher understand him? Does the teacher have a problem understanding spoken English?"

Of course the reason such students understand one another's English is because they all say it the same wrong way. As one of my pupils, a Russian Jew, told me, "In Russia, I thought I knew English, because I spoke English only with other Russians. Now in America, I speak with Americans and I find out I don't know English."

In the words of the Apostle Paul, "they measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves among themselves" (2 Cor. 10:12). Making this mistake in language learning is relatively harmless. When it comes to learning spiritual truths, however, we dare not assume something is right simply because the majority of our religious peers say so. Spiritual truth is not determined by the opinion of the majority. God's ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts. His ways and His thoughts can be learned, but not without intense study, sincere prayer, and deep thought about the issues. It takes time.

The textbook for learning God's ways and thoughts is the Bible. The teacher is the Holy Spirit, whom Yeshua said "shall teach you all things" and "will guide you into all truth" (John 14:26; 16:13). We need to let God's Spirit teach us God's ways and thoughts from the Scriptures, and stop "measuring ourselves by ourselves and comparing ourselves among ourselves." Then we will be on the road to learning the difference between God's truth and man's opinions. □

“LEFT BEHIND”

Daniel Botkin

“Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left” (Mt. 24:40f).

I don't know about you, folks, but when this happens, I don't want to be taken. I want to be left behind. Why do I say this? Because of the words Yeshua said just prior to the above statement: “But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken...”

Who got “taken” in the days of Noah, and who got “left behind”? The wicked were taken away in the Flood (“the flood came and took them all away”), and the righteous were left behind to inherit the earth. So it was in the days of Noah, and so shall it be at the coming of the Son of man, Yeshua said. That's why I want to be left behind, to inherit the earth. Don't get me wrong. If some sort of “rapture” does happen and all the believers go zooming off the planet to be with Jesus, I won't argue or resist. I'll be glad to go if that's how it happens. But I have my doubts that it will happen in the Hal-Lindsey, Chick-tract fashion that so many Christians expect -- in spite of the current popularity of the “Left Behind” series of pro-rapture Christian novels (which I have not read and do not wish to read). One reason for my skepticism about the rapture theory is its origin. Years ago the late Bill Britton wrote about the origin of this teaching. I present it here, with no further comment, for readers' consideration:

Perhaps you have heard of the Irvingite movement, known as the Catholic Apostolic Church. The Encyclopedia Britannica, volume 12, 1966 issue, pages 648-649, describe Edward Irving and the controversy over his teachings in Scotland and England in the early 1800s. He was excommunicated by the London presbytery, and in 1833 was condemned and deposed from the ministry of the Church of Scotland because of his teachings concerning “the sinfulness of Christ's humanity.” He also began to teach a “rapture of the Church” after a young Scottish lass by the name of Margaret McDonald went into a trance and described a vision in which she said she saw the saints leaving the earth at the return of the Lord, before the tribulation. Her trance and vision took place in the spring of 1830, while living in Port-glasgow, Scotland. Her “revelation” was recorded in a book written by R.N. Norton and printed in London in 1861. I have a copy of this portion of the book, though it is now out of print and almost impossible to obtain. Prior to this time, the Church, clear back to the Apostles, had always preached that the Church would go victoriously through the tribulation. There is no record of the “escape rapture” theory being preached before 1830. On April 30, 1831, a Mrs. J.B. Cardale, who later joined Irving's church, had uttered a

personal revelation in a home prayer meeting, echoing Margaret McDonald's revelation of a pre-tribulation rapture.

It was from this supposed revelation that the modern doctrine and modern phraseology respecting it arose; it came not from Scripture, but from that which falsely pretended to be the Spirit of God. Edward Irving accepted this teaching, and it was taught at prophetic meetings at Powerscourt House in Ireland, attended much by Plymouth Brethren organizer John Darby. Irving's views influenced Darby, C.H. Macintosh, and C.I. Scofield, whose Bible notes popularized the new theory. So it was a young Scottish girl who originated this idea, and is so recorded on page 15 of Norton's book on the Catholic Apostolic Church. Darby, Scofield, along with Clarence Larkin and his charts, began to teach this new theory, and in the early 1900s it reached a peak in popularity. □ (See pg. 2 for info about a book. -DB)

THE STATE OF THE DEAD

Dr. Daniel Botkin

In Hebrew the abode of the dead is called *Sheol* (שְׁאוֹל). The word *Sheol* has the same ש-א-ל root as *sh'elah* (שְׁאֵלָה), the word for "question" -- perhaps because the abode of the dead is The Big Question. Where are the dead? Or to word the question another way, Are the dead? That is, do the dead still exist in some state in the spiritual realm? Or do the dead simply cease to exist until the Return of the Lord, when they will be brought back into existence at the resurrection? Most Sunday Christians believe the former. Most 7th-day Sabbath-keeping Christians believe the latter. I am a Sabbath-keeper, but I believe the former. I do not believe that the righteous cease to exist when their bodies die. I am persuaded that the spirits of the righteous continue to live on in the presence of the Lord after the body dies.

The question of the state of the dead should not be something that divides believers, because it makes no difference to the dead which view is correct. Either way, when the righteous die, their next conscious moment will be in the presence of the Lord, whether it happens the instant the body dies, or whether they have had to wait hundreds or thousands of years.

Even though I am persuaded that the spirits of the righteous dead are still living, I can fellowship with believers who hold the opposite view. I do not insist that others embrace my view of this issue, because I do not consider it an essential to the faith. Unfortunately, some Sabbath-keepers who hold the opposite view do regard this question as an essential issue. They consider it a dangerous heresy to believe that the spirits of the righteous are now in the presence of the Lord, and they consider it their duty to persuade others to embrace their view.

Why do so many Sabbath-keepers view this subject as something so vital to the faith? I am not sure, but I suspect it may be at least partly due to

the writings of Ellen G. White, whose influence reaches into the Sabbath-keeping community beyond the boundaries of the SDA Church that claims her as its prophetess. Ellen White viewed this doctrine as one of "the two great errors" in Christianity. In her popular book *The Great Controversy*, she wrote: "Through the two great errors, the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions. While the former lays the foundation for spiritualism, the latter creates a bond of sympathy with Rome" (pg. 588).

Ellen White's concern about the doctrine of the immortality of the soul was directly linked to her concern about spiritualism. Spiritualism (also called necromancy) is an attempt by the living to contact the dead. This belief goes back to ancient times, of course. We have the account in the Bible of King Saul asking the witch of Endor to bring up the spirit of Samuel from the dead. A revival of spiritualism came about in the mid-1800s, during the lifetime of Ellen G. White. Funk & Wagnalls New Encyclopedia, under "Spiritualism," says this: "About 1848 in the U.S., an alleged child medium, Margaret Fox (1833-93), was exploited by her sister and father and aroused sensational news stories that spurred the creation of a cult of spiritualism." The popularity of modern spiritualism grew and reached its peak in the United States during the years of Ellen G. White's ministry, which probably explains why she viewed belief in "the immortality of the soul" as one of "the two great errors" in Christianity.

Spiritualism was deceiving many professing Christians in Ellen White's day. One way to deal with the problem was to teach Christians that the Bible condemns the practice. Ellen White and others went further, and said that communication with the dead is impossible because death is, in Ellen White's words, "the utter extinction of

life" (*The Great Controversy*, pg. 533). This teaching thus pulled "the foundation for spiritualism" out from under those who were tempted to try to contact the dead.

No doubt Ellen White and others had good intentions, but what they did was similar to what the rabbis did when they built a fence around the Torah -- going beyond what the Scripture says in order to protect the people from even getting close to sin. Spiritualism is sinful, of course, but the belief that the spirits of the dead are alive is not spiritualism, nor does it necessarily lead to spiritualism. There are multitudes of Bible-believing Protestants who believe in the immortality of the soul, yet these Christians make no attempt to communicate with the spirits of the dead, because they know the Bible condemns the practice. (Roman Catholics are another matter.)

The fact that a belief or doctrine can be twisted and misused for evil is not a reason to reject that belief. Nor is the fact that pagans held a certain belief a reason to necessarily reject that belief. The pagan belief in the immortality of the soul is often put forth as a reason to reject the idea. While the pagans were wrong about many things, we cannot assume that they were wrong about every single thing they believed.

The only legitimate reason to reject a belief or doctrine is because it contradicts what the Scriptures teach. And before some readers send me articles and books to try to persuade me that my view *does* contradict what the Scriptures teach, let me say this: I have already read and studied the arguments that SDAs and others put forth, and I am familiar with all the Scriptures they use in their arguments. I have nothing personal to gain or lose by holding one view or the other, so I think I have studied the arguments with an open mind. Yet they fail to convince me.

I do not have space to address every single flaw in all the arguments I

have read, nor do I feel that the subject is so important that I need to persuade everyone to embrace my view. I do want to briefly present my primary reason (though certainly not my only reason) for believing as I do. It is not necessarily my most convincing reason, but I am not trying to convince people to change their views. I just want my fellow Sabbath-keeping brethren to see that there are legitimate reasons to believe in the view that I hold. I am not trying to convince people to change their doctrine, but I am trying to convince people to allow for some liberty in how this subject is viewed.

My primary reason for believing as I do rests on the definitions of "life" and "eternal life" (or, "everlasting life"). There is mere "life," possessed by all humans, which starts at birth and ends at the grave. Then there is *eternal* life, which is not synonymous with mere life. The Scriptures make it very clear that eternal life is something that we can now possess, before the Return of the Lord and the resurrection of the body. In John's Gospel there are several statements made by Yeshua which speak about people having eternal (or everlasting) life, and the verb "have" is in the present tense. Likewise in 1 John 5:11-13 it is clear that we can now, in this present age, possess eternal life: "And this is the record, that God hath given [*past tense; it's already done*] to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath [*present tense; now*] eternal life; and he that hath not the Son hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe in the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have [*present tense; now*] eternal life...."

The above verses (and other passages) show that we do not have to wait until the Return of the Lord and the resurrection of our bodies to receive and possess eternal life. Our physical body dies, of course, and it will remain dead until the resurrection, because our physical body is not the part of our being that receives eternal life in this age. But that inward part of my being that has already received eternal life, and now possesses eternal

life, cannot die. If that were the case, then the so-called "eternal life" that I now possess would not really be eternal. It would be temporary. To believe that physical death means "the utter extinction of life" is to believe that God gives us eternal life until our body dies, then takes away that so-called eternal life and withholds it from us until the Second Coming and the age to come. If the eternal life that I now possess is truly eternal, then it cannot end at physical death.

What about Ecclesiastes 9:5, "the dead know not anything"? This is probably the one verse most often quoted by those who hold the opposite view. This verse is not a problem for me, though, because if my view is correct, then the only part of me that will ever be "dead" is my body -- and Ecclesiastes 9:5 is true, for my outer physical body *won't* know anything, for it will have experienced "the utter extinction of life" until the resurrection. The inward part of me that now has eternal life, however, will *not* be dead, and that part of me *will* know. If it is only the body that is "dead," then it is only the body that will "know not anything."

This short article only touches the surface of this subject. We have not even gotten into the rich man and Lazarus (Lk. 16), which many want to dismiss as "just a parable." Even if we concede that the rich man and Lazarus were fictional characters in a parable, we still have in this story the most detailed description of the after-life to be found anywhere in the Scriptures, and this description came from the lips of our Lord. Whether the story is a parable or not, it contains Yeshua's vivid description of what happens to the righteous and to the unrighteous at death. If Yeshua's description is not a true picture of the after-life, then it would seem that He was misleading His listeners, and us as well.

I do not wish to belabor the point. Let me close with this final thought. A few years ago I was having a good-natured discussion about this topic with a friend who disagrees with my view. I brought up Luke 20:37f: "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth

the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto Him."

"Are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob dead or alive?" I asked. "We know that their bodies are dead and will remain dead until the resurrection, but are they, themselves, completely dead in every way?"

This statement in Luke 20 certainly declares that the three Patriarchs are dead in a physical sense and await the resurrection of the body. However, these same verses also tell us that the three Patriarchs must now be living in some sense as well. If Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were consigned to "the utter extinction of life" in every way, and were completely dead, spiritually as well as physically, then how could Yeshua say that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob "is not a God of the dead, but of the living"? If He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, then Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob obviously have to be "living" in some sense, even though their bodies are dead. When Yeshua ended His statement with the words "for all live [*present tense; now*] unto Him," to whom could He be referring except to "the [physically] dead," including Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? □

*Where go the dead when they depart
this house of clay
And let it suffer slow decay
Beneath the sod
Where once they trod.
Oblivious of the bones beneath?*

*Such questions plagued me in my youth.
Not knowing error from the truth.
I sought the One who there had been.
'Neath Sheol's heavy weight of sin.
And finding Him, I found the truth.*

*Now as I pass from youth to man.
I find a question rise again:
When will my flesh-bound soul depart
And taking wing fly to the heart
Of God from whence it first came forth?*

*Daniel Borkin
(written sometime in the 1980s)*

WHO WERE THE JUDAIZERS?

The Jerusalem Council of Acts 15

Daniel Botkin

Reprinted from *Gates of Eden* 2-3

Christians who believe in keeping the 7th-day Sabbath are sometimes called "Judaizers" by their fellow Christians. While there were (and perhaps still are) real Judaizers, it should be noted that the word *Judaizer* does not even appear in the KJV Bible. The first known use of the word *Judaizer* in the English language did not occur until 1582,¹ and if one searches for the word in the Scriptures, it will only be found in recent translations of the Bible.² True, there were people in New Testament times whom we could correctly refer to as Judaizers. But before accusing a fellow-believer of Judaizing, the accuser should be sure he knows what a Judaizer is. Probably the best description of Judaizers is in Acts 15:1:

"And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, and said, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you **CANNOT BE SAVED**.'" (Emphasis mine)

The main question of the so-called Jerusalem Council was *not* "How Should Gentiles Behave?" The question was "What Do Gentiles Need To Do *In Order To Be Saved*?" Some of the believers from Judea said that if the Gentiles wanted to be saved, they had to be circumcised. This meant more than the mere physical removal of the foreskin. Circumcision performed for the purpose of being "saved" meant a full, formal conversion to Judaism, complete with a baptism into Judaism and an embracing of the rabbis' entire Oral Law (probably the law that Peter had in mind when he referred to "a yoke ... which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear"³).

The Judaizers believed that this conversion process would turn the Gentile believer into a full-fledged Jew, and that without this the Gentile *could*

not be saved. Without a complete, formal conversion to Judaism, the Gentile believer could not become a full-fledged member of the saved Messianic Community, the Judaizers said.

Of course the Judaizers were mistaken. Simon Peter told the Council how the Roman Cornelius and his household of uncircumcised Gentile God-fearers had received the Holy Spirit without formally converting to Judaism.⁴ It was obvious, therefore, that full conversion to Judaism was not a prerequisite to being saved, for God would not fill "unsaved" people with His Holy Spirit. Paul and Barnabas reinforced Peter's argument by "declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the [uncircumcised] Gentiles by them."

James then spoke and gave his judgment: "Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from things contaminated by idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood."

Many Christians stop reading at this point and say, "These four things are the only parts of the Old Testament Law that Gentiles need to follow. We can ignore the Sabbath because the Sabbath is not specified here for Gentile believers." However, if this were the case, we would also have to

conclude that it is permissible for Gentile believers to covet, steal, dishonor their parents, and dabble in the occult, for none of the commandments forbidding these things are specified here. And to say that commandments against coveting, stealing, etc. appear on other pages of the New Testament is just evading the issue, for there was no "New Testament" book yet in existence to instruct these believers. The New Testament writings were not compiled and canonized until about 150 years later, long after this first generation of believers were in their graves. The only Bible the believers had at the time of the Jerusalem Council was what is now called the Old Testament.

Obviously James' words cannot mean that none of the Torah's commands are valid except for these four things, for the writers of the New Testament epistles, when writing years later, constantly quoted from the Torah to instruct Gentile believers. The confusion begins to clear up when the rest of James' statement is read:

"For Moses of old time has in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogue every Sabbath day."

What does Moses being read in the synagogue every Sabbath have to do with Gentile believers? On the surface, this closing remark of James seems irrelevant to the topic being discussed, and makes the passage even more confusing. However, if the historical setting is taken into consideration, James' closing remark clears up the confusion and gives meaning to the passage. What is the historical setting?

At this point in history, the Gentile believers were still worshipping in the synagogues on the Sabbath, along with the Jewish believers, who were called Nazarenes. Therefore the implication of James' words, if I may take the liberty to paraphrase, is this:

“Begin by instructing the Gentiles about these four things [verse 20]. As they continue to attend synagogue with us every Sabbath, they will gradually learn the rest of the Torah, and put it into practice as they learn [verse 21].”

Of course James and the others did not foresee the then-future split between church and synagogue. The Apostles expected the Gentiles to continue learning Torah with the Nazarenes every Sabbath in the synagogues in every city.

The above explanation still leaves one question unanswered, namely, Why did the Apostles specify these four particular areas of Torah (things contaminated by idols, fornication, things strangled, and blood)? Some writers and Bible teachers have stated that the Apostles were prescribing the so-called Noahide Laws which the rabbis formulated as the minimum basic requirements for Gentiles to be accepted by God as Gentiles. While the four things listed in Acts 15 bear some similarity to the Noahide Laws, they are not identical to the Noahide Laws. The Noahide Laws are seven, not four.⁵

Why did the Apostles decide to begin the Gentiles' instruction with these four commandments? Why not begin by teaching them some of the weightier matters of the Torah, such as laws against murder and theft? I believe the answer to that question lies in the fact that even idolatrous Gentiles had civil laws against such things, so they already considered such things wrong. Gentiles did *not* have civil laws against all forms of sexual immorality, however. On the contrary, sexual immorality was very common and considered quite acceptable by the Gentile culture of that time. Therefore the Apostles wanted to make sure that the Gentiles who were turning to God understood that sexual immorality is wrong.

It is interesting that the other three commandments prescribed by the Apostles were dietary restrictions. The Gentiles were told not to eat: 1) food that had been offered to idols, 2)

meat from a strangled animal, and 3) blood. Why begin the instruction of new believers by telling them about dietary laws? That is a rather strange place to start. Or is it?

I believe the Apostles were simply following the teaching pattern that is set forth in Leviticus. Leviticus is the third book of the Torah, but for Jewish children it was always the first book of the Bible that they studied. The first ten chapters of Leviticus detail the duties of the priests as they offered sacrifices in the Tabernacle. At the end of this section, in chapter 10, the priests' duty to the people is stated:

“And that you may put a difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean; and that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord has spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.”

The rest of Leviticus, beginning in chapter 11, contains commandments for daily living, which the priests were to teach the people. What is *the very first thing* that the Lord tells the priests to teach the people about? The dietary laws, which make up the entire content of chapter 11.⁶

Thus the Apostles, consciously or unconsciously, were simply following this pattern of teaching “a difference between holy and unholy and between unclean and clean” by beginning with the dietary laws, and with the expectation that these new members of the Messianic Community would, from Sabbath to Sabbath, eventually be taught “all the statutes which the Lord had spoken by the hand of Moses.” “For Moses of old time has in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day.”

The historical setting of Acts 15 must not be ignored. There are many parts of the Bible which can be understood and enjoyed with no knowledge of the historical setting. But if we deliberately divorce a passage such as Acts 15 from its historical setting, we misunderstand and twist the Scriptures to our own ruin. By looking at the passage in its

entirety and in its historical setting, we see that the Judaizers were those who insisted that Gentiles needed a full, formal conversion to Judaism in order to be saved. (This was also the problem Paul was dealing with in Galatians.) There may still be Judaizers in existence today, but I am certainly not one of them.

NOTES

¹Webster's 9th New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1986), 653.

²Gal. 2:14, Ἰουδαίζω, translated “to live as do the Jews” in KJV; “to judaize” in the 1979 KJV II.

³No Scripture-loving Jew could describe the written Torah as an unbearable yoke. See Psalm 19 and Psalm 119.

⁴It is important to note that “God-fearers” were Gentiles who were already observing Sabbath, feast days, and dietary laws. They were already living what could be described as a “Jewish” lifestyle. They just had not taken the final steps of conversion (i.e., circumcision and baptism) and they were not required to pay the Temple tax or offer sacrifices in the Temple. See Joseph Good, *Prophecies in the Book of Esther* (Hatikvah Ministries, 1995), 90f and Patrice Fischer, *Modern-Day God-Fearers: A Biblical Role Model For Gentile Participation in Messianic Congregations*, an unpublished paper in the author's possession.

⁵The seven Noahide Laws as formulated by the rabbis consisted of six prohibitions (against theft, murder, sexual immorality, idolatry, blasphemy, and eating a limb torn from a living animal) and one positive precept (establish courts of justice). These seven laws actually provide only an outline for a total of 66 laws that the rabbis came up with for Gentiles. See Aaron Lichtenstein, *The Seven Laws of Noah* (New York: The Rabbi Jacob Joseph School Press, 1981).

⁶It makes sense that instructions for daily living should begin with things that are very much a part of daily life. Eating is more a part of daily life than almost any other activity.

A Sunday Sabbath in 1 Cor. 16:2 An Example of Eisegesis Dr. Daniel Botkin

I am amazed at the extent to which some Christians will go in their misguided efforts to justify using Sunday worship as a substitute for the Biblical 7th-day Sabbath. Some Christians point to 1 Corinthians 16:2 to confirm their erroneous belief that Jesus or the Apostles changed the Sabbath from Saturday, the seventh day of the week, to Sunday, the first day of the week: "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."

Seeing a Sunday Sabbath in this verse is a perfect example of what is called *eisegesis*, as opposed to *exegesis*. The difference between these two words is best understood by noting the differing prefixes, *eis-* ("into") and *ex-* ("out of"). *Exegesis* is the act of drawing the true meaning out of a Bible text. *Eisegesis* is reading some idea that is not actually there into the text. *Eisegesis* generally happens when the reader looks at a text through the eyeglasses of his own habits and surroundings rather than by putting himself in the shoes of the original readers to whom the text was addressed. Christians who have been in the long habit of going to church on the first day of the week and seeing the collection plate passed every Sunday think that in 1 Corinthians 16:2 Paul was telling the Corinthians to take up a collection at church every Sunday. After all, Paul and the Corinthians were Christians just like us, weren't they?

A close look at this verse shows that this is not at all what Paul had in mind. Paul was not telling the Corinthians to take up a public offering at church every Sunday. On the contrary, he was telling them to individually and privately set aside an amount of money at the beginning of each week, so that they would have some savings accumulated by the time he arrived. That way there would be no need to take up collections after Paul arrived. The funds that were being raised to help the poor saints in Jerusalem would be collected and ready to send as soon as Paul arrived. The following verse makes it very clear that this is what Paul had in mind: "And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality [gift] unto Jerusalem."

Anyone who still thinks that Paul might be talking about a public collection on Sunday can look at a Greek interlinear Bible. Jay P. Green's Interlinear New Testament shows that the phrase translated "every one of you" (or "each [one] of you," NASB, NIV, TEV, et. al.) literally says "each of you by himself" (εκαστος υμων κατ' εαυτου). Although I do not usually care for the NIV Bible, the NIV does make the meaning clear in this verse: "On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made."

Why on the first day of the week? Wasn't payday on Fridays? As a seventh-day Sabbath-keeper, I can understand the benefit of using the first day of the week to do my financial planning for the coming week. Monday through Friday I go to the post office each day to get the mail. If there are checks that come in from readers, I write thank-you notes and set the checks aside. I do not go to the post office on Sabbath, but I go after Sabbath is over, either Saturday night or Sunday morning. Then on Sunday, the first day of the week, I begin my weekly financial chores. I record the week's donations in the books and in a card file; I endorse the checks, total them, and get the deposit ready for my weekly trip to the bank on Monday. (If I could, I would complete the task by making the deposit on Sunday, but of course the bank is closed that day.) At the same time, I also look at my own personal expenses for the coming week and figure how much money I will need to deposit in my personal account to cover bills, and how much cash I will need for the week.

Because I am in the habit of keeping the seventh-day Sabbath and doing my weekly financial chores on the first day of the week, 1 Corinthians 16:2 makes perfect sense to me. If I were to receive a letter from the Apostle Paul with these instructions, I would understand what he was telling me to do. And I guarantee one thing: I would not imagine that Paul was telling me to put my offerings into a public collection plate each week at a Sunday Sabbath service. □

**RICHARD WURMBRAND:
HIS IMPACT ON MY LIFE**
Daniel Botkin

In 1972 I met the Lord. A couple years later I met Richard Wurmbrand -- in his books, that is. Meeting him in person would not come until 1976.

The first Wurmbrand book I remember reading was a large volume I came across at the Peoria Public Library, *Christ in the Communist Prisons*. I was deeply moved by Wurmbrand's account of the heroic, victorious Christians who were suffering for their faith in Communist countries. I wanted to read more. I started supporting Wurmbrand's ministry to the persecuted saints and began receiving his newsletter. I also read every Wurmbrand book I could get my hands on, and shared them with others.

Of all the Wurmbrand books I have read, my favorite is *Sermons in Solitary Confinement*. Of Wurmbrand's fourteen years in prison, three years were spent alone in a cell thirty feet below the ground. Wurmbrand had no Bible, no books, no paper or pen. To preserve his sanity, he composed a sermon every night and delivered it right there in his cell to an invisible audience. He put the main points of each sermon into short rhymes to help him remember them. Through constant repetition of these rhymes, Wurmbrand was able to retain some 350 of these sermons, some of which he put into writing after his release from prison. *Sermons in Solitary Confinement* contains twenty-two of these sermons; a sequel called *If Prison Walls Could Speak* contains twenty more. Some of Wurmbrand's sermons were addressed to his congregation, some to God, some to particular individuals, some to himself. What makes *Sermons* (and its sequel) unique is that the sermons allow the reader to get into the minds and hearts of those who suffer for their faith. Other books describe the physical aspects of suffering, but these books give a vivid picture of the emotional and spiritual struggles that take place in the minds of the martyrs.

Reading Wurmbrand's writings caused me to take my faith more seriously, seriously enough to suffer if need be. Wurmbrand's books also

caused me to see that God was much bigger than I had realized, much bigger than our petty little concerns about trivial matters.

I also got burdened for people living under Communism. I did not think I would ever have an opportunity to share the gospel with Communists, but one day my opportunity came. I saw a poster for a concert one afternoon. The Moscow Symphony Orchestra was going to be playing in Peoria the very next evening. I told Fred, a friend of mine, and we decided to see if we could find a way to share the gospel with the musicians from Moscow.

We could not afford to buy tickets to the concert, so we weren't sure how to go about getting in. We went to the parking lot behind the building where the concert was going on, and spent some time in prayer, asking for an open door. Pretty soon a security guard opened the rear stage door and asked us what we were doing. We explained to him that we had some Bible portions and other Christian literature that we hoped to distribute to the members of the Moscow Symphony Orchestra. He said he did not mind, and he let us in the back door. After the concert was over, all the musicians came backstage to put away their instruments and change clothes. Fred and I began handing out small Gospels of John and other portions of Scripture.

"It's Bible literature," we explained.

"Biblia?!" they asked.

We nodded yes.

"Biblia! Biblia!" they shouted to the others.

They swarmed around us with outstretched hands, eager to receive the literature. Within a few minutes we had given away nearly everything we had. A little later, Fred and I were walking down Main Street and we happened to notice several members of the orchestra in the lobby of a big hotel. We still had a few pieces of literature left, so we went inside to distribute it. Most of them received it as eagerly as they had done backstage at the concert hall. One man, however, declined the Gospel booklet when I told him it was "Biblia."

"Biblia? No thank you! Communist!" he proudly stated, pointing to himself.

I happened to have a tract by

Richard Wurmbrand that explained the superiority of Christianity over Communism. On the front page of the tract were pictures of Communist leaders Marx and Lenin. I offered the man this tract.

"Ah, Marx and Lenin! Yes, thank you!" he beamed as he took the tract from me.

The idea to give Scriptures to the Moscow Symphony Orchestra would probably never have occurred to us had it not been for Richard Wurmbrand.

I finally got to meet Wurmbrand in Israel in 1976. Teresa and I were living in Nahariyya, a coastal town near the Lebanese border, when we heard that Wurmbrand was going to be speaking at a church in Haifa. We took a bus and went to the church. After the service, everyone went to the fellowship room for tea and cookies. Wurmbrand was sitting at a table and people were going up to him to talk. I wanted to meet him, but I felt unworthy to approach him. I was too awe-struck by the presence of such a holy saint.

Finally, Sabina introduced herself to me and Teresa. "Have you met Richard yet?" she asked.

"No," we replied.

Sabina brought us over to Richard and insisted that we sit at the table with him. He was human, of course. We spoke about normal things. He asked us where we were from, what we were doing in Israel, etc.

I heard Wurmbrand speak two times after that, once in New Jersey around 1994, and at the UMJC Conference in Wheaton, Illinois in 1995. He was one of the few spiritual giants in our generation. I feel privileged to have lived in the same century as Richard Wurmbrand. □

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THE SCRIPTURES AND THE POWER OF GOD

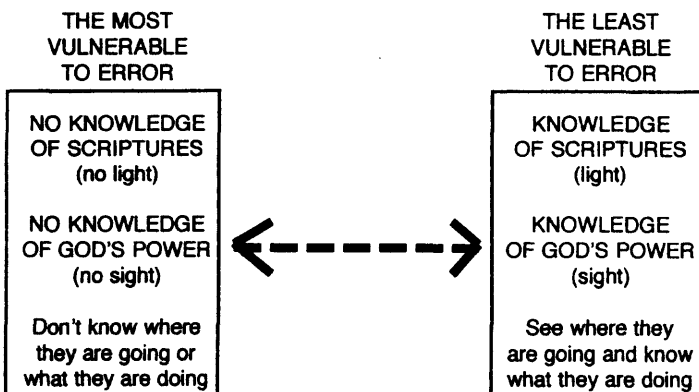
Dr. Daniel Botkin

"Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." -Mt. 22:24

The above statement shows that error comes from two sources: not knowing the Scriptures and/or not knowing the power of God. If we want to avoid error, we must know the Scriptures and we must know the power of God. Knowing only one and not the other will cause our walk with the Lord to be lop-sided, and we will be more vulnerable to error. This truth is echoed in Yeshua's statement that we must worship the Father "in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:24). The Spirit is the source of power ("ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you," Acts 1:8); truth is found in the Scriptures, the Word of God ("Thy word is truth," Jn. 17:17). Just as a man needs two hands to work effectively, so we need both a knowledge of the Scriptures and first-hand experience with the power of God to do the work of God effectively. If we have only one and not the other, we are like a one-armed man trying to do work that requires two hands.

Our need for both the Scriptures and the power of God can also be likened to a person's need for both light and sight in order to see. A person who has the gift of sight but no light can see no more than a blind man, and a blind man cannot see regardless of how much light he has. Both light and sight are required to see. Having only one and not the other can cause a person to fall into a ditch. We must have the light of the Scriptures and we must have spiritual sight that the Holy Spirit imparts when we receive the power of God.

Man's vulnerability to error can be diagrammed on a graduated scale. The two extremes at the two ends of the scale show the two types of people who are the most likely and the least likely to err:



Most Christians fall in one of two categories somewhere between these two extremes. They are either strong in their knowledge of God's power but weak in the Scriptures, or they are strong in the Scriptures but weak in their

knowledge of God's power.

An example of Christians in the former category would be Pentecostal and charismatic Christians. These people emphasize the power of God. They preach and pray for the power of God, and receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit with speaking in tongues, and go on to further outward manifestations. This first-hand experience with the power of God gives them some spiritual sight. They have vision, which inspires and motivates them to spiritual pursuits. However, they often do not know what they are doing, because they are weak in their knowledge of the Scriptures. They are headed in the right general direction, but their lack of Scriptural knowledge makes them vulnerable to error. When the power of God is emphasized as it is in Pentecostal and charismatic circles, this produces a fertile atmosphere for supernatural experiences -- visions, dreams, prophecies, tongues and interpretation, etc. However, all these experiences must harmonize with the Scriptures: "To the Torah and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20). Not knowing the Scriptures makes it difficult to know whether or not a manifestation of power has as its source the Holy Spirit or some other spirit.

The importance of knowing the Scriptures cannot be overemphasized. It was important to the Messiah and His Apostles. The Bereans were called "noble" because they searched the Scriptures daily. Paul wrote to Timothy about the importance of the Scriptures.

Disciples who are not called to be teachers in the Body do not need to know the Scriptures as well as teachers do. However, all disciples should get a good, general "working knowledge" of the Scriptures. By that, I mean everyone should at the very least be familiar with all the major characters and main events recorded in the Bible, and know what the Bible says about basic doctrines.

In the 18th and 19th Centuries, even unbelievers were expected to be familiar with the Scriptures. A person's formal education was considered incomplete without a working knowledge of the Bible. The educated unbelievers of past centuries had more knowledge of the Scriptures than many church-going Christians do today. Christians of past centuries may have been blind to the importance of the Sabbath and Torah, but they at least read their Bibles. George Muller said, "I have read the Bible through one hundred times, and always with increasing delight." John Quincy Adams said, "I have for many years made it a practice to read through the Bible once every year." Catherine Booth, wife of Salvation Army founder William Booth, had read through the Bible eight times by the time she was twelve years old.

Experiencing the power of God will not keep a man free from error if he does not know the Scriptures. By the same

token, knowing the Scriptures will not keep a man free from error if he has no first-hand knowledge of the power of God.

From what I know, I suspect that most of my readers already know the importance of knowing the Scriptures (which explains why I am devoting only a few paragraphs of this article to the Scriptures). I also suspect that many of my readers are lacking in first-hand experience with the power of God (which explains why I am devoting a lot of paragraphs to the power of God). I say this because I know that many 7th-day Sabbath-keeping groups take a strong stand against supernatural manifestations such as speaking in tongues. I recently received a lengthy article by a Sabbath-keeper that sought to discredit all modern-day speaking in tongues. The writer tried to prove his point by telling about the words and deeds of some fanatics and televangelists. The writer did not give a solid Scriptural argument against speaking in tongues. Do you know why? Because there is none. The only argument the writer could present was to point an accusing finger at the flaws of tongue-talking televangelists and perverted Pentecostal preachers. If we are going to reject the receiving of power by the baptism of the Holy Spirit on the basis of the flaws and fanaticism and abuses that sometimes exist among those who claim to have received this experience, then we had better reject the receiving of salvation by faith in the Messiah, because flaws, fanaticism, and abuses exist among those who claim to have received this salvation.

Sabbath-keepers need to get over their fear and hostility toward supernatural manifestations of God's power. We all know about the "charismaniac" abuses, but that's no reason to go to the opposite extreme and end up "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Tim. 3:5).

"But those Pentecostals don't even keep the Sabbath on the right day! How can they have the power of the Holy Spirit?"

Want to know what some Pentecostals say? "But those Sabbath-keepers don't have the power of the Holy Spirit! How can they be right about the Sabbath?"

I picture the demons saying, "Satan forbid that those Pentecostals ever get hold of the truth about the Sabbath and the Torah! And Satan forbid that those 7th-day Sabbath-keepers ever get hold of the power of the Holy Spirit!"

As long as the Pentecostals cannot see the truth about the Sabbath, Satan can keep them walking in the error of a substitute Sunday Sabbath, and as long as the Sabbath-keepers do not experience the power of God, Satan can rest assured that their meetings will remain dull, cold, and lifeless.

Thinking about our need for the power of God reminds me of *El Cid*, a movie I saw several years ago. *El Cid* (played by Charlton Heston) was a great and noble leader of an army. When *El Cid* rode his horse into battle, he was a source of courage and inspiration to his loyal soldiers, and a source of terror to his enemies. In the course of a very important battle, *El Cid* was wounded by an arrow, and he and his army retreated to their camp. During the night *El Cid* died. However, the few people who knew of his death kept it a secret for fear the men would all lose their courage. The next morning they dressed *El Cid* in his armor, fastened his sword and shield into his hands, mounted his corpse on the saddle of his horse and sent him out onto the battlefield. *El Cid's* soldiers, thinking their great leader was still alive, continued to fight with great courage, and the enemies, also thinking *El Cid* was still alive, fled in terror.

What does *El Cid* have to do with

our topic? Let me explain. From a doctrinal perspective, all believers know that Yeshua is alive. However, from an experiential perspective, many believers do not experience Him as a *living* Savior through the power of the Holy Spirit. Even though they doctrinally believe He is alive, in effect they are going against the Enemy with a dead, crucified Savior, just like *El Cid's* men did. It worked in *El Cid*, but it won't work in our battle, because Satan is not fooled. If we go out against the Enemy without the power of the Holy Spirit, we are putting no more fear into Satan than Roman Catholics do when they march with a crucifix held aloft.

How do we receive the power of the Holy Spirit? Yeshua told His disciples to wait for the promise of the Father. "For John truly baptized with water," He said, "but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence ... ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you" (Acts 1:5, 8). Ten days later on the Day of Pentecost, the disciples were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. Later on in other passages in Acts, we see other disciples experiencing the same thing, with some minor variations. The important thing to note is this:

The receiving of the Holy Spirit was always a distinct, identifiable experience for each individual disciple.

Each believer could say, "Yes, I received the power of the Holy Spirit on a specific date, at a specific time, in a specific location." If an individual had received the Holy Spirit, he knew it. He could point to the time and the place that it happened. And how did he know? The normal outward evidence was speaking in an unknown tongue. Acts 10:47 makes it clear that in Peter's eyes, this was the evidence that the Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit. When Peter heard them speak in tongues, he knew it had happened.

"Is it that important that I experience speaking in tongues?" Let me answer that question with some

questions. If speaking in tongues was the normal thing that immediately followed the receiving of the Holy Spirit, why shouldn't we expect the same outward manifestation when we receive the same Holy Spirit? And if you do not speak in tongues, how can you say with certainty that you have received the Holy Spirit? If you cannot point to a specific time and place when you received the Holy Spirit, how can you say for sure that you received?

"But don't we receive the Holy Spirit when we believe in Jesus as our Savior?" Again, let me answer that question with some questions. The eleven Apostles to whom Jesus spoke in Acts chapter 1, did they automatically receive the Holy Spirit when they believed? No, for He said to them, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit; ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you." The Samaritans who believed through Philip's preaching, did they receive the Holy Spirit when they believed? No, because Peter and John came to these Samaritan believers and "prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for as yet he was fallen upon none of them" (Acts 8:15f). Did Saul of Tarsus receive the filling of the Holy Spirit when he met Yeshua on the road to Damascus? No, it was three days later when Ananias came and prayed "that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 9:17). Did the believers in Ephesus receive the Holy Spirit when they believed? No, because Paul asked them, "Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed?" They replied that they had not heard of the Holy Spirit, so "when Paul had laid his hands upon them the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied" (Acts 19:2, 6).

Receiving the Holy Spirit was always a distinct, identifiable experience, subsequent to coming to faith, and the normal result was speaking in tongues. Why should we suppose that it is different today?

We do receive a measure of the Holy Spirit when we believe, but we do not automatically receive the power that comes from receiving the baptism

of the Holy Spirit. Before the Day of Pentecost, Yeshua breathed on the disciples and said, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit" (Jn. 20:22). Yet these very same men still needed to later receive the power of the Holy Spirit, for it was to these same men that He said, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you."

Yeshua referred to this as "the promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4). When urging people to receive the Holy Spirit, Peter said, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39). This should convince us that the promise of the Father is for us. And Luke 11:11-13 should deliver us from any fears about asking for the Holy Spirit:

"If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask them?"

Receiving power through the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not a cure-all, but it is a "cure some." It is not the end of your spiritual quest, but it is the beginning of a new stage of growth. It does not make you superior to all believers who have not experienced it, but it does improve your own present walk with the Lord. It does not place a magic wand in your hand to carry out your own will, but it gives you power to carry out the will of the Father.

The primary purpose of this power is to enable us to be faithful witnesses of Yeshua: "ye shall receive power ... and ye shall be witnesses unto Me" (Acts 1:8). The Greek word used for "power" is *dunamis* (δυναμις), the source of our English word *dynamite*. The word is derived from *dunamai* (δυναμαι), which means "I can; I am able." The power/*dunamis* of the Holy Spirit ignites an explosion in our heart that enables and equips us to be witnesses.

Some brief instructions on receiv-

ing: We receive by faith. We do not need to "tarry" as the Apostles did. They had to wait until Yeshua was glorified "for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because that Yeshua was not yet glorified" (Jn. 7:39). Now there is no need to tarry, because Yeshua is glorified and the Holy Spirit has been given and is available to all disciples.

When we receive, we should expect the Holy Spirit to give us utterance: "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). Notice who did what. The Holy Spirit gave utterance, but it was the people who had to speak. The Holy Spirit does not take hold of our tongue and thrash it around inside our mouth as though we were having some kind of involuntary muscle spasm. The Holy Spirit gives utterance by bringing to our minds the syllables which we are to utter. We have to do the speaking. Our speech may seem a bit awkward and halting at first, but as we continue to give voice to these syllables that the Holy Spirit has placed in our minds, we will soon find that rivers of living waters are flowing out from our innermost being (Jn. 7:37).

Some people receive this experience as a result of others praying with them. Others have received it alone. A friend of mine from India received the baptism of the Holy Spirit by himself as a new believer. He had never even heard of speaking in tongues. One night while deep in prayer, he found himself in great ecstasy, uttering sounds that he did not understand. When he later told some other Christians about his experience, they explained to him from the Scriptures what had happened to him.

I cannot force people to receive the power that comes with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but I do hope to make believers not content to live without it - not just for the sake of the excitement and thrill that might accompany it, but because not knowing the power of God can lead to error: "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power [*dunamis*] of God." □

TONGUES: CLEARING UP THE CONFUSION

Dr. Daniel Botkin

In Genesis God sent the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel. The purpose of this manifestation of unknown tongues was to put a stop to man's selfish ambition to make a name for himself. In the Book of Acts, God sent diverse tongues of another sort. This manifestation of tongues was given to assist man in the building of God's spiritual temple, a Messianic Community made of living stones. In Genesis God used tongues to scatter; in Acts He used tongues to begin the regathering of His scattered people.

Despite the heavenly origin of these tongues, there still seems to be confusion among believers about speaking in unknown tongues. The source of the confusion is often Paul's writings, which, as Peter said, contain "some things hard to be understood" (2 Pet. 3:16). Another source of confusion about tongues is lack of experience. People who pray in unknown tongues on a regular basis are usually not confused about the subject. It is usually only people who have never experienced it who find the subject confusing.

With this fact in mind, let me make an appeal to inexperienced readers: Listen to the voice of experience. Rather than listening to hostile believers who have never experienced speaking in tongues, listen to those disciples who have experienced this phenomenon. Who can better understand and explain an experience? Those who have never had the experience, or those who have? Everyone would agree that my wife, who has given birth to seven children, can understand and explain the experience of birthing a child better than I can. I can speak about the phenomenon of childbirth only as a spectator; she can speak from experience. Please give the voice of experience some respect. Keep in mind that those who oppose the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues are speaking as spectators, and not as

people who have experienced this blessing.

A couple years ago I printed an article on the subject of tongues. To help clear up confusion that some readers may have, here is part of that article:

When a person speaks in tongues, is he speaking to men or is he praying to God? It depends. Paul writes about praying and singing in tongues (1 Cor. 14:14f). He also writes "he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him" (1 Cor. 14:2). Yet we know that men understood the Apostles when they spoke in tongues on the Day of Pentecost: "every man heard them speak in his own language" (Act 2:6).

After Paul writes that "no man understands" a person speaking in tongues, Paul then tells us that tongues are "for a sign" to "them that believe not" (14:22), which would imply an understanding of the utterance on the part of the unbeliever who hears it, just as happened on the Day of Pentecost. But then in the very next verse, Paul says that if unbelievers come into the assembly and hear everyone speaking in tongues, they will say you are mad. Now Paul seems to be telling us that we shouldn't let the unbelievers hear the very tongues which are supposed to be a sign for them!

Finally, Paul says that if there is no one present to interpret the tongue, then a person should "keep silent" and "speak to himself and to God" (14:28), which sounds like another pair of contradictory instructions.

The only way to make any sense of Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 14 is to recognize that there are two types of supernatural tongues. First, there is the tongue which could be described as a "prayer language," which is available to all Spirit-filled disciples.

This tongue is for the edification of the

individual who is praying rather than for the edification of the congregation. ("He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself," 14:4.) This is the tongue which "no man understands." Paul wanted all disciples to experience this tongue: "I wish that you all spoke in tongues" (14:5). Paul encouraged the Corinthians to edify themselves by praying and singing in this tongue (14:14f). No one else needs to hear this tongue (though it is not a sin if they do). This is the tongue which a man "speaks to himself and to God."

The second type of supernatural tongue is an utterance which is intended to be heard by others and supernaturally understood and interpreted by someone for the benefit of the congregation. This is the tongue which can function as a sign to the unbelievers, as on the Day of Pentecost. This tongue, along with its interpretation, is equivalent to a prophecy. (If prophecy were a dime, the tongue and its interpretation would each be a nickel.) This type of tongue is one of the nine gifts of the Spirit listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, and is not given to every single believer. These gifts are distributed to specific members of the congregation according to God's will, for the edification of the congregation. This is the tongue to which Paul refers when he writes "All do not speak with tongues, do they?" (1 Cor. 12:30). No, all do not speak in tongues *to the congregation*, but all may pray and sing in tongues "to himself and to God." Paul also says "All are not prophets, are they?" yet he also says "ye all may prophesy" (14:31). One does not have to be a prophet to prophesy, and by the same token, one does not have to have the "gift of tongues" (i.e., the tongue which is for the edification of the assembly, and needs an interpretation) in order to pray and sing in tongues for one's own edification. □

THE VEIL OF LAWLESSNESS

Daniel Botkin

The Apostle Paul wrote about a veil that hangs over the spiritual eyes of Jews who do not believe in Yeshua. (See 1 Cor. 3:15.) This veil hides the identity of the Messiah from Jewish people. There is also a veil that hangs over the spiritual eyes of most Christians, a veil that I call the veil of lawlessness. This veil hides the truth of God's Sabbath and God's dietary laws from Christians. Just as most Jews assume that Jesus is just for Gentiles and not for Jews, so most Christians assume that the seventh-day Sabbath and dietary laws are just for Jews and not for Christians.

The Bible does not talk in great detail about this veil over the eyes of Christians, because this veil was not yet woven when the New Testament was written. The father of lies needed a century or so to weave together a veil that would hide the Sabbath and dietary laws from Christians. Satan knew that if Christians could be persuaded to abandon the Sabbath and dietary laws, this would give him two victories. First, it would rob the Christians of the blessings that result from obedience to these particular commandments. Second, it would discredit the gospel message in the eyes of the Jewish people, and convince them that the Jewish leaders of the First Century made the right choice when they rejected Yeshua of Nazareth as a candidate for the Messiah.

Although this veil of lawlessness was not completely woven together until after the New Testament was written, there are verses that strongly suggest that the Apostles saw its beginning. (See 1 Thes. 2:7; Jude 4; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 Jn. 2:3f.) And although I have no specific Scripture verse to prove it, it is my personal belief that each time a Christian breaks the seventh-day Sabbath or eats unclean food, it strengthens the fabric of this veil of lawlessness over that individual's eyes. I believe that our Heavenly Father fully forgives His children when they do these things in ignorance; nonetheless, I also believe that the continual eating of unclean food and the continual breaking of the Sabbath, even when done in ignorance, will make it more difficult for Christians to see the truth of these issues. The longer someone has practiced a habit, the harder it is to convince that person that he is in error and needs to change.

Most people who get this publication are already persuaded that the Sabbath and dietary laws are still valid, and that the coming of the Messiah did not abolish these parts of the Torah. For those readers who are not persuaded, I would like to suggest an experiment. Set aside a period of several weeks or months. During this time, eliminate all pork products, shellfish, and other unclean foods from your diet. On each Saturday, abstain

from unnecessary work and from buying or selling. Use each Sabbath to rest and focus on the Lord. During this experimental period of time, see if your view of the Sabbath and dietary laws begins to change. If you do this experiment with a sincere desire to know the truth of these matters, I believe that the fabric of the veil of lawlessness will start to disintegrate and fall apart, and you will begin to see the Sabbath and dietary laws as our Father intends for His children to see them. □

THE BLESSING OF PROPHECY

Dr. Daniel Botkin

SHAVUOT, called "Pentecost" in the New Testament, is a holiday that commemorates two major Biblical events, one in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament. Jews celebrate this holiday as the anniversary of the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai. Christians remember Pentecost as the anniversary of the giving of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2. Messianic believers can commemorate both of these events in the celebration of Shavuot.

In the Messianic movement there has been a lot of emphasis on the Torah in recent years, and rightly so. We need to relearn, restore, and re-establish those elements of the Torah that the Church abandoned centuries ago -- things like the Sabbath, the Feasts, the dietary laws, and other things which were discarded on the pretext that they were "too Jewish." Without minimizing the gift of the Torah, we Messianic believers need to be sure we do not lose sight of that other blessed gift given on Shavuot, the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that writes the Torah on our hearts, internalizing it so that our obedience springs forth from an inward desire to do the Father's will as expressed in His Torah. It is the Holy Spirit that causes us to see the Torah as something that we *get* to do, rather than as something that we *have* to do. It is the Holy Spirit that opens our eyes to see the Torah as a loving Heavenly Father's wise instructions for His children, rather than as an external list of restrictions which we are obligated to obey due to some outward motivation such as fear or peer pressure.

With these thoughts in mind, let us look at one particular blessing that is mentioned in connection with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, namely, the blessing of prophecy. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter began his sermon by quoting Joel's prophecy: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit

upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit; and they shall prophesy... (Acts 2:17f).

ARE ALL PROPHETS?

In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit did not come upon every one of God's covenant people. The Holy Spirit came only upon certain individuals and imparted the gift of prophecy to those chosen individuals. After the Messiah ascended and was glorified, the Holy Spirit was poured out "upon all flesh," and the result was to be the impartation of prophecy to all of God's children: sons, daughters, servants, handmaids, from the least to the greatest.

Does this mean that all of God's New Covenant people are now prophets? The Apostle Paul asks this rhetorical question: "Are all prophets?" (1 Cor. 12:29). The context of the question (and the Greek syntax) makes it clear that Paul expects a negative answer to his question. ("All are not prophets, are they?" is how the NASB translates it.) Paul does not consider every believer a prophet, yet in the very same epistle, he tells us "ye may all prophesy one by one," and he urges us to "covet to prophesy" (1 Cor. 14: 31, 39). All are not prophets in the sense of holding the "office" of a prophet (per Eph. 4:11), yet all disciples may prophesy in some capacity, just as all disciples may evangelize or teach in some capacity without holding the office of an evangelist or teacher.

Since prophesying by sons and daughters and servants and handmaidens is the first blessing mentioned in Joel's prophecy about the outpouring of the Spirit, prophesying is something we should expect to see among God's New Covenant people. Let's consider what prophecy is and how it comes about.

SEEING MUST PRECEDE UTTERANCE

Prophets were originally called seers. (1 Sam. 9:9) The gift of prophecy enabled the seers to see things which could not be perceived by the physical senses. We do not all hold the office of a prophet, but we can all be prophets in the sense of being "seers." Paul stated that "we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (1 Cor. 4:18). The eternal things are invisible to the human eye. In order to "look at" these things, we have to be able to see into the invisible realm of the spirit. We have to be seers, and we have to learn how to use our spiritual eyes to see. The blessing of prophecy requires seeing.

The connection between prophecy and seeing is apparent in the Prophets' descriptions of their experiences. Just a few of the many examples:

- "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw..." (Isa. 1:1).
- "Moreover the word of Yahweh came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree. Then said Yahweh unto me, Thou hast well seen..." (Jer. 1:11f).
- "Now it came to pass ... as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God" (Ezk. 1:1).
- "Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night..." (Dan. 7:2).
- "And He said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruits" (Am. 8:2).
- "The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see..." (Hab. 1:1).

The things which the Prophets saw were things in the spiritual realm, things that were invisible to the human eye. God spoke audibly to Samuel (at

least the first time) and He spoke face to face with Moses, but these seem to have been highly exceptional cases. God was careful to point out that Moses was a very special case, and that He normally speaks to prophets only through dreams, visions, or "dark speeches" (NIV, "riddles"). (See Num. 12.)

The visible things in the physical realm are often a reflection or shadow of invisible things that exist in the unseen spiritual realm. Sometimes the Holy Spirit lets us see a spiritual truth in the form of a parable, by pointing out something that we see in the physical realm. An example of this kind of revelation is recorded in Jeremiah 18. The Lord told Jeremiah, "Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear My words." Jeremiah went and watched the potter at work. By observing the actions of the potter, Jeremiah understood what action God was going to take in dealing with His people. We, too, can see into the spiritual realm in this way, but it takes Divine revelation. It also takes spiritual senses that have been sharpened through discipline and training.

THE EXPRESSION OF PROPHECY

Seeing is not the same as prophesying, of course. Prophesying is the actual communication of what the seer has seen. This is most often done by speaking, and sometimes by writing. Sometimes prophecy includes the use of props, like Jeremiah's use of yokes or Agabus' use of Paul's belt. (See Jer. 27 & 28 and Acts 21:11.) In the case of Ezekiel, it sometimes included drawing pictures and acting out performances. (See Ezk. 4 & 5.)

Whatever form of expression prophecy takes, seeing is a necessary prerequisite to prophesying. The prophesying must be an outgrowth of the seeing. The problem with much of today's preaching is that the speakers' words are not an outgrowth of what the speakers have seen for themselves in the spiritual realm by Divine revelation. In many cases, preachers merely parrot the ideas and doctrines they have heard from other people.

There is nothing wrong with the simple sharing of second-hand information in this way, but this is not prophecy. Prophecy is the sharing of a vision that the speaker has obtained by seeing into the invisible spiritual realm. Prophecy brings edification, exhortation, and comfort to the assembly in a way that parroting second-hand information cannot do.

When prophecy is uttered, does it require a certain tone of voice and/or a loud volume? Must it be accompanied by vigorous bodily motions? It can be and it often is, but these things are not always necessary. When Jonathan Edwards delivered *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, the most famous sermon in American history, he read his pre-written sermon "softly and simply." Some might want to argue and say that Edwards' sermon was not prophecy. However, the results convince me that this sermon was a word of prophecy to the people of Enfield, Connecticut that day. Here is how one historian describes the effects of Edwards' July 8, 1741 sermon:

"Strong men held to pews and posts, feeling they were sliding into hell. Others shook uncontrollably and rolled on the floor. Cries of men and women were heard throughout the village, begging God to save them. Five hundred were converted that evening, sparking a revival that swept thousands into the kingdom. The Great Awakening had come."¹

A word of prophecy may be delivered "softly and simply," in the manner of Jonathan Edwards. However, it is not uncommon for a person to get rather excited when uttering a prophecy. In fact, the Hebrew definition of the verb *to prophesy* suggests that excitability is the norm and should be expected. The short definition given in *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* does not suggest excitability, but more detailed lexicons show that this is the case. One such lexicon defines the verb *to prophesy* as "to boil up, to boil forth, as a fountain; hence to pour forth words, like those who speak with fervour of mind or under divine inspiration, as prophets and poets." This

same lexicon shows that prophecy can be chanted, spoken, or sung. The verb can even be defined as "to rave" or "to become mad." The lexicon adds this word of explanation: "The prophets, when under the power of inspiration, appear to have been greatly agitated and to have exhibited writhings and spasmodic affections of the body like delirious persons."²

Perhaps the degree of excitability that is manifested depends on the speaker's personality and/or how excited the speaker is by what he or she has seen. We should not speak forth a prophecy with a counterfeit tone of excitability that we have manufactured just to make our words sound more authoritative. On the other hand, if we are truly excited and moved by the Spirit, we do not need to suppress our emotions. We can let the words pour forth like water from a pot that is boiling over. We can even exhibit "writhings and spasmodic affections of the body" if the Spirit moves us in that way.

THE CONTENT OF PROPHECY

Some people think of prophecy only in terms of predictions about the future. While prophesying does sometimes predict, it more often prescribes. To think of prophecy as nothing more than prediction is to see only the outer shell of the words and miss the life-giving spirit contained in the words. Just as we can look at a man and see only his body and not his spirit, so we can look at prophecy and see only the words and not the spirit of prophecy.

What is "the spirit of prophecy"? Revelation 19:10 tells us that the spirit of prophecy is "the testimony of Yeshua." A current word of genuine prophecy given to an individual or to a congregation or to an entire generation of the Body of Messiah is Yeshua's present testimony to that individual or congregation or generation. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Prophecy allows us to hear what the Lord is saying to His people now, in our time. It brings us up to date, so to speak, and gets us

focused on the things the Lord wants us to focus on at the present time.

The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Yeshua in another way, too, of course, because so much of the writings of the Prophets includes prophecies about the Messiah. As the Talmud puts it, "All the prophets prophesied not but of the days of the Messiah" (Sanh. 99a). However, even these Messianic prophecies should not be viewed as nothing more than predictions about the coming of Yeshua, with their fulfillment limited just to the one-time appearance of the Messiah. For example, in Luke 4 Yeshua read from the Prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Then He sat down and said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."

Some people look at the above information and reduce its meaning to a simple three-fold conclusion: "Isaiah prophesied it; Jesus fulfilled it; that's the end of it." Yes, Isaiah prophesied it and Jesus fulfilled it, but we miss out on the full blessing of this prophecy if we think that Jesus' one-time Messianic fulfillment of it automatically cancels out any possible secondary fulfillment in the future. The spirit of prophecy lives on even after its primary fulfillment by the Messiah. While Yeshua's actions in the synagogue at Nazareth were, indeed, the primary and most important fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, this prophecy can be fulfilled in a secondary sense again and again. Every time any son of God is truly anointed by the Spirit to preach, heal, or deliver, he can humbly yet confidently proclaim, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon *me*..." He can say to his hearers, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in *your* ears."

Another example of a Messianic prophecy that can be fulfilled again and again is in Yeshua's rebuke to the scribes and Pharisees: "Ye hypo-

crites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, 'This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me. But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men'" (Mt. 15:7-9).

Yeshua clearly stated that Isaiah was writing about the hypocrites who would live some 700 years later, in Yeshua's generation. But was Isaiah not also writing about the hypocrites in his own generation? Of course he was. He was, in fact, prophesying about the hypocrites who would appear in any generation, including ours.

By viewing prophecies in the Bible this way, we can see that the spirit of prophecy is an ever-living word that can find fulfillment again and again in contemporary situations. This is important, because prophecy has as

its foundation the Word of God. Prophecy must be tested by the Scriptures and not contradict what the Scriptures proclaim. If our prophecy is based on the Scriptures, this will give us the assurance and confidence we need to speak out. It will also give the hearers the confidence and peace of mind that they need to receive it as a word of prophecy from the Spirit, whether it is a word softly spoken from sermon notes, or an utterance that is accompanied by props, exciting agitations, and writhings and spasmodic affections of the body. □

¹Robert J. Morgan, *On This Day* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publ., 1997), July 8.

²William Gesenius, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1844), 645f.

ABRAHAM & LOT: A CONTRAST

Daniel Botkin

Before we look at the differences between Abraham and Lot, let us consider their similarities. Physically, they were both of the same stock. Lot was a nephew of Abraham. They both grew up as contemporaries in the same environment in the same culture. They both believed in the same one, true God and were both declared to be "righteous."

Abraham and Lot were similar in many ways, yet the fruit that each man bore presents a glaring contrast. In the final chapter of Lot's life, we see him sitting at the gate of Sodom. Since the city gate was where the elders assembled and where business was conducted, we may assume that Lot was involved in the politics and/or the commerce of Sodom. We see Lot offering his two daughters to be abused by a mob of sex perverts. We see him being ridiculed when he attempts to warn his two sons-in-law of the coming judgment. We see Lot and his family hesitating when the two angels tell them to flee Sodom. We see Lot's wife turning into a pillar of salt because she insisted on one last look at the wicked city that had captured her heart. Finally, we see Lot living in a cave, like an animal, lying in drunken incest with his own two daughters, so drunk that he doesn't even remember impregnating them.

That is the last we hear of Lot's life. What a contrast to the Bible's simple description of the end of Abraham's life: "Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people" (Gen. 25:8).

A tree is known by its fruit, the Master said. What kind of fruit did each of these two men bear in terms of their descendants? Lot's two sons (who were also his grandsons, being born of incest) were Moab and Ammon. The descendants of Moab worshipped Chemosh, a pagan Canaanite god that demanded child sacrifice and perverse sexual rituals. It was Moab's king who hired Balaam to curse Israel. A plague from Yahweh killed 24,000 Israelites because they "committed whoredom with the daughters of Moab" (Num. 25).

The children of Ammon, Lot's second son/grandson, were just as wicked. They worshipped Moloch, an idol with a man's body and a bull's head. The images of Moloch were heated with fire, then live infants were cast into the upturned, red-hot hands of the idol. The descendants of both Moab and Ammon continued to be a curse to Israel during the periods of the Judges, the Kings, and in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

These were the descendants of Moab and Ammon, the children of Lot. God's final judgment against Moab and Ammon was pronounced by the Prophet Zephaniah: "Therefore as I live, saith Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, even the breeding of nettles, and

saltpits, and a perpetual desolation..." (2:9a).

It was the corruption of Sodom and Gomorrah that resulted in the birth of Moab and Ammon; therefore Moab and Ammon must receive the same judgment as Sodom and Gomorrah. Although Sodom and Gomorrah had been destroyed, the seed of Sodom and Gomorrah had taken root in the hearts of Lot's family. Moab and Ammon were the fruit of that wickedness. Lot was a "righteous man" whose "righteous soul" was daily "vexed" by the wickedness of the Sodomites. (See 2 Pet. 2:7f.) In spite of righteous Lot's continual vexation and grieving over the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot's descendants were cursed with the same judgment as Sodom and Gomorrah because these descendants continued in the same perversity that Sodom and Gomorrah practiced.

What a contrast Abraham's descendants were to Lot's! Abraham begat Isaac, Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob begat the twelve tribes of Israel. These children of Abraham produced prophets and priests. They penned and preserved the Holy Scriptures and they eventually brought forth a flesh-and-blood manifestation of the Scriptures when "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" in the Person of Yeshua of Nazareth. The Judeo-Christian revelation, originally manifested at Mt. Sinai and then in the

Incarnation, continues to turn people to holiness and righteousness, while the spirit of Sodom continues to turn people to perversion and wickedness.

Abraham and Lot had many similarities, yet the fruit of these two men was as different as night and day. Why? What made the difference? The answer to this question can be summed up in just one word: *seeing*. Let me explain.

At first Abraham and Lot dwelt together. Eventually both men prospered so much that it caused strife between the herdmen of Abraham's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle. It was too confusing and too crowded for comfort, so Abraham suggested that they separate while they were still on friendly terms. Abraham gave Lot first choice of where to go: "If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." Then, the Scripture says, "Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before Yahweh destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah" (Gen. 13:10). When Lot needed to decide where to live, he based his decision solely on what his physical eyes could see, "and pitched his tent toward Sodom." "But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before Yahweh exceedingly," the very next verse says.

After Lot "lifted up his eyes" and headed toward Sodom, the Lord said to Abraham, "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever."

Both men lifted up their eyes and looked, but they saw two different things. Lot saw only the things that any carnal man could see: the material benefits, the financial security, the worldly pleasures that Sodom could provide. Abraham saw the promise of God: a promise of the entire Land of Canaan and a promise of physical descendants. Abraham believed God's promise concerning the land, even though he had no idea how he would possess it (for "the Canaanite

and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land," vs. 7). He believed God's promise of a seed, even though he had no idea how he would have children (for "it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women," 18:11).

Lot looked at the financial prosperity and worldly pleasures of a city which had been built and developed by wicked men who were doomed to destruction. Abraham "looked for a city which had foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10). We must be careful what we see when we lift up our eyes. Seeing has been the problem from the very beginning:

- "the woman saw that the tree was good for food..."
- "the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair"
- "And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father"
- Shechem "saw her [Dinah], he took her and lay with her, and defiled her"
- "When Judah saw her [his daughter-in-law], he thought her to be an harlot ... and he came in unto her"

The above examples of seeing are just from Genesis. Many more examples are found throughout the other sixty-five books of the Bible. "We saw the giants!" said the ten cowardly spies who accompanied Joshua and Caleb. "I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold," said Achan. "Then went Samson to Gaza, and saw there an harlot, and went in unto her."

The Bible warns us to beware of "the lust of the eyes" (1 Jn. 2:16). If we lift up our eyes and focus on the riches and security and worldly pleasures that Sodom and Gomorrah can offer us, then the seed of Sodom and Gomorrah will take root in the hearts of our children. They will bear the fruit of Sodom and Gomorrah and suffer the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah. If, on the other hand, we lift up our eyes to New Jerusalem, the city of Abraham, we and our children will inherit the promises of God. □

SYMBOL AND SUBSTANCE

Dr. Daniel Botkin

Some people look at a problem such as homelessness, AIDS, or drug abuse, and verbally express concern about the problem. Then they perform some symbolic or ceremonial gesture that really does nothing to help solve the problem. The symbolic, ceremonial gestures make the participants appear to be caring, compassionate people, but no substantive solutions are offered to actually help remedy the situation. Yet these people feel that they have done something noble and worthwhile because they have participated in some symbolic, ceremonial gesture. Radio talk-show host Rush Limbaugh has used the phrase "symbolism over substance" to describe this phenomenon.

We Messianic believers need to be careful that we do not fall into this kind of error in the practice of our faith. We, too, can make the mistake of attaching more importance to symbolic rituals than we do to the substance that these symbolic actions are meant to represent.

Some of the actions which the Torah prescribes are symbolic actions. We can say that an action is symbolic if it symbolizes something greater than itself. For example, Colossians 2:16f says that diet, holy days, new moons, and sabbaths are shadows (or "symbols") of things to come, and that the Messiah is the body (or "substance") which casts these shadows. The fact that these things are shadows or symbols is no reason to discard them. However, we do need to remember that the substance can exist without the shadow, but the shadow cannot exist without the substance. The substance which casts the shadow is far more important than the shadow itself.

For example, one of the holy days is the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Torah tells us to get all the leaven out of our houses and to abstain from eating leaven for one week. Like all the holy days, this is meant to teach us a spiritual lesson to reinforce our faith. In the New Testament we learn that this annual symbolic purging of leaven from our homes is meant to teach us to purge our hearts from "the leaven of malice and wickedness" and to live a life that is

symbolized by "the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. 5:7f).

God still wants us to keep this feast. "Therefore let us keep the feast," Paul wrote. However, if we cleanse our homes from leaven while tolerating the leaven of malice and wickedness in our heart, we make a mockery of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. We can search and scour and scrub our entire house; we can ceremonially burn the last bits of leaven that we find; we can pompously recite a religious proclamation to formally renounce ownership of any leaven that we may have overlooked in our meticulous search. We can cleanse our house of every trace of leaven, but if we have not removed the leaven of malice and wickedness from our heart, we have missed the point. We have elevated symbolism over substance by paying more attention to the symbolic action than to what it is meant to teach us.

All of the "shadows" mentioned in Colossians 2:16 (diet, holy days, new moons, sabbaths) are important, but if we perform these symbolic actions without laying hold of the substance to which they are meant to point us, then we have missed God's purpose for these things. If our life is not characterized all year long by the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, what good does it do us to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread? If our heart is filled with the leaven of malice and wickedness all year long, what good does it do to abstain from eating leaven for one week every year?

If we behave like unclean beasts and birds of prey by biting and devouring each other, what good does it do us to abstain from eating the flesh of unclean animals? What good does it do us to search the night sky for the new moon, the symbol of spiritual renewal, if we do not pray enough to experience the inward renewal of our heart by the Holy Spirit on a regular, continual basis?

If we keep the Sabbath but do not experience the "rest unto the soul" that the Sabbath symbolizes, then our soul is missing out. If we have not come unto Yeshua, taken up His yoke, learned of Him, and found rest unto our soul, then we are only getting the physical benefits of keeping the Sabbath.

Imagine two churches. One is a typical Sunday-keeping church that has

its Easter ham dinners. However, the people do this out of ignorance, not out of rebellion. They honestly do not know any better. They have some erroneous theology, but they have a genuine love for God and for one another, and it shows. The other church keeps the 7th-day Sabbath, the dietary laws, new moons, and Feasts. The people are very zealous and scrupulous about these things, but their hearts are filled with the leaven of malice and wickedness. They bite and devour one another. They do not love one another. Which of these two churches is more offensive to God?

I am not minimizing sabbaths, new moons, holy days, and dietary laws. I am maximizing the greater importance of laying hold of the substance of what these shadows are meant to teach us. Too much time is spent bickering about the minute details of the shadows. "What activities violate the Sabbath? How should the new moon be calculated -- by the Jewish calendar, by a local visible sighting, or by a visible sighting from Jerusalem? When should Passover and Pentecost be celebrated -- according to the Pharisees' reckoning or that of the Sadducees? How scrupulously should the dietary laws be followed? Should we be stricter than the Orthodox rabbis?"

Sometimes these things need to be discussed when planning congregational meetings, but arguing over such things amounts to arguing about where the edge of the shadow ends. The outline of the shadow is fuzzy, because the Scriptures do not always give the cut-and-dried answers that we would like to have. This should tell us that God is more concerned that we lay hold of the substance behind the shadow than He is about how meticulous we are about debatable details of the shadows.

We would do well to remember Aesop's fable of the dog with the bone. The dog was on a small bridge crossing a stream. Seeing his own reflection, the dog thought it was another dog with a bone in its mouth. The dog wanted that bone, too, and barked to try to frighten the dog into dropping its bone. Of course the dog's own bone fell into the stream when he opened his mouth to bark. The moral of the story? Beware that you not lose the substance by grasping at the shadows. □

THE SPIRIT BEHIND ART

Daniel Botkin

This article appeared in "Soul Food," a monthly column that I recently began writing for Art Calendar, a business magazine for visual artists. I am reprinting it here for readers who may be interested in seeing some of my writing that has appeared in mainstream, non-religious publications. -DB

I have often heard people use the words *spirit* and *spiritual* when talking about art and art-related topics, but I have rarely if ever heard anyone explain what the somewhat vague adjective "spiritual" actually means when it is used to describe art. I would like to share some things which validate the idea that art and the creative process are, indeed, spiritual.

We are created in the image of God. There are several aspects of God's nature and character which He imparts to His human creatures, and one of these aspects is His urge to create. As a matter of fact, the very first thing the Bible says about God is that He created: "In the beginning God *created*..." In the Hebrew text the verb "created" actually comes before the subject "God," thus emphasizing the importance of the creative urge and the creative process.

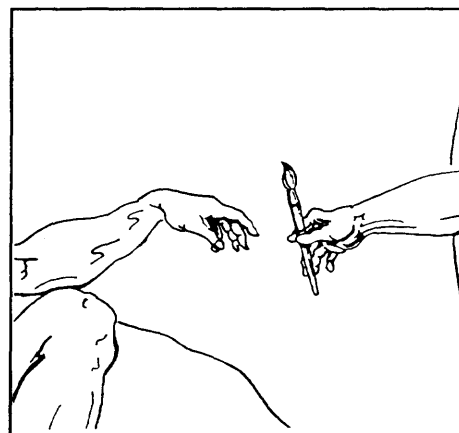
The creative urge is in us because we bear the image of God. We desire to create because the One from whom we derive our existence has a desire to create. In this respect we are like God. We want to do on a small scale what He did on a much larger scale when He created the universe.

Thomas Cole, a painter of the Hudson River School, said it this way: "Art, in its true sense, is, in fact, man's lowly imitation of the creative power of the Almighty." The 20th-century

Christian mystic A.W. Tozer took this idea further and suggested that even atheist and agnostic artists may be inspired by the God in whom they do not believe. In his book *The Pursuit of God*, Tozer wrote the following: "It is my own belief (and here I shall not feel bad if no one follows me) that every good and beautiful thing which man has produced in the world has been the result of his faulty and sin-blocked response to the creative Voice sounding over the earth. The moral philosophers who dreamed their high dreams of virtue, the religious thinkers who speculated about God and immortality, the poets and artists who created out of common stuff pure and lasting beauty: how can we explain them? It is not enough to say simply, 'It was genius.' What then is genius? Could it be that a genius is a man haunted by the speaking Voice, laboring and striving like one possessed to achieve ends which he only vaguely understands? That the great man may have missed God in his labors, that he may even have spoken or written against God does not destroy the idea I am advancing."

Of course not all people have the creative urge like artists do. Why is this so? Contrary to what many artists believe, it is not because artists and poets are more God-like than non-artists. Different individuals are gifted with different measures of the various aspects of God's character. We artists have been given a large dose of the creative urge, but many of us severely lack some of the other aspects of God's character -- things like patience, humility, common sense, mental stability, and emotional soundness. So let's not think of ourselves as being superior to non-artists.

The account of the creation in Genesis shows that God's creative urge caused Him to bring order out of the chaos of the primal creation, when "the earth was without form and void" and when "darkness was upon the face of the deep." As artists, we are following the example of our Maker when we labor to achieve order and harmony in a work of art. When we apply and blend colors to a canvas, or



mold and shape clay, or piece together various materials, we are, like God, bringing something new and unique into existence. Of course one major difference is that we, unlike God, are not able to call our raw materials into existence.

Most works of art require a series of steps -- preparation of materials and media, preliminary work, roughing in, filling in details, etc. As we carry out the steps which are necessary to bring about our creation, we are imitating our Creator, for He, too, created in stages, six to be exact. During the six days of creation, God completed each of the various steps, and when He "saw that it was good," He went on to the next stage the following day. The satisfaction we feel as we see a piece of our artwork taking shape is similar to the pleasure that God felt as He created the universe. "Thou hast created all things," proclaim the four and twenty elders around God's throne, "and for Thy pleasure they are and were created" (Revelation 4:11).

We artists are sometimes accused of being impractical, especially by people who see little or no value in creating art unless it puts bread on the table. My wife, who in other respects is a good wife, is one of these people. A few weeks ago I told her to meditate on Genesis 2:9, which says, "And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food." I wanted to see if she would get the same Divine revelation that I got from this verse. Not being an artist, she didn't get it, so I had to explain:

(Continued on next page)

"Notice that there were two reasons for the creation of trees," I told her. "The first and primary reason was to be pleasant to the sight. The secondary reason was to produce food. As an artist created in the image of God, I have a holy obligation to follow this same Divine priority. My first concern must be to create art that pleases the eye. Whether or not the artwork puts food on the table must be of secondary importance."

My wife didn't buy it, but I'm still working on her.

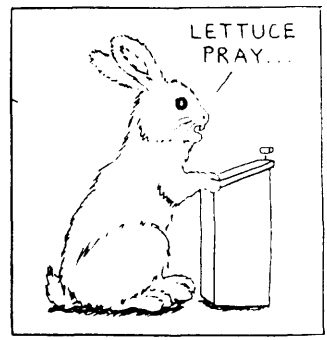
When we complete a piece of art, the creating process is finished. There is one more thing we want to do, though. We want to exhibit our work so it can be viewed and enjoyed. In this, too, we imitate our Creator. The Bible says that at the end of the sixth day, "God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good." We are told that at this time "the heavens and the earth were finished." The week was not yet complete, though. God was not totally satisfied with the universe until He added a seventh day, the Sabbath, which He blessed and sanctified to be a weekly memorial to His creation. A universe that was merely "very good" was not enough. It needed an element of the holy in order to be complete.

The sense of satisfaction that we experience when our work is exhibited and enjoyed by others is similar to the sense of satisfaction that God experiences when He sees His people enjoying His creation at the end of each week on the Sabbath. Abraham Joshua Heschel, in his classic *The Sabbath, Its Meaning for Modern Man*, draws a parallel between art and the Sabbath: "The art of keeping the seventh day is the art of painting on the canvas of time the mysterious grandeur of the climax of creation: as He sanctified the seventh day, so shall we. The love of the Sabbath is the love of man for what he and God have in common."

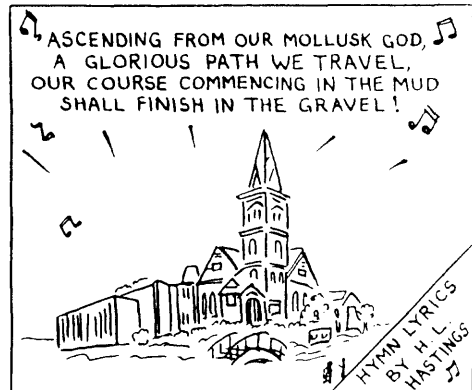
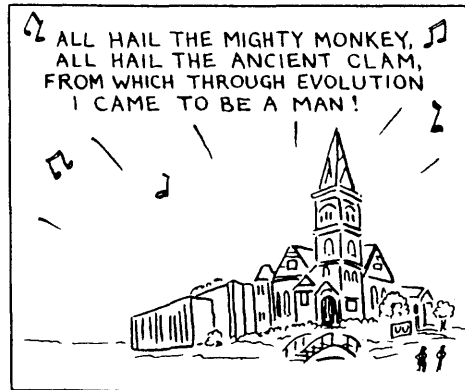
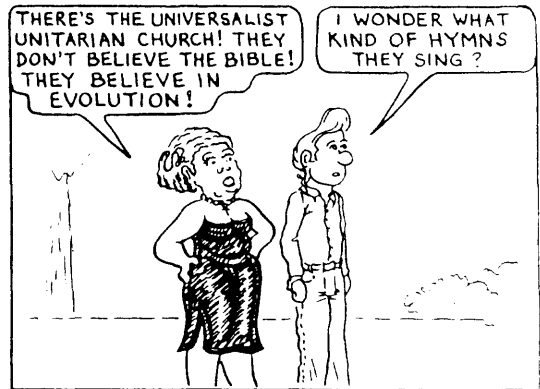
I agree with Heschel, and I believe that the same holds true for art. Man's love for art, like his love for the Sabbath, is also the love of man for what he and God have in common. □



KOSHER KOMIX KORNER



REVEREND
TWISTRUTH
& HIS DISCIPLES
by Daniel Botkin
"MONKEY BUSINESS"



DREAMS AND VISIONS

Dr. Daniel Botkin

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams”

On Shavuot, the Day of Pentecost, Peter quoted the above passage from the Prophet Joel. According to this passage, we should expect dreams and visions to be manifested among Spirit-filled New Covenant people. Even before that First-Century Day of Pentecost, God spoke to the Prophets through dreams and visions. “Hear now My words: If there be a prophet among you, I Yahweh will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches” (Num. 12:6-8).

Moses, to whom the Lord spoke face to face, was the exception to the rule. As the above passage shows, dreams and visions were the normal means by which God spoke to the Prophets. As disciples of the Messiah, we now have the promise of the Holy Spirit, so we should not think it unusual if God speaks to us through dreams and visions as He did to the Prophets of old.

The primary way that God communicates to us is through the Scriptures, and all dreams and visions must be judged by the Scriptures. However, the written Word is not the only way that God communicates to man. He sometimes speaks through dreams and visions. This does not mean that every dream we have is from the Lord, or that every unusual idea that pops into our head contains a message from God. However, when we have unusual dreams or visions, we do need to be open to the possibility that the Lord may be trying to tell us something. Paul wrote, “I will come to

visions and revelations of the Lord.” We should have this same expectation.

In ancient times people took dreams seriously. When Joseph dreamed that his brothers’ sheaves of grain bowed down to his sheaf, they did not laugh it off. They hated him for his dreams. When Joseph dreamed that the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed to him, his father Jacob did not dismiss it as a silly notion. He took it seriously.

Years later when Joseph was in an Egyptian prison, Pharaoh’s butler and baker were sad because they did not understand what their dreams meant. When Pharaoh had his dream, he likewise was greatly disturbed because there was no one to interpret it. The Bible says “his spirit was troubled.” These three Egyptians were not even God’s covenant people. They were pagans, yet God showed them through dreams what He was about to do. Other pagans who had prophetic dreams from God were King Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2 & 4) and King Abimelech (Gen. 20). In the New Testament, God gave dreams to the Magi, to Joseph, and to Pilate’s wife. The Book of Acts mentions several accounts of dreams and visions from the Lord.

The Bible takes the subject of dreams and visions seriously, and so should we. We should especially pay attention to dreams and visions if they seem to be some sort of warning, or if they contain Scriptural symbols and subject matter, or if they seem to trouble our spirit. When we experience dreams and visions of this nature, we should pray for an interpretation and for the wisdom to know how to respond. Sometimes the Holy Spirit will reveal the meaning. Sometimes another brother or sister might understand what the dream or vision means. People occasionally share their dreams with me and ask if I know the meaning. Sometimes I see the

meaning right away. Other times I don’t have a clue what it means.

Most Bible believers seem to be more open to dreams than they are to visions. This may be due to a limited understanding of what a vision is. Some people think that a vision is something that is seen with the physical eyes, sort of like a hallucination. A vision may take this form, but a vision can also be a mental image seen only with the inward eye, a picture that suddenly flashes into the mind for no apparent reason and without any obvious outward stimulus. Or a vision might be an idea which gradually takes shape in the mind and heart, as the Holy Spirit shows us bits and pieces of the picture until the vision is clear enough for us to begin pursuing it.

Visions can also be seen when we experience what the Bible calls “falling into a trance.” The fact that mediums experience a trance-like state during occult rituals should not scare us away from genuine, Holy Spirit-induced trances. Both Peter and Paul fell into trances and had visions while praying. (Acts 10 & 22) Knowing the Greek word for “trance” might help us better understand this sort of experience. The Greek word is *ekstasis* (εκστασις), the source of our English word *ecstasy*. The Greek word means “displacement of the mind.” In other words, the mind “shifts gears,” so to speak, and sees things that it otherwise would not see. It is similar to what happens with the flat posters that have a hidden 3-D image which cannot be seen until the eyes focus in just the right way. Once the eyes are focused to penetrate the 2-D layer of the poster, then the 3-D images are perfectly clear. These posters cause frustration for those who cannot see the 3-D images, and ecstasy for those who do see them. This is strictly a physical phenomenon, but it is a good illustration of how trance-induced visions work.

The Test of Prophecy

This weekly Torah portion [Be Ha'alot'cha; Num. 8:1-12:16] describes the lighting of the golden candelabrum, the blowing of trumpets to announce the Jubilee year and the carrying of the Ark of the Covenant. At the end of the portion, the people grumble and Miriam and Aaron rebel against Moses. In between, we learn lessons that help us distinguish between pure prophecy and secondary prophecy. "And God came down in the cloud, and spoke unto him, and took of the Spirit that was upon him and put it upon the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, but they did so no more" (Num. 11:25). Here, the difference between prophecy (*navua*) and secondary prophecy (*hitnavut*) becomes clear.

Jewish Bible commentators such as Samson Raphael Hirsch and Yehezkel Kaufman explain that the passive form of the Hebrew word for prophecy (*hinnaveh*) indicates true prophecy -- pure and direct from the Source. The reflexive form (*hitnaveh*) indicates an indirect form of prophecy, a pale reflection of true prophecy. This is the quality of prophecy experienced by King Saul when he went among the prophets (1 Samuel 19:23-24). The spirit of the true prophets was so strong that the others were infected by it and experienced secondary prophecy.

Another example is found in Numbers 11, where two men begin to prophesy in the camp of the Israelites. Joshua is offended for the sake of the honor of his teacher Moses and asks him to stop them. Moses replies: "Art thou jealous for my sake? Would that all God's people were prophets, that God would put his Spirit upon them" (verse 29). According to the prophet Joel, this is what will happen in the Last Days: "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit" (Joel 2:28-30).

Dreams contain some of the elements of prophecy. God talks to prophets in their dreams, though not every dream is

prophetic. The prophet Jeremiah urged that we carefully "separate the wheat from the chaff." The Jewish commentator Abravanel writes: "How are we able to recognize the true nature of our dreams, to know if the dream was a fantasy or a God-given inspiration? How do we distinguish between the wheat and the chaff? Even though both -- the prophetic dream and the regular human dream -- are of the same nature, there is still a major difference between them. The proof of authenticity lies in the intensity of the experience and clarity of the vision." And Rabbi Gamaliel adds: "If this plan or work should be of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them" (Acts 5:38, 39).

The fact that even people dedicated to God can be jealous is confirmed by Miriam and Aaron's rebellion against Moses. They were jealous of his level of prophecy: "Does God *only* speak with Moses?" they ask (Numbers 12:2). They claimed to be upset because Moses was married to a Cushite but this was just an alibi. In fact, they were jealous that *Moses* was a true prophet and they could only prophesy when they were close to him. As a result of her malicious gossip, Miriam is stricken with leprosy. And despite the fact that Miriam had spoken ill of Moses in front of people, he pleaded: "Dear God, heal her, I pray!" (12:13). Anyone who speaks ill of others becomes well again when the slandered person prays for him. In this we find a sign of a true prophet, one who "loves his enemies and prays for those who persecute him. With this they prove to be sons of the Heavenly Father" (Matthew 5:44, 45).

Finally, prophecy must be tested. "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

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If we ignore dreams and visions, we might miss out on blessings. There is a church in Swaffam, England, that has a memorial plaque to honor the memory of John Chapman, a rich man who gave generously to the church. John Chapman was not always rich. He was originally a poor tinker but a prophetic dreamer. In one of his dreams a voice told him, "Travel to London, and you will meet a man on London Bridge who will make you rich." John Chapman had this dream three times. After the third time, he decided to follow his dream, and he

went to London Bridge.

Chapman waited on the bridge, and soon a man approached him and struck up a conversation. "What are you doing in London?" the man asked.

"A dream sent me here," Chapman replied.

"I had a strange dream recently," the man said. "I dreamed that I traveled to Swaffam and dug up a jar of gold coins buried under the only tree of a tinker named John Chapman."

Chapman kept his mouth shut, went home and became a rich man.

Our dreams and visions may not make us monetarily wealthy like Chapman's dream did for him, but there are spiritual treasures the Lord wants to give us through dreams and visions. Joel's prophecy promises dreams and visions, so we should not ignore them as a source of blessing.



Source of John Chapman story: Kathryn Lindskoog, *The Gift of Dreams* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 125.

THE MIRROR OF THE MARTYRS

Daniel Botkin

This spring I viewed an unusual art exhibition called *The Mirror of the Martyrs*, billed as "a traveling exhibit which recalls the drama of people, obedient to crown and church, torturing and killing people who claim a higher obedience." The artwork which serves as a basis for the exhibit is a series of 17th-century prints by Dutch printmaker Jan Luyken. Luyken created 104 etchings for the 1685 edition of Tielman van Braght's *Martyrs Mirror*, a 1290-page book which documented in great detail the martyrdom of hundreds of Anabaptists. In 16th-century Europe, several thousand Anabaptists were tortured and killed by the state, with the blessing of the church. Because Anabaptists were hated by both Catholics and Protestants, more martyrs came from Anabaptist ranks than from any other Christian group in the 16th century.

The exhibit asks hard questions. Why did "good people" torture and kill? Why do the powerful fear the weak? Does anyone have the right to abuse the body of another of God's creatures? Why do modern governments continue to torture and kill? What beliefs are worth dying for? Who are martyrs today?

The exhibit is powerful, but not pleasant. Because of Luyken's eye for detail and historical accuracy, we are given a vivid picture of the savagery and cruelty of those times. We see state-sponsored and church-sanctioned whipping, stretching, piercing, chopping, mutilating, branding, and burning of men, women, and children as young as fourteen. We learn that the execution of Anabaptists was experienced by the public as high drama. The liturgy of death, called by van Braght "Bloody Theatre," included all the elements of drama: a rehearsal dinner, a stage, a script, a director, the cast, stage hands, props, spectators, and reporters. Inept executioners were often jeered when they bungled

executions.

The exhibit also includes some artifacts, the most interesting being some of the actual copper plates that Jan Luyken produced. The history of the 104 copper plates is a mystery that has been only partly solved. The plates were first used in the 1685 edition of the *Martyrs Mirror*, and in a few subsequent printings in the following century. In 1880 a Rotterdam newspaper reported the discovery of the plates in a chest in the home of a railroad official. In 1925 Mennonite historians learned that Hans Weber, Sr., a Munich citizen, had ninety of the 104 plates. The fate of the other fourteen plates is unknown. Two Mennonite historians saw the ninety plates in 1930, but could not afford to buy them. In 1944 Allied bombing of Germany intensified, and Hans Weber, Jr., the heir to the plates, moved his family to a safer area and left the ninety plates stored in three boxes. Efforts by Mennonites to locate the plates in 1969 were unsuccessful. Then in 1975, descendants of the late Hans Weber, Jr., found one box of thirty plates and offered to sell them. Mennonites were able to purchase seven of them in 1977, but the other 23 were purchased by a private art collector. After he died, Mennonites purchased the 23 plates in 1989, and added them to the seven they had purchased in 1977. The fate of the other 74 plates remains an unsolved mystery.

More mysterious than the story of the plates, though, are the questions raised by the powerful images that are preserved on the plates. The images force us to confront the mystery of evil. How could civilized people have been so sadistic? How could educated religious authorities, both Catholic and Protestant, think that torture was a Divinely-sanctioned way to force people to renounce their personal beliefs? Luyken's prints depict events that took place in the 16th century, but

the questions they raise are relevant to all times, including ours.

Not all of the images depict torture and killing. Some of them chronicle events which led up to the arrest of Anabaptists. The most touching of these is the image of Anabaptist Dirk Willems rescuing his persecutor from an icy pond. Willems had escaped from the prison where he was being held captive, and the guard pursued him. Willems, with his weight greatly reduced by prison food, was able to cross the thin ice safely. Willems' pursuer followed him, but the ice broke under his weight. Willems believed the Biblical teaching in the Sermon on the Mount that says, "Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you." So Willems turned back and rescued his persecutor. After the rescue, the ungrateful guard dragged his rescuer back to the prison, and Willems was burned at the stake.

Mennonite historians John S. Oyer and Robert S. Kreider write this about the power of imagery in the *Martyrs Mirror*.

"We who pride ourselves on our tenacious fidelity to the printed word must be led by the *Martyrs Mirror* to reflect on this question: what has influenced us more profoundly, the 1290 pages of van Braght text or the 104 images of Luyken? Both are essential and complimentary. Here, unmistakably, image has particular persuasive power and communicative eloquence.

"In a starkly simple etching of Dirk Willems rescuing his pursuer -- hands of the enemy reaching out to the hands of the heretic -- the word becomes flesh. More loaded with moral wisdom and conviction than a scholarly dissertation, this image captures the ethics of the cross." □

The exhibit will be in Nashville July 2-6 at Opryland Conference Center. For more information: ph. (316) 283-1612 www.bethelks.edu/kauffman/martyrs

חמס HAMAS

Daniel Botkin

HAMAS is a word that is familiar to people who keep up on the news about current events in Israel. Of all the anti-Israel Muslim terrorist organizations, Hamas is one of the most violent. The Hebrew word *hamas*, in fact, means “violence.” According to the Gesenius Hebrew lexicon, the Arabic cognate of the Hebrew word *hamas* means “warlike valour” (noun form) or “to be active, brave, constant” (verb form). I do not know Arabic, but I assume that this Arabic cognate of the Hebrew *hamas* is the word used by the terrorist group Hamas.

I knew that the Hebrew word *hamas* meant “violence” before all the recent anti-Israel terrorism. What I did not know was how many times the word *hamas* appears in the Hebrew Bible, and what the Bible says about the fate of those who carry out *hamas*/violence against the people of Israel. I recently read through The Twelve Prophets (Hosea through Malachi) in Hebrew, and I was surprised how often I kept running across the word *hamas*. This piqued my curiosity enough to do a study to find out more about *hamas* in the Scriptures. I looked at every passage where the word *hamas* appears (68 times, if my count is accurate). In view of what the Bible says about *hamas*, I would not want to be in the shoes of a Hamas terrorist.

Before I share some of the things the Bible says about *hamas*, let me first state that I am not anti-Arab. I am strongly opposed to the use of terrorism by any group, Arabic or non-Arabic, but I have no prejudice against Arabic people as an ethnic group. As a matter of fact, during my seven years of teaching English to foreign students, I often felt a much closer kinship to my Arabic Muslim students than I did to students from other

cultures. This was probably due to a few factors. For one thing, my Muslim students took matters of faith seriously. Even though their faith was mis-directed, their interest in spiritual matters gave me some common ground with them. The fact that they are physical descendants of our Father Abraham also made it easier for me to relate to them. I also felt a kinship because their culture has preserved some of the ancient Mid-East customs that were practiced in Biblical times, and I could relate to those customs.

There are many elements in the Arabic culture that I love and admire, but Hamas is not one of them. My prayer for these children of Abraham is that they be delivered from the spirit of Islam which leads them to commit acts of *hamas*/violence against the children of Israel. According to the Bible, those who practice *hamas*/violence against the children of Israel will bring the fierce wrath of God down upon themselves.

The first place the word *hamas* appears in the Bible is in Genesis 6:11 & 13. “The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence (*hamas*) ... And God said unto Noah, ‘The end of all flesh is come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence (*hamas*) through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.’”

Here in the early chapters of the very first book of the Bible, God makes it clear that the fate of those who practice *hamas* is destruction. It was *hamas* that brought the Flood of God’s judgment on the earth. Right now Israel is “filled with Hamas.” It is possible that the entire earth may once again become filled with *hamas* by the terrorism of Hamas, bringing down world-wide destruction before the Messianic age.

Some theologians believe that the “anointed cherub” in Ezekiel 28 is a reference to Satan. If this view is correct, then according to Ezekiel 28:16, it was *hamas* in the midst of this cherub that caused the Lord to cast him out of the mountain of God.

The word *hamas* appears in the Psalms. Prayers are lifted up for deliverance from violent men, men of *hamas*. The enemies of God’s anointed are described in Psalms as people who “breathe out *hamas* [cruelty]” (Ps. 27:12). The habitations of *hamas* are called “the dark places of the earth” (Ps. 74:20). Psalm 11:5 plainly states that God hates those who love *hamas*: “...the wicked and him that loveth violence (*hamas*) His soul hateth.”

Two passages of Scripture that should serve as warnings to today’s Hamas terrorists are Obadiah 10 and Joel 3:19. These verses deal specifically with the *hamas*/violence perpetrated by Edom, another name for Esau, the ancestor of the Arabs, against Jacob and Judah, the ancestors of the Jewish people. According to Obadiah, the children of Edom “shall be cut off forever” because of their violence (*hamas*) against their brother Jacob. Joel says that “Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence (*hamas*) against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land.”

So fierce is the wrath of God against the descendants of Esau who practice *hamas* that one of the commandments of the Torah says, “Thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek [grandson of Esau, and another ancestor of the Arabs] from under heaven” (Deut. 25:19). The Hertz Commentary makes a remark about this verse that is worth considering in view of today’s Hamas terrorism against Jews in Israel: “A people so devoid of natural religion as to kill non-combatants had forfeited all claim to mercy” (p. 856).

Eventually Israel’s prayers for deliverance from *hamas* will be answered. Isaiah’s description of the Messianic Kingdom includes this promise: “Violence (*hamas*) shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation and thy gates Praise” (Isa. 60:18). May the Lord speedily deliver Israel from the *hamas* of Hamas. Amen. □

HELL FIRE

Daniel Botkin

Years ago I heard about a Baptist preacher who used some unusual props whenever he preached about hell. This preacher would wear a fire-proof suit made with asbestos, and at the height of his sermon he would douse himself with lighter fluid and set himself ablaze and thrash about to demonstrate the torments of the damned.

I have not heard of anyone employing visual aids this dramatic recently, but I have been noticing references to hell more often than usual this past month. Moishe Rosen wrote about hell in the *Jews For Jesus* newsletter. (See excerpt on this page.) It is not unusual to hear Bible-believing Christians mention hell as a reality, but I heard and read a few other references to hell this past month which were not made by born-again Christian preachers in a religious setting.

In addition to Rosen's article, I noticed four other serious references to hell, all of them in unexpected places. Two of them were in connection with the execution of Timothy McVeigh. A man who had lost a family member in the bombing told a reporter on secular radio that McVeigh's soul would suffer in hell for all eternity. Before the execution, our local secular newspaper featured a semi-serious cartoon showing a "welcome-to-hell" banner stretched across the gates of hell for McVeigh.

I saw a reprint of an article from the *Amarillo Globe-News* that mentioned a reference to hell on a secular TV show: "A recent episode of the sitcom 'Everybody Loves Raymond' has sports-writer Raymond staying home watching TV on Sunday morning while the rest of the family goes to church. When Raymond's little girl draws a picture of Dad standing in the fire of Hell, he does some thinking, and, by the end of the show, starts attending Mass with the family."

Another recent reference to hell appeared in the May 25 *Jewish Press* (page 75). It seems that not all Moslem clerics approve of suicide bombings, and some even go so far as to say that suicide bombers will go to hell. The

Mufti of Saudi Arabia said: "I am not aware of anything in the religious law regarding killing oneself in the heart of the enemy's ranks, or what is called 'suicide.' *This is not a part of Jihad*, and I fear that it is merely killing oneself." The Mufti of Jericho published a fatwa (religious ruling) last April in which he declared that suicide will lead to "torments in Hell on Judgment Day."

In the past the fear of Divine retribution served as a moral restraint to discourage the wicked from fully yielding to their evil nature. Some people believe in the annihilation of the wicked and/or a post-resurrection opportunity for repentance for some of the lost. God will have the final say about what hell is

and who will go there. Alfred Edersheim, in "The Question of Eternal Punishment" (Appendix XIX in *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*), wrote: "...in regard to those who have departed (whether or not we know of grace in them) our views and our hopes should be the wisest (consistent with Scripture teaching)..."

I agree. But in the meantime, it is good that the wicked occasionally be reminded that on Judgment Day some people will hear the King say, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." The wicked need to know that if they continue to follow the devil and his angels, they will share their fate. □

MESSIAH OUR CITY OF REFUGE

Dr. Daniel Botkin

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16)

John 3:16 is the best-known verse in the Bible, probably because it is the one verse that best summarizes in a nutshell the main message of the Bible. It is a wonderful verse, and many people are familiar with it. Unfortunately, familiarity can lead to misuse. I have seen unrepentant drunkards and fornicators use John 3:16 to try to convince me that they were on their way to heaven, in spite of their refusal to repent of their sins.

“All it says you have to do is believe in Jesus,” they say.

Of course the unrepentant drunkards and fornicators who quote John 3:16 have to ignore the Scripture verses which say that drunkards and fornicators will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9f; Gal. 5:19-21).

We cannot isolate one verse of Scripture and divorce it from the rest of the Bible. Doctrinal errors are established when men focus on one verse and ignore everything else the Bible says about the subject they are trying to understand. We must let the Bible define its own terms. When we read John 3:16, we must let the Bible define *God, love, believe, etc.*

The term in John 3:16 that needs to be clarified is the phrase “believeth in Him.” What does it mean to believe in the Son of God? How does the Bible define the term *belief* or *faith*? One thing is certain. Faith without works is dead. The Bible plainly and clearly states this three times so there will be no mistake about how God defines faith. (See James 2:17, 20, 26.) Unrepentant sinners who say they believe in the Son of God have a “faith” that is like that of “the devils [who] also believe, and tremble” (James 2:19).

The only faith God recognizes as

genuine is a faith that produces good works. The good works are not a substitute for faith, nor are they the basis or source for faith. The good works are the fruit of faith and the proof of it. Genuine, Biblical faith is always accompanied by repentance. Repentance and faith are often mentioned together in the New Testament. “Repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15); “...repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21); “...repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God” (Heb. 6:1).

A look at the Biblical concept of the cities of refuge can serve as an illustration to clarify what it means to believe in the Messiah. Before the children of Israel went in to possess the Land, the Lord instructed them to designate certain cities to be cities of refuge. (See Numbers 35 & Joshua 20.) These cities, six in number, were walled cities scattered over the land of Israel. If a man killed someone and it was not a case of cold-blooded, pre-

meditated murder, the killer could flee to the nearest city of refuge. Here a person who had killed someone accidentally or in self-defense had a place of sanctuary where he would be safe from “the avenger of blood,” i.e., the victim’s family.

It is interesting to note that the number of cities was six. Seven is the Biblical number of perfection and completion. This suggests that the six cities of refuge speak prophetically of a seventh and final City of Refuge. The Messiah Yeshua, Jesus of Nazareth, is our spiritual City of Refuge, the place where we are safe from the enemy of our soul.

There is a story in the Bible about a man who should have taken advantage of God’s provision of a city of refuge, but did not. The story is recorded in 2 Samuel 2. David was king over Judah, and Saul’s son Ish-bosheth was king over the other tribes. Ish-bosheth’s army was led by Abner and David’s army was led by Joab. Abner and his men were fighting against Joab and his men. When Abner realized that defeat was inevitable, he fled the battle. Looking behind him, he saw he was being pursued by Joab’s younger brother Asahel. A young, inexperienced soldier like Asahel was no match for a veteran fighter like Abner. Knowing this, Abner told Asahel to fight with one of the younger men. “Turn thee aside from following me: wherefore should I smite thee to the ground? How then should I hold up my face to Joab thy brother?” But Asahel refused to heed Abner’s warning, so Abner slew him in self-defense.

In the next chapter we see Abner in and out of the city of Hebron, which happened to be one of the cities of refuge. Then we read about Abner’s death: “And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly, and smote him under the fifth rib, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his

brother.”

After Abner's death King David lamented, "Died Abner as a fool dieth?" The answer is obvious. However wise Abner may have been about some things, he was foolish about one thing. He failed to take advantage of God's provision of a place to protect him from Joab's revenge. Abner did not stay inside the gate of Hebron, the city of refuge. He was almost inside. He died on the very threshold of the city gate of Hebron, just inches from safety. He allowed himself to be lured out to unsafe ground where he forfeited his right to legal protection. He was deceived and destroyed by his enemy at the very entrance to the place of safety. Because of a false sense of security, Abner died like a fool.

Hebron was a city of refuge built by men to protect a man's physical life from a human enemy, but it speaks of a spiritual place "not made with men's hands," a place to protect a person's eternal life from Satan, the enemy of our soul. The only place of safety for the slayer was in the city of refuge; the only place of safety for the sinner is in the Messiah, our City of Refuge.

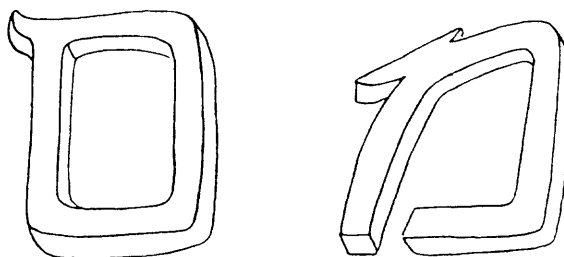
Just as a man had to enter into a city of refuge to be in the place of safety, so we have to enter into the Messiah to be in the place of safety. We enter into the Messiah by believing into Him. The phrase "believe into Him" sounds more awkward than "believe in Him," but it is, in fact, a more accurate translation of the phrase as it appears in the Greek text of John 3:16. As a matter of fact, in the very first English translation of the New Testament (in 1380), John Wycliffe translated this phrase in John 3:16 as "whosoever believeth into Him." Wycliffe translated it this way because the Greek word *eis* (εἰς) means "into." The Greek word for "in" is *en* (ἐν). John 3:16 uses *eis*, not *en*.

The Greek word *eis*, like the English word *into*, carries with it the idea of movement. The use of the word *into* tells us that the person or object was formerly *outside* (the house, for example), and has now moved *into* the house. The difference

The Hebrew letter *mem* (מ) can serve as a visual aid to help us picture the Messiah as our City of Refuge. This is appropriate, because the Hebrew word for Messiah, *Mashiach* (מָשִׁיחַ) begins with the letter *mem*. Even in rabbinic thought the *mem* stands allegorically for *Mashiach*.¹ Shown below are the two forms the letter *mem* can take. The form on the right is called the "open *mem*." This is how the letter appears when it is used at the beginning of a word or in the middle of a word. The form on the left is called the "closed *mem*" or "final *mem*." This form is used only when the *mem* is the very last letter of a word.

Look at the open *mem* below and imagine it as a walled city, our spiritual City of Refuge. The *mem* is open; there is a way to enter into the Messiah and receive the blessing of God. Rabbis see the open *mem* as "[t]he constant outpouring of blessing from His open hand"² As long as there is an open door, the sinner can repent and enter into the Messiah. The door will not remain open forever, though. Just as there is a final *mem* that closes a word, so there will be a final Judgment Day that will close the door of repentance, judge those outside Messiah, and close the books.

In Judaism, God is sometimes referred to by the name *Makom* ("Omnipresent"; literally, "place"). The Hebrew word *Makom* contains an open *mem* at the beginning and a closed *mem* at the end: מָקוֹם (read right to left). According to the rabbis, the open *mem* of *Makom* speaks of that part of God which is "open," i.e., that which can be known and understood. The closed *mem* speaks of that which is "closed," i.e., that which is unknowable and hidden and beyond the grasp of our limited, finite understanding.³ There will always be "the secret things [which] belong unto Yahweh our God" (Deut. 29:29); we will always "know in part" in this life. But to find eternal life and the true knowledge of God, we must enter into the Messiah, our City of Refuge. "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Yeshua the Messiah, whom Thou hast sent" (John 17:3).



¹Rabbi Michael L. Munk, *The Wisdom in the Hebrew Alphabet* (New York: Mesorah Publ., 1994), 146.

²Ibid., 144.

³Ibid.

between *into* and *in* may seem minor and nit-picky, but it is of vital importance when we are talking about being in the Messiah. We cannot say we are "in Him" unless we have first "believed into Him," and moved from being outside the Messiah to being in Him. In the Epistles of the New Testament, the phrase "in Christ [Messiah]" appears dozens of times, but until repentance and faith have carried us

over the threshold of the door, we cannot say we are in Him. First we "believe into Him," then we are "in Him."

Many people who mistakenly think they are in Messiah are like Abner at the gate of Hebron. Abner is a picture of a man almost there. He typifies multitudes of people who are at the very entrance, but refuse to take that one final step of commitment that will

carry them over the threshold. Such people are so close to safety that they develop a false sense of security. They may feel more at home in a church than in a bar or a night club, but they are still on the wrong side of the threshold. Being at the very gate, they look into the city; they see and hear all the activity; perhaps they even talk with Jesus as did many other would-be disciples. It is easy for such people to imagine that they are inside.

“What are you doing, Daniel, trying to make people doubt their salvation?” If a person’s salvation is genuine, these words will not drive him out of the City of Refuge. If anything, my words will drive him deeper into the heart of the City of Refuge. My concern is for those who have an imaginary faith and therefore an imaginary Messiah and an imaginary salvation. A.W. Tozer wrote about such people. “Imagination has been mistaken for faith and has been made to do service for obedience,” Tozer wrote. “There is a mental disease fairly familiar to all of us where the patient lives in a world wholly imaginary. It is a play-world, a world of make-believe, with no objective reality corresponding to it. Everyone knows this except the patient himself. He will argue for his world with all the logic of a sane man, and the pathetic thing is that he is utterly sincere. So we find Christians who have lived so long in the rarefied air of imagination that it seems next to impossible to relate them to reality.”

Died Abner as a fool dieth? Yes, because he was outside the city of refuge. But a person who remains outside the Messiah, the City of Refuge for the soul, is twice the fool Abner was. Abner died only once for his error; those who die outside the Messiah die a second death, called “the lake of fire,” a place of “weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

However unpopular the belief in hell may be, hell has not changed to keep up with the times and the shifting sands of men’s opinions about the afterlife. Regardless of what men think about hell, it cannot be wished away. Its jaws remain open wide to

swallow all who continue to sin against a holy God who gave His Son to die that all might have a place of refuge.

Jonathan Edwards, in his famous sermon *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, pictures people outside the Messiah as people who walk on a thin, rotten covering that is stretched over the fiery pit. “And there are innumerable places in this covering so weak that they won’t bear their weight,” Edwards stated. “And these places are not seen. The arrows of death fly unseen at noonday.” The rotten covering described by Edwards surrounds the City of Refuge and extends all the way to the entrance. The only solid ground is inside.

Why has God ordained His Son to be the only place of safety? Because His Son took upon Himself the punishment for our sins. And because the sentence has already been carried out upon Him, it will fall no more upon Him, *nor upon those who are in Him*. The only place of safety is where the fire of God’s wrath has already fallen.

My home state, Illinois, is known as the Prairie State. Years ago when prairie grass covered the flat plains, one of the most dreaded events was a grass fire in the dry season. If a man in a field saw smoke in the distance, he knew the wind would carry the fire to his location in a matter of minutes. There were no trees high enough, no water near enough, and no legs fast enough to escape the fire. There was only one way of escape. With his back to the wind, he started a second fire in the grass and waited for the wind to carry that fire away from him until a burned-out patch of ground was before him. He then stepped into that area, and when the fire reached his location, it simply stopped and died. “Where there is no fuel, the fire goeth out” (Prov. 26:20). So it is with our City of Refuge, the Messiah Yeshua. The only place of safety is where the fire of God’s wrath has already fallen.



“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and by his stripes we are healed.” (Isaiah 53)

GATES OF EDEN

SPECIAL EDITION

SEPTEMBER 2001

PO BOX 2257, EAST PEORIA, IL 61611-0257

FROM THE EDITOR

September 14, 2001

Dear Readers,

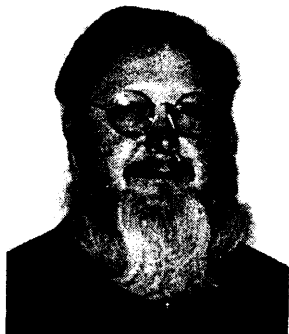
On September 11, the day of the terrorist attacks on America, I was planning to finish up the Sept.-Oct. issue of *Gates of Eden* and get it ready to take to the printer.

Due to the awful events of this week, the Sept.-Oct. issue will be sent a little later than originally planned. In the meantime, I am sending this shorter special edition. It is not a replacement for the Sept.-Oct. issue; it is a one-time special edition. The regular Sept.-Oct. issue will be sent soon, God willing.

I felt a sense of urgency to write something immediately in response to the great tragedies that have taken place in our nation. Rather than adding this as a supplement to the Sept.-Oct. issue, I am sending it separately by first class mail. Bulk mail often takes a long time to reach its destination, and I wanted to get this into the hands of readers as soon as possible.

I pray that this special edition will educate you if you are uninformed, awaken you to repentance if you are asleep, encourage you to pray if you are prayerless, and give you hope if you are hopeless.

Daniel Botkin



Friday September 14. Today I listened to the radio broadcast of the special services at the national cathedral in Washington, DC. A clergyman prayed a prayer that began with these words: "God of Abraham, Mohammed, and Jesus Christ..."

With all due respect, Allah, the "god" of Mohammed, is not the same God to whom Jews and Christians pray. Just because someone believes in only one god, we cannot assume that the person believes in the true God.

Most Americans know very little about Islam. I am by no means an expert, but I do have a general knowledge of the basics of Islam, which is more than most Americans know. Americans need to get a general knowledge of the basics of Islam so

THE INVASION OF ISLAM

Daniel Botkin

they will know what they are up against spiritually.

I do not have space to share everything I know about Islam, but I want my readers - Jews, Christians, Messianic Jews, Messianic Israelites - to know enough about Islam to prevent them from making the mistake of thinking that Muslims worship and serve the same God that they do. Many Americans have the mistaken notion that Islam is compatible with Judaism and Christianity.

Mohammed, the founder of Islam, was born in A.D. 570. When he was 40 years old, he claimed that he had been visited by the angel Gabriel. Over the next 23 years of his life, he claimed to have received a series of visits and revelations from Gabriel. These revelations were allegedly memorized by Mohammed, dictated to his companions, and written down by scribes. The Koran (sometimes written Quran) is the written record of these "revelations."

Islam's foundational statement of faith is expressed in the words *La ilaha illallah, Muhammed-ur-*

(Continued on next page...)

Rasulullah -- "There is no God except Allah, and Mohammed is His prophet." Islam makes it clear that any idea of Jesus as the only begotten, divine Son of God is out of the question. Allah "has absolutely no associate with Him in His divinity." The Koran says, "Far be it from Him [God] that He should have a son!" (ch. 4:169-171) and "He [God] begetteth not" (ch. 112). Muslims claim to believe in Jesus as a prophet, but they do not believe in His divinity, His Sonship, or His Resurrection. To them, Jesus was "only a Messenger" (Sura 5, The Table).

Islam has five articles of faith, called the five pillars of Islam. One source, an attractive, glossy brochure obviously designed to try to persuade American Christians to convert to Islam, lists the five pillars as: faith, prayer, charity, fasting, and pilgrimage to Mecca.² Another source, written for the purpose of "satisfying the intellectual cravings of Muslim youth,"³ lists the five obligations of Islam as: prayer, fasting, charity, pilgrimage, and *Jihad* (holy war). The Muslim author writes of *Jihad* :

"[T]his word is used particularly for a war that is waged solely in the name of Allah against those who practise oppression as enemies of Islam. This supreme sacrifice of life devolves on all Muslims. If, however, a section of Muslims offer themselves for the *Jihad* , the community as a whole is absolved of its responsibility. But if none comes forward, everybody is guilty. This concession vanishes for the citizens of an Islamic State when it is attacked by a non-Muslim power. In that case everybody must come forward for the *Jihad* . If the country attacked has not enough strength to fight back, then it is the religious duty of the neighbouring Muslim countries to help her; if even they fail, then the Muslims of the whole world must fight the common enemy. In all such cases, *Jihad* is as much a primary duty of the Muslims concerned as are the daily prayers or fasting. One who shirks it is a sinner. His very claim to being a Muslim is doubtful. He is a hypocrite whose *'Ibadah* [worship] and prayers are a sham, a worthless show of devotion."⁴

Islam was established by *Jihad* .
Defeated foes were given the choice

of being killed or converting to Islam and living as Muslims. One reason Islam was able to spread so rapidly in Mohammed's own lifetime was because of Christianity's steady decline into deeper corruption. Robert J. Wieland writes:

"The Arab prophet [Mohammed] found a religious vacuum and rushed in to fill it with his strange, authoritarian teachings. Islam was born, and its roots fed on the decay of a vitiated Mediterranean Christianity. One of the great phenomena of history is the improbable, but lightning-like military success of early Islam. Within a few years of the Prophet's death, both the Byzantine Roman and Persian empires fell like overripe fruit into Muslim hands. Allah's untutored horsemen routed these proud rulers of the world in daring campaigns like nothing the world had seen since Alexander the Great ... Thousands of Christians in North Africa and the Middle East became Muslims almost overnight, and the once-orthodox land of Augustine mysteriously and disgracefully surrendered its Christian identity so completely, that the richest Roman province of Christ became fanatically devoted to the star and crescent. In North Africa, home of many of the church fathers, hardly a vestige remains of its once-brilliant Christian history."⁵

Does Islam tolerate other beliefs?

This question is asked in the slick brochure designed to appeal to American Christians. The brochure answers: "It is one function of Islamic law to protect the privileged status of minorities, and this is why non-Muslim places of worship have flourished all over the Islamic world. History provides many examples of Muslim tolerance towards other faiths."⁶

The above statement is, to put it bluntly, a damnable lie. Many Muslim nations have strict laws prohibiting the practice of any non-Islamic faith. Christians are routinely and brutally persecuted by Muslims in Indonesia, Pakistan, Egypt, and other Arab and African countries. If the Christian faith is flourishing in the Islamic world, it is flourishing in spite of (or perhaps because of) the persecution, not because Islam welcomes and tolerates other beliefs.

A few quotes from the Koran to show why Muslims who take the Koran seriously are intolerant of Jews and Christians:

"O ye who believe! Take not the Jews and Christians for friends. They are friends one to another. He among you who taketh them for friends is (one) of them" (Surah V 5:51).

"Thou wilt find the most vehement of mankind in hostility to those who believe [i.e., believe in Islam -DB] (to be) the Jews and idolators" (Surah V 5:82).

"Allah's messenger (may peace be upon him) said: 'You will fight against the Jews and you will kill them until even a stone would say: Come here, Moslem, there is a Jew hiding himself behind me, kill him!'" (*Sahih Moslem*, English translation, Beirut, Dar al Arabia, Vol. 4, p. 1510).

Some years ago Sheik Abdel Aziz ibn Baaz, the mufti of Saudi Arabia, made it clear that peace with non-Muslims is only permissible if Muslims are weak.⁷ "Peace with the Jews would be unthinkable if the Moslems were strong," he said. "In such an event reconciliation with the Jews would not be permissible; it would be our duty to fight them."⁸

Muslims have grown stronger in the past several years, and their aggression against Israel has increased. Now they feel bold enough and strong enough to attack America.

Let us remember in the difficult days ahead that this is primarily a spiritual battle, and more than a mere physical battle. □

NOTES

¹Abul A'la Mawdudi, *Towards Understanding Islam* (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: National Offset Press, 1986), 131.

²*Understanding Islam and the Muslims* (Washington, DC: Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 1989).

³Mawdudi, 7.

⁴Ibid., 142.

⁵Robert J. Wieland, "Islam Challenges the World," *Signs of the Times*, Aug. 1985, 11.

⁶*Understanding Islam and the Muslims*, n.p.

⁷A mufti is an interpreter of Islamic law.

⁸*Yediot Aharonot and Haaretz*, Jan. 20, quoting the Saudi daily *al-Muslimun*.

THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE

Daniel Botkin

Since the terrorist attack on September 11, there has been a great deal of talk about prayer. Even on secular radio and TV, people are being urged to pray for America, and many people have been gathering to pray. Since Tuesday morning I have heard and read the words *pray* and *prayer* more times than I can count. The thing that concerns me, though, is that I have not heard or read anything about the need for national repentance. Except for one brief reference by Billy Graham ("God promises to bless us if we repent"), I have not heard the words *repent* or *repentance*.

I do not belittle the power of prayer, but without nation-wide repentance, nation-wide prayer is useless. Let me explain. After the children of Israel came into the Promised Land and saw the walls of Jericho fall down for them, they felt invincible (much like America did before September 11, 2001).

Therefore, they were stunned and bewildered when they suffered an unexpected defeat at the next city, a small town called Ai (much like America was stunned and bewildered after September 11, 2001).

The hearts of the people melted and became like water. Joshua and the elders of Israel tore their garments, fell on their faces before God, put dust on their heads, and prayed to the Lord.

God's response to all this prayer was: "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou upon thy face? Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled [deceived] also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you. Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow: for thus saith the Lord God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O



Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you" (Josh. 7:10-13).

Prayer was ineffective for the children of Israel until the sin was dealt with and the accursed things removed from the nation.

Like all Americans, I am deeply grieved by what happened in our nation. But what do you expect, America? When a nation turns its back on God, He turns His back on them. "If ye forsake Him, He will forsake you" (2 Chron. 15:2). A nation forfeits Divine protection when it sins as grievously as we have.

I grew up in the 1950s and 1960s. Sin existed in America in the 1950s, of course. But at least sin was still considered sinful and shameful then. People didn't "have affairs"; they committed adultery. Unmarried couples didn't "live together"; they were fornicators living in sin. There were no "single moms"; there were unwed mothers. There were no "single-mother-children"; there were bastards. There were no "gays"; there were homosexuals, sodomites, queers. These sins existed, but at least they were kept in the darkness where they belonged. These sins were not constantly flaunted before the public, demanding acceptance.

In the early 1960s, America tried to kick God out of public schools by declaring school-sponsored prayer unconstitutional. All the filthy sexual

perversion started coming out of the closet demanding acceptance. In the early 1970s, abortion was legalized, and now America has the blood of millions of aborted babies on its hands. "So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are," God warned, "for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it" (Num. 35:33).

If there is not nation-wide repentance - no deep, genuine remorse for our nation's sins - then God will not hear the prayers of our nation, regardless of how many prayers we make. "And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide Mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil" (Isa. 1:15f).

Repentance must be deep enough to make us change our ways. A quick "please-comfort-us" prayer, followed by a surge of patriotism, flag-waving, and the singing of patriotic hymns, will not get the job done. These activities may unite the nation, but they do not guarantee God's blessing and victory. If America goes to war without first getting right with God, she runs the risk of defeat. The oft-quoted passage of 2 Chronicles 7:14 declares God's promise to heal the land of His back-slidden people, but this promise is conditional. One of the necessary conditions is that His people "turn from their wicked ways."

When God's judgment was announced by Jonah to the people of Nineveh, the king of Nineveh ordered all his people to put on sackcloth, to fast, to cry mightily unto God, and to turn from their evil ways. Even the domestic animals were forced to fast and wear sackcloth. God saw their works and spared them.

President Bush proclaimed last Friday a Day of Prayer and Remembrance. Let us pray that he will go a step further and call for a national Day of Prayer and Repentance. □

BENT TO BACKSLIDING

Daniel Botkin

back-slide vi: to lapse morally or in the practice of religion (Webster's)

"My people are bent to backsliding from Me" (Hosea 11:7). God spoke these words in Hosea's day, but the truth of these words is not limited to the people of Hosea's day. The same thing is true of God's people in every generation. We are bent to backsliding. Our natural inclination is away from God rather than toward Him. This means that we must be determined to fight a life-long battle against temptation if we want to avoid backsliding.

Some people backslide with a presumptuous attitude. "I'm just going to have some fun, enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, then get right with the Lord again. He'll forgive me and restore me."

This is a very dangerous attitude. First of all, there's no guarantee that you will live that long. A newsletter from a Messianic ministry in Israel recently reported that one of the twenty young people killed in the terrorist attack at the Dolphinarium in Tel Aviv was a backslidden Messianic believer. This young lady had been part of a Messianic congregation, but was drawn away by the pleasures of the world. She had quit attending her congregation's Friday night Erev Shabbat service, and she went instead to the disco that Friday night, and died a premature death.

"But don't you believe in the eternal security of the believer?" I prefer to reword it and say that I believe in the security of the eternal believer.

"But I believe that all born-again believers will go to heaven, even if they die in a backslidden state, so I'll take my chances and backslide for a short time. All believers go to heaven, if they're truly born again Christians." Maybe so, but what makes you so sure you are truly born again? If you have that attitude, chances are that you experienced a counterfeit conver-

sion and are included in that category of people that John described as those who "went out from us, but were not of us" (1 John 2:14).

Satan launches a three-pronged attack in an effort to tempt God's people to backslide. John describes this three-pronged attack as "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16). This has been Satan's strategy from the very beginning. He said to Eve, "Ye shall not surely die. For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Satan appealed to the lust of the flesh with the word "eat"; he appealed to the lust of the eyes with the words "your eyes shall be opened"; he appealed to the pride of life with the words "ye shall be as gods."

In the very next verse the woman yields to this three-fold temptation: "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat..." The lust of the flesh is seen in the words "good for food"; the lust of the eyes is seen in the words "pleasant to the eyes"; the pride of life is seen in the words "to make one wise."

Satan used the same three-pronged attack when he tempted the Last Adam, Yeshua. He appealed to the lust of the flesh by suggesting that Yeshua turn stones into bread. He appealed to the lust of the eyes when he showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. He appealed to the pride of life by suggesting that Yeshua throw Himself off the pinnacle of the Temple and let the angels catch Him.

Satan used this three-pronged attack on Eve, he used it on the Son of God, and he will use it on us. He will try to get us to yield to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the

pride of life.

The lust of the flesh concerns sins which primarily involve the body: sexual immorality, violence, drunkenness, drugs, gluttony, etc. The lust of the eyes speaks of things that please our eyes. In the days of the Roman Empire, people could go to the Colosseum and feast their eyes on all sorts of spectacles. Nowadays, Satan uses high-tech entertainment and lets people feast their eyes on movies and computers. Are movies and computers sinful? In moderation and with self-discipline, no. In excess and without self-discipline, yes. Why? First, because we are told to "redeem the time." Second, because there is a lot of trash that we should not view. Therefore we need to be discerning, disciplined, and selective about what we see and how much time we spend on such things.

The third prong of Satan's attack, the pride of life, is probably the most dangerous, because it is so subtle. People who backslide by yielding to the lust of the flesh or the lust of the eyes usually know they are doing something wrong. "I know I shouldn't do this, but..." When people backslide by yielding to Satan's appeal to their pride, they usually do not realize that they are falling into sin. On the contrary, they believe that they are doing something good and right and holy and noble. They believe that they are answering a higher call, and anyone who tries to warn them or discourage them from carrying out their plans is perceived as an agent of the devil.

The war against temptation is a life-long battle, but it is a battle we can win if we follow in the footsteps of our Messiah. Each time we gain victory over temptation, we become stronger and more experienced in spiritual warfare. As time goes on, we can mature into seasoned warriors who can, by the grace of God, handle temptation in the heat of battle. □

THE THRESHING FLOOR

Daniel Botkin

IN BIBLICAL TIMES the threshing floor was the area where sheaves of grain were brought at harvest time. Here the edible grain would be separated from the chaff or stubble - the outer husks and other unusable debris. After beating the harvested ears of grain on the stone threshing floor to loosen the husks, a winnowing fork would be used to toss the grain up into the air, so the wind would blow away the light, worthless chaff. Sometimes large fans would be used to create stronger winds to blow away the chaff. As the light chaff departed, the heavier seeds of grain would fall to the floor, and then be gathered up and stored in the garner.

Throughout the Scriptures there are various passages that use this process of separating the chaff from the wheat as an analogy of the way in which God separates the wicked from the righteous. There are many verses that speak about the wicked being blown away like the chaff of the summer threshing floor. The reader can find these verses by looking under *chaff* and *stubble* in an exhaustive concordance.

When John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah, he used this analogy to warn God's people that they were about to be brought to the threshing floor. "[His fan is in His hand," John said, "and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner: but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

When the spirit and power of Elijah came in the person of John the Baptist, God's people were brought to the threshing floor in preparation for the Messiah's First Coming. When the spirit and power of Elijah is here to prepare God's people for the Second Coming, we can expect another threshing to take place.

The Protestant Reformation in the 16th century brought the Church to the threshing floor, and the Messianic movement of this century is going to bring the Church to the threshing floor. The Protestant Reformation forced people to make a choice between remaining under the spiritual authority of the apostate Roman Catholic Church or rejecting Rome's authority. Those who rejected Rome's authority experienced a degree of spiritual liberation. Unfortunately, the Reformers did not go far enough. By holding onto Roman Catholic traditions such as the Sunday Sabbath, they still maintained a spiritual connection to Rome, the seat of the great apostasy.

As the Messianic movement continues to grow and mature, the Protestant Church will be brought to the

threshing floor. Once again God's people will need to make a choice. This time they will need to decide between holding onto Protestant traditions which have their roots in apostate Roman Catholicism, or returning to "the faith that was once delivered unto the saints." The Reformers set God's people free from the false authority of Rome, but they failed to point the liberated saints toward Jerusalem, the original seat of authority for God's Messianic Community. The Messianic movement is being raised up to finish the job that the Reformers started some 500 years ago.

The present threshing of the Protestant Church is still in its early stages, because the Messianic movement is still a young movement. The Messianic movement is not too young, though, to experience a threshing of its own. This is now happening in many places. The threshing that is currently taking place among Messianic believers is separating people into two groups: those who truly know and love the Messiah (these are the wheat), and those who do not (these are the chaff).

More and more frequently we hear about professing Messianic believers who apostasize. These people usually start out by studying about the Jewish roots of their Christian faith. They learn about all the paganism that has crept into the Church. They find out about the history of anti-Semitism and anti-nomianism, and they come to realize that the Torah is still valid.

Up to this point, all is well. Every believer should have knowledge about these things. But "knowledge [without love and humility] puffeth up" (1 Cor. 8:1). If love and humility are not present to provide some balance, then these disciples can become puffed up and proud of their knowledge. When that happens, they make themselves candidates for deception. They begin to question and doubt nearly everything the Church has ever taught - including the teaching that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of the Living God. If these doubting disciples listen long enough to the lies of those who are enemies of Yeshua, then the doubt eventually grows into unbelief and denial of the faith. Then these professing believers depart from the faith and become like the chaff that is driven away by the wind. And, as John the Baptist warned, they will be burned up with unquenchable fire.

John the Baptist warned that the Messiah would thoroughly purge His threshing floor at His First Coming, and now He is beginning to once more purge His floor in preparation for His Second Coming.

There is a story in 2 Samuel 6 (repeated in 1 Chronicles 13) that involves a threshing floor, and this story provides a picture of what is taking place in this present purging of the Messiah's threshing floor. The story tells about King David's attempt to bring the ark of the covenant from Kirjath-jearim to Jerusalem. Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, set the ark on an ox cart. A great procession was formed, with Uzzah and Ahio driving the cart along the road, and David and all Israel playing music "before God with all their might." Everyone was rejoicing and praising the Lord. Then it happened. They came to the threshing

floor of Nachon. The oxen stumbled and the wagon tilted. The holy ark was in danger of falling off! Uzzah, in an effort to keep the ark from falling in the mud, put forth his hand to steady the ark. A natural reaction, but it cost Uzzah his life. "And the anger of Yahweh was kindled against Uzzah, and He smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God" (1 Chr. 13:10). Uzzah was the chaff, blown away and consumed by fire at the threshing floor of Nachon. Ahio was the wheat that survived this threshing and remained.

"Why did God kill Uzzah?" people ask. It's no mystery; the Bible says why: "because he put his hand to the ark." God had given very strict instructions in the Torah about the ark. Only the priests of the family of Kohath were allowed to move the ark, and even they were not allowed to touch the ark itself. They were to touch only the staves that were inserted through the rings on the corners of the ark.

"[T]he sons of Kohath shall come to bear it: but they shall not touch any holy thing lest they die" (Num. 4:15).

There are some things you do not touch. The ark was one of those things, and the identity of the Messiah is another. "Touch not Mine anointed (*mashiach*)" God says in Psalm 105.

The value of the ark was not in the gold that covered it. The value of the ark was due to the fact that it was the centerpiece of the Tabernacle, the *mishkan*, the dwelling place of God. It was the place where the Presence of God dwelt in fiery manifestation, "between the wings of the cherubim." As such, it was the pre-Incarnation symbol of the Incarnation of God in the Messiah Yeshua (John 1:14). When foolish men put forth their hand to tamper with the identity of Yeshua the Messiah, they are running a risk even greater than that of Uzzah. Uzzah touched only the symbol of the Incarnation of God; Yeshua of Nazareth is the actual Incarnation of God.

As the Messianic movement continues to go through this threshing process, every individual had better make certain that his faith is true "wheat," and not chaff. □

THE NAMING OF JACOB'S 12 SONS

Daniel Botkin

When I taught English to foreign students, some of my students had names that sound rather strange to Americans. I had one Korean student named Bum, and another named Suk. I had a Vietnamese girl named Dung. I didn't have the heart to tell her what her name sounded like in English.

Most people are stuck for life with the name their parents gave them, unless they want to go to the trouble and expense of having their name legally changed. Some people who don't like their given name just use a nickname such as Butch.

In Biblical times newborns were often given a name in connection to some event or hope surrounding the birth. This custom can be seen especially in the naming of the 12 sons of Jacob, who grew up to be the fathers of the 12 tribes of Israel. A reader has to look at the Hebrew text to see the plays on words in the naming of Jacob's 12 sons. Let us look at the naming of each son in the order of their births.

When Jacob's wife Leah brought forth her first son, "she called his name Reuben: for she said, Surely the Lord has seen my affliction." The name Reuben means "See, a son." It is a combination of the plural imperative (command) form of the verb *see*, *re'u* (ראה) and the word for *son*, *ben* (בן). The sound of *Reuben* also resembles Leah's statement "he has seen my affliction," which is *ra'ah b'oni* (ראה בעניי).

Leah named her second son Shimon "because the Lord hath heard [*sham'ah*, שמע] that I was hated." Shimon (written "Simeon" in most English Bibles) is formed from the verb *hear*, the same word used in the *Shema* ("Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God...")

After the birth of her third son, Leah said, "Now this time my husband will be joined [*y'laveh*, ילדה] unto me, because I have born him three sons: therefore was his name called Levi [*lavi*, "joined"]."

The birth of Leah's fourth son caused her to praise the Lord. "Now I will praise [*odeh*, אודה] the Lord," she said. Therefore she called his name Judah [*y'hudah*, יהודה], a name formed from a verb meaning *praise*.

Rachel, Jacob's second wife, had not yet conceived. In her desperation to have a child, she gave her maid Bilhah to be a concubine who would bear children on her behalf. When Bilhah brought forth a son, Rachel said, "God hath judged me [*danani* דנני], and hath also heard my voice, and hath given me a son." Therefore she called his name Dan [דן].

When Bilhah gave birth to another son, Rachel said, "With great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed." She called this son Naphtali [נפתלי]. The phrase "with great wrestlings have I wrestled" is *naftulei elohim niftalti* [נפתולי אלהים נפתלתי]. The word *elohim* is usually translated "God," so this could be translated "with the wrestlings of God I have wrestled." The Stone Edition of the Tanach translates it "Sacred schemes have I maneuvered."

Not to be outdone by her sister, Leah gave her maid Zilpah to Jacob to bear children on her behalf. When Zilpah gave birth to a son, Leah said, "*Bagad*," and called his name Gad. The word *bagad* is written in the Hebrew text as a single word, בגד, but when read, it is pronounced as two

separate words, *ba' gad* (בא גד). *Ba* (when written בא), means "comes" or "has come." *Gad* can mean fortune or prosperity. Therefore *bagad*, when understood as *ba' gad*, means "fortune is coming (or has come)." The KJV translates *gad* as "a troop," which explains why the KJV has Leah saying, "A troop cometh." Rashi interpreted *gad* here as "mazal tov."

Leah expressed her happiness at the birth of Zilpah's next son by naming him Asher, a name that means *happy*. "Happy am I [*ash'ri*]!" she said. "For the daughters shall call me happy."

Leah herself conceived again and gave birth to another son. "God hath given me my hire [*sachar*, שכר]," she said, and named him Issachar (יששכר).

Leah bore yet another son. This time she said, "Now my husband will dwell with me [*yizbleni*, יזבלני]." She gave this son the name Z'vulun, usually written Zebulun in English Bibles.

Rachel finally conceived and bore a son. She named him Joseph (*Yosef*, יוסף), saying, "The Lord shall add [*yosef*, יסף] to me another son." (Or, "May the Lord add to me another son.")

Rachel got her wish for another son, but it cost her her life. She died giving birth to Jacob's twelfth and final son. With her dying breath, Rachel called this son Ben-oni ("son of my sorrow," בן-אֹנִי). Jacob, however, called the child Benjamin ("son of my right hand," בנימין).

Thus we see that all 12 of Jacob's sons were given names in connection with events surrounding their births and/or in connection with their mothers' hopes. These 12 sons appear as major characters in Genesis, the first book of the Bible, and their names are mentioned in John's final description of the heavenly Jerusalem in Revelation, the last book of the Bible. (See Rev. 21:12.) Imagine the joy these mothers would have experienced if they had known then that someday the 12 gates of the New Jerusalem would forever bear the names of their 12 sons. □

THE UNCTION

Daniel Botkin

Uction is that indefinable, indescribable something which an old, renowned Scottish preacher describes thus: "There is sometimes somewhat in preaching that cannot be described either to matter or expression, and cannot be described what it is, or from whence it cometh, but with a sweet violence it pierceth into the heart and affections and comes immediately from the Lord; but if there be any way to obtain such a thing it is by the heavenly disposition of the speaker." We call it unction. -E.M. Bounds

Many of us have heard a preacher or a Bible teacher speak in such a way that grabs our soul. As we listen we somehow intuitively sense the importance and the truth of the words that are being spoken. Perhaps we have heard the same ideas proclaimed by others in the past, but this time the words are sinking in, and we see the importance and the beauty of what is being proclaimed. We may have heard others proclaim this same truth before, but this time there is a difference. It is the difference between mere truth and truth that has been vitalized by the unction or anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Whether we preach to great multitudes from a pulpit or speak to individuals one at a time, we need the unction of the Holy Spirit on our words. A holy life saturated with prayer will bring the power of God's presence and the presence of God's power into our speaking. Nothing else will bring the unction. Merely believing the right doctrines will not bring it. Cold, mechanical observance of man-made traditions will not bring it. Using carnal means to manipulate the minds and excite the emotions of listeners will not do it. Without holiness and prayer the genuine unction will not be there.

The unction is something that carnal men cannot duplicate. Carnal men may *imitate* the unction - and many do a great imitation - but they

cannot duplicate it.

Without the unction, our hearers are not as likely to recognize the importance and the truth of the words we speak. Even miracles are no substitute for the anointing of the Spirit on our words. Miracles are wonderful, and something we should expect more often. But if a man's only reason for believing is because he witnessed a miracle, his faith might be short-lived. The Bible gives several examples of people who saw miracles and later lost their faith.

We cannot have miracles without the unction, but it is possible to have the unction without miracles. John the Baptist had the unction and went forth in the spirit and power of Elijah. Elijah was one of the greatest miracle workers ever, yet the Bible says, "John did no miracle..." Not a single one, even though he went in the spirit and power of that great miracle worker Elijah. However, the Scripture is quick to add these words to the record of John's no-miracle ministry: "...but all things that John spake of this Man were true. And many believed on Him there" (John 10:41f). John's words rang true to the people because of the unction, without a single miracle to confirm his message.

The ministry of John the Baptist is introduced in a peculiar way in Luke 3:1f: "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and of the reign of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high

priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zachariah in the wilderness."

Most readers do not care much about all the political and religious big shots listed here, since they are minor characters and somewhat incidental to the main story. It's good that these pompous, worldly leaders are mentioned, though, because it shows us a wonderful truth. It shows us that when God wants to send His word to someone, He can bypass all the Caesars, governors, tetrarchs, and high priests, and send His word to a man in the wilderness, someone outside the political and religious mainstream.

We do not need political or ecclesiastical power to get the job done, but we do need the unction of the Holy Spirit, just as John the Baptist needed it. John did no miracles, he had no tape ministry or newsletter, he had no sound system or building or even pews for his listeners to sit on, yet he turned many in Israel back to the Lord their God, and prepared the way for the Messiah. He was able to do it because he had the unction, the anointing of the Holy Spirit. When asked who he was, he answered, "I am the voice of one crying." That One crying through him was the One God of Israel's *Shema*. John became a voice for Someone Else. He let God be the mind that decided what the voice would say. This is what the unction does to a man.

The unction is not only a matter of *what* is said, it is also a matter of *how* it is said. Yeshua was the greatest Teacher who ever lived, but the content of His teachings was not always entirely new or different. Many of the things He said had been said by other rabbis before Him. Much of His teaching consisted of repetition, reaffirming, rearranging, paraphrasing and clarifying earlier teachings which were already familiar to His hearers. Much of the content was not extremely

different from what others had said, yet "the people were astonished at His teaching" (Mt. 7:28). At the synagogue in Nazareth, they "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth" (Lk. 4:22). Like the Bridegroom in the Song of Solomon, "His lips dropped sweet-smelling myrrh" (Song 5:13).

When the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest Yeshua, His would-be arresters returned empty-handed. The power behind His words so stunned them that they did not even try to bring Him back to those who had sent them. "Never man spake like this Man!" they exclaimed.

I like to imagine how the rest of the conversation might have gone:

"What was it that he said?"

"Well, He said that the first and greatest commandment is to love God with all the heart, with all the-

"We've said that! What's so great about that? What else did he say?"

"He said the second greatest commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself."

"We've said that, too! What's this 'Never man spake like this Man' business? These are the same things we teach!"

"I know. But there was something about the way He said it..."

The people were astonished not just by *what* Yeshua said, but by *how* He said it. "For He taught then as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Mt. 7:29). The scribes had taught many of the same things, but without the authority that comes from the unction of the Holy Spirit.

We can know all the right doctrines and teach them without authority, like the scribes did, or we can get the unction and let the Holy Spirit back up our words in a way that will cause our hearers to see the importance and the beauty of the truths that we proclaim. The only way to get the unction is by living a holy life and spending time in prayer. So let's do it!

*

Without perseverance in prayer, the unction, like the manna overkept, breeds worms. -E.M. Bounds

THE ARMY OF LOCUSTS

Dr. Daniel Botkin

In Revelation chapter 9 John saw an army of locusts come out of the smoke that issued out of the bottomless pit. This army of locusts had power, but their power was limited. They were not to hurt the grass or trees; they were allowed to harm only those men who did not have the seal of God in their foreheads; they had power to torment like a scorpion; they were allowed to hurt men for "five months." John described their appearance with these words:

And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.

DESCRIBING VISIONS AND INTERPRETING PROPHECY

The Book of Revelation is called a "prophecy" (Rev. 1:3). Sometimes prophecy is something that the prophet just intuitively senses as a result of his spiritual sensitivity and receptivity. Other times prophecy is given in the form of a vision, something the prophet sees. When prophecy takes the form of a vision, as it did for John, it is often not intended to be understood in a literal, simplistic way. God showed the prophets visions and they recorded what they saw, perhaps without even fully understanding exactly what their visions meant.

Some visions were difficult to describe. The prophets sometimes lacked the vocabulary to tell exactly what it was that they saw. This is why the prophets' descriptions of their visions are sprinkled with words such

as *like, as, as if, as it were, like unto, the likeness of, the appearance of, etc.* Look at how often such words appear in John's description of the army of locusts, or in Ezekiel's description of the cherubim. Prophets were forced to use this language of ambiguity and imprecision, a "reverential vagueness," because earthly languages cannot fully describe heavenly visions. The best that prophets can do with earthly languages is to describe their heavenly visions by comparing them to earthly things with which their readers or listeners are familiar.

THE ARMY OF LOCUSTS: WHAT ARE THEY?

So, what was John talking about when he described the army of locusts? A fleet of 21st-century military helicopters? Some modern-day teachers who promote trendy, pop interpretations of prophecy see nothing more than helicopters in these verses. Christians of the past, who knew history better than most of us do, saw this army of locusts as a prophecy of the rise and spread of Islam. Writer Robert Wieland states that the Reformers "clearly recognized Islam" in this passage.¹ John Foxe, author of *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, said that it is "clearer than light itself" that this is a prophecy of the Muslim conquests.²

"Well into the nineteenth century a chorus of Protestant prophetic scholars identified Islam's niche in prophecy as being these fifth and sixth trumpets," Wieland says.³ Commentator Albert Barnes wrote: "With surprising unanimity, commentators have agreed in regarding this as referring to the empire of the Saracens [Arab Muslims -DB], or to the rise and the progress of the religion and the empire set up by Muhammed."⁴

Commentators may not agree with unanimity anymore, but many of the older commentators agree. W.B. Godbey began his comments on Revelation 9 by stating, "This chapter

is a thrilling description of the rise and progress of the Mohammedan wars."⁵ Adam Clarke said that John's description of the army of locusts "certainly agrees better with the Saracens than with any other people or nation" and "agrees very well with the troops of Mohammed."⁶ Matthew Henry referred to the army of locusts as "the armies of the Mohamedan empire."⁷ John Wesley said, "All this agrees with the slaughter which the Saracens made for a long time after Mahomet's [Mohammed's] death."⁸

Let's look at some of the details of John's vision and see how it describes the rise and spread of Islam.

OUT OF THE ABYSS

The army of locusts came forth from a dark cloud of smoke that rolled out of the bottomless pit. The "bottomless pit" in Greek is *abussos* (αβυσσος), the source of our English word *abyss*. Some English Bibles simply translate it "the abyss." It is remarkable that Abul A'la Mawdudi, one of Islam's most prominent scholars of the 20th century, used the very word *abyss* when writing about the beginnings of Islam. In a book written to introduce English-speaking people to the basics of Islam, Mawdudi tells his readers that Muhammed and his message came out of "**Arabia - the Abyss of Darkness.**"⁹ These are his exact words, and they appear in bold print as a sub-heading in his book. It is no mere coincidence that this outstanding Islamic author unwittingly identified Islam's source, in bold print no less, as "the Abyss of Darkness," using the very same word that appears in Revelation.

LOCUSTS IN ARAB LITERATURE

Why an army of locusts to represent an army of Arabs? About 900 years before John's Revelation, the Prophet Joel had symbolically described an invading, attacking army as a swarm of locusts. Any large,

invading army might be compared to a swarm of locusts, but the Arabs and Muhammed have a unique connection to the locust: "In the Bedoween romance *Antar*, the locust is introduced as the national emblem of the Ishmaelites [one of the ancestors of the Arabs -DB]. And it is a remarkable coincidence that Muslim tradition speaks of locusts having dropped into the hands of Muhammed, bearing on their wings this inscription - 'We are the army of the Great God.'"¹⁰

As we saw a Muslim writer unwittingly connect Islam's beginnings to the Abyss, here we see Muslim writers unwittingly connect Islam to the locusts that come from the Abyss.

THE RESTRICTIONS

As stated at the beginning of this article, the army of locusts had certain restrictions placed upon them. "And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads" (Rev. 9:4).

Once again Islam connects itself to these prophecies by the words of its own literature. Concerning trees and vegetation, the Koran says: "When you fight the battles of the Lord ... [d]estroy no palm trees, nor burn any fields of grain. Cut down no fruit trees..."¹¹ Commentator Albert Barnes wrote: "This precept is the more remarkable because it has been the usual custom in war, and particularly among barbarians and semi-barbarians, to destroy grain and fruit, and especially to cut down fruit trees, in order to do greater injury to an enemy."¹²

Those with "the seal of God" were not to be killed, according to Revelation 9:4. Muslim armies were instructed by the Caliph Aboubekir, Muhammed's successor, to not kill the humble, pious Christians who lived in monasteries. Concerning such Christians, the Muslim armies were told to "let them alone, and neither kill them, nor destroy their monasteries."¹³ It is a well-known fact that the Muslims had deep respect for St. Francis of

Assisi. They likewise had respect for humble, sincere Christians in earlier centuries. Apparently these were the Christians who (at least in the minds of Muslims) had "the seal of God" to protect them.

The locusts in John's vision were not allowed to "kill them," but they were to torment them like scorpions for a period of "five months." Commentator Albert Barnes understood this to mean that Islam was "not to cut off and to destroy the church, but it was to bring upon it various calamities to continue for a definite period [i.e., 'five months' -DB]."¹⁴

The "five months" is understood by most commentators to mean five *prophetic* months, that is 150 years. This figure is based on the "one day = one year" principle suggested in Numbers 14:34, Ezekiel 4:6, and Daniel 9:24ff. Muslims did, indeed, vex and afflict the Christian world for five prophetic months. After a century and a half of war and conquest, "an important change came over the followers of the prophet of Mecca, turning them from the love of conquest to the pursuits of literature and science."¹⁵ Barnes says, "From that period they ceased to be formidable to the church; their limits were gradually contracted; their power diminished; and the Christian world, in regard to them, was substantially at peace."¹⁶

THEIR APPEARANCE

John's description of the locusts' appearance sounds very much like history's descriptions of the Muslim armies of Mohammed's day. The first thing John notes is that "the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle." The locusts were not just horses, but something more, something "*like* unto horses." Adam Clarke wrote: "The Arabs are the most expert horsemen in the world: they live so much on horseback that the horse and his rider seem to make but one animal."¹⁷ This would account for John's description of the horse and rider as if they were one single being, rather than two separate beings.

John describes the locusts as

wearing "as it were crowns like gold" - not actual gold crowns, but "*as it were* crowns, *like* gold." In the Arab story *Antar*, cited earlier, it is written that God intended for Arabs "that their turbans should be unto them instead of diadems."¹⁸ Godbey points out that yellow turbans were worn by Muslims.¹⁹

John's locusts had faces of men and hair of women. Historical references from the 3rd, 4th, and 5th centuries mention that Arabs wore beards ("faces of men") and long, uncut hair ("as the hair of women").²⁰ Quoting again from the Arab poem *Antar*, we see a reference to beards, shoulder-length hair, and turbans on Arab men: "He adjusted himself properly, twisted his whiskers, and folded up his hair under his turban, drawing it from off his shoulders."²¹

The "teeth as the teeth of lions," a phrase borrowed from Joel 1:6, speaks of the ferociousness and violence of the army. The "breastplates of iron" speak of the Arabs' armor. The poem *Antar* makes at least four references to a warrior's cuirass or breastplate.²² The Koran says, "God hath given you coats of mail to defend you in your wars."²³

The locusts' "tails like unto scorpions" may be understood to refer to either 1) the Muslims' ability "to shoot backward with unerring precision" while retreating at full gallop²⁴; or, 2) the fact that victorious Muslims "infected the conquered with their pernicious doctrines" by forcing them to convert to Islam.²⁵

GOD'S PURPOSE FOR THE PLAGUE OF LOCUSTS

The reason God allowed this plague was to bring His people to repentance. This can be seen in the final two verses of Revelation 9: "And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk. Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication,

nor of their thefts.”

Anyone who knows anything about Church history knows that these were the very sins in which the Church was steeped when the false prophet Muhammed was raised up. Just as God used the heathen kings of Assyria and Babylon as a rod of correction to chasten and correct and purify His people in olden times, so He used the heathen Muhammed as “the scourge of God for the castigation of fallen religion.”²⁶ After a century and a half of war and conquest, Islam had supplanted Christianity in much of the eastern empire. Adam Clarke points out that the part of the Church which survived the Islamic wars “was not at all corrected by the judgments which fell upon the eastern church, but continued its senseless adoration of angels, saints, relics, etc., and does so to the present day.”²⁷

THE PLAGUE OF LOCUSTS:

PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Christians of the past believed that Revelation 9 was a prophecy of the rise of Islam and the Muslim invasion of the Christian world. If this view is correct, does this mean that Revelation 9 can have no further fulfillment in events of the present or future? Not at all. The nature of prophecy is such that a prophetic word may find its fulfillment more than one time, in more than one single event. Consider the prophecies in Matthew 24. Some found their fulfillment in the destruction of the Temple in AD 70, and they will also find further fulfillment in events just prior to the Second Coming.

Whether we agree with those who saw Revelation 9 as a reference to Islam or not, one thing is certain. The Islamic armies are rising again and setting out once more to vex the world like a plague of locusts. Centuries ago they abandoned their lust for conquest and world domination in order to pursue literature and the sciences. Now they have abandoned their love for literature and the sciences and returned to their lust for conquest and world domination.

WHAT ARE WE TO DO?

Some people’s response to the current threat of Islamic terrorism is to pack their bags and head for the hills, to move to some remote wilderness location which will hopefully be safe from any effects of terrorism. This reaction is understandable, but it ignores God’s purpose in allowing the plague of terrorism. God’s purpose is to get His people to wake up and repent of their sins, so that they can call others to repentance and faith and righteous living.

The desired effect of the plague is national repentance and revival. We will not help to bring this about by fear-inspired seclusion and isolation from the masses of people who need to hear the call to repentance. A light hidden under an agricultural bushel basket will not serve its purpose of helping those who are in darkness.

In addition to calling our nation to repentance, we need to educate people. “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge,” God said (Hos. 4:6). Most Americans’ knowledge of the Scriptures is very superficial and shallow or totally non-existent. Sadly, this is often true even among church people. As a result, people are ripe for deception. One deceptive lie that is currently making great headway among many Americans is the notion that Islam is “a fine, noble religion.” Unfortunately, even our President has used these words to describe Islam. While there are some fine, noble Muslim people, the religion of Islam is a counterfeit faith that has as its source the bottomless pit, the Abyss of Darkness.

The Israelis have dealt with the spirit of Islam longer than we have. They may not understand everything about the spiritual nature of Islam, its source, and the spirit behind it, but many Israelis understand enough to know that Allah, the god of Islam, is not the same as Yahweh, the God of Jews and Christians. In a recent article in *The Jewish Press*, Moshe Feiglin writes about his visit to the U.S. Feiglin happened to be in New York the week of September 11. He was in a small grocery store when he heard

President Bush announce on the radio that there would be a national day of prayer.

“Go to church, to the synagogue, to the mosque, and pray,” the President said. Feiglin describes his reaction:

“Did I hear right?” I ask the storekeeper. “Did he say mosque?”

She nodded.

“At this very moment you’ve lost the war,” I say to the astonished storekeeper.

Feiglin explains: “They slaughtered you in the name of Allah, and now the President calls on you to pray to him.”²⁸

It is not popular to say that Islam is a counterfeit faith that should be renounced, rejected, and abandoned by Muslim people. The spirit of this age is pushing for an all-inclusive, New Age view that sees all religions - even Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism - as legitimate faiths. Our proclaiming that all non-Biblical faiths are illegitimate will not make us popular, but we are not in a popularity contest. The Scripture speaks of only “one faith” (Eph. 4:5), “the faith that was once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). Our proclaiming this one faith, the faith described in the Holy Scriptures, will set us apart from the mainstream, but it is the only hope for our nation. □

1 Robert J. Wieland, “Islam Challenges the World,” *Signs of the Times* (Aug. 1985), 12.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*

4 Allen Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the Bible*, Vol. 18, 398.

5 W.B. Godbey, *Commentary on the New Testament*, Vol. 1, 49.

6 Adam Clarke, *Clarke’s Commentary*, Vol. 18, 1098, 1100.

7 Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Vol. 10, 1167.

8 John Wesley, *Notes on the Whole Bible*, 903.

9 Abul A’la Mawdudi, *Towards Understanding Islam*, 8th ed. (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: National Offset Printing Press, 1986), 63.

10 Barnes, quoting Forster’s *Mohammedism Unveiled* (vol. i. p.217), 399.

11 *Ibid.*, 403.

12 *Ibid.*

13 *Ibid.*

14 *Ibid.*, 405.

15 Barnes, 408.

16 *Ibid.*

17 Clarke, 1100.

18 Barnes, 401.

19 Godbey, 58.

20 Barnes, 400f.

21 *Ibid.*, 401.

22 *Ibid.*, 401f.

23 *Ibid.*, 402.

24 Godbey, 59.

25 Clarke, 1101.

26 Godbey, 58.

27 Clarke, 1103.

28 Moshe Feiglin, “Why America Has Already Lost the War,” *The Jewish Press*, 5 Oct. 2001, M6.

UNTIL THE SEED SHOULD COME

Dr. Daniel Botkin

Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the seed should come to whom the promise was made. - Gal.3:19

Christians sometimes quote this verse in an attempt to justify their casting away of the Torah as a moral guide for believers.

"The law was intended to last only until a certain time," they say, "until the Messiah, the Seed, had come. Now that Jesus has come, the Old Testament law no longer applies. It was only meant to last until Jesus came."

The anti-nomian view (the idea that the Torah can be ignored by Christians) presents some major problems. First, if the Torah was meant to end when the Seed came, then why did the Seed warn His disciples to not even think that He had come to abolish the Torah? (Mt. 5:17ff) And if the Torah is no longer valid, how are Christians supposed to know how God wants them to live and worship? The New Testament gives some instruction, of course. It is worth noting, though, that many of the New Testament instructions are direct quotes from the Torah. Even anti-nomians like Scofield admit this: "The [OT] commandments are used in the distinctively Christian Scriptures [the NT] as an instruction in righteousness," Scofield wrote. (*Scofield Reference Bible*, Gal.3:24 footnote.)

Scofield's observation is true, and it raises an important question: If the Old Testament Law was meant to last only until the Seed came, then what business did Peter, Paul, James, and John have telling Christians to obey Old Testament commandments? They sometimes even used the phrase "for it is written" to give added weight to their authority when they quoted Old Testament commands. If it is now no longer necessary to obey Old Testament commands because the Seed has come, then what difference does it make that "it is written"?

Obviously *some* commandments of

the Torah are still binding on Christians. Most Bible-believing Christians agree that the Ten Commandments should be obeyed. (Well, nine of them, anyway. For some reason the Sabbath commandment is viewed as abolished.) Bible-believing Christians generally agree on other various Torah commands (prohibitions against sodomy, witchcraft, talebearing, etc.). So obviously *some* of the Torah's commands are still binding for Christians. And, according to Galatians 3:19, part of the Torah was meant to last only "until the Seed should come." The Big Question is: Which part of the Torah was meant to last only until the coming of the Seed? Who gets to decide which Torah commands Christians can ignore and which ones they should still obey? And what is the basis for determining whether a commandment is abolished or still binding? The anti-nomian view cannot answer these questions.

The anti-nomians focus on the phrase "until the Seed should come," with special emphasis on the word *until*. If we first look at the introductory phrase "it was added because of transgressions" (with a special emphasis on the words *added* and *transgressions*), we can come up with a view that explains which part of the Torah was meant to last only until the Seed should come. First let's consider the word *added*.

If something is "added," then there has to be something else to which it is added. The use of the verb *add* necessitates the existence of a prior addend to which the second addend is attached. If the law was "added," then *to what prior addend was it added?* More importantly, did Paul mean that the *entire Law* was added (to something)? Or, did he mean that *part of the Law* was added to a *prior, already-existing Torah*? If this is the case (and I believe it is), then this would help to clarify which part of the Torah was meant to be temporary, "until the Seed should come," and which part of the

Torah was meant to be observed even after the Seed came. Obviously the part of the Law that was added as an addendum to the prior, already-existing Torah would be that part which was meant to last only until the Seed should come, and the prior, already-existing Torah would be that part which was to continue even after the Seed came.

Now let's consider the phrase "because of transgressions." This will help clarify what law was added. We need only ask ourselves this question: Which part of the Torah makes a provision to cover transgressions? The answer: That part of the Law which gives instructions concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices. See, for example, Leviticus 16:3, 16, & 21, where the sin-offering and burnt-offering are offered "because of their transgressions" - the exact phrase Paul uses in Galatians 3:19.

The next question: Were the laws concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices for transgressions added to a prior, already-existing Torah? Yes, they were. The Torah was first given to God's people when they heard the voice of Yahweh utter the Ten Commandments. (See Deuteronomy 4:13, 36; 5:4, 22.) Then Moses went up into the mountain. When the people got tired of waiting for Moses to return, they transgressed the Torah by making a golden calf to worship. This transgression of the Torah made it necessary for God to add something more to the Torah, namely, laws concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

"The law was added because of transgressions." This statement alone strongly implies (if not proves) that there was, indeed, an already-existing Torah, because "where no law is, there is no transgression" (Rom. 4:15). In order for transgression to exist, there must be a law to transgress. It was the transgression of the already-existing Torah that made it necessary to add the law of burnt-offerings and sacrifices. Therefore we could understand Galatians 3:19 to mean "the law [of

burnt-offerings and sacrifices] was added [to the Torah] because of transgressions [against the Torah].”

These laws of burnt-offerings and sacrifices were added to cover transgressions, but burnt-offering and sacrifice was not the thing God was originally after: “For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices. But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be My people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imaginations of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward” (Jer. 7:22-24). Obedience was what God wanted, but transgression created a need for burnt-offerings and sacrifices to be added to the Torah.

It is remarkable that even Scofield, in spite of his anti-Torah bias, makes this comment about these verses from Jeremiah: “The command concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices was not given to the people till they had broken the decalogue, the law of obedience” (Jer. 7:22, fn.1, emphasis mine.) It is even more remarkable that in this same footnote, Scofield refers the reader back to his notes at Exodus 20, where he separates the giving of the Law into stages. Scofield sees the first stage as consisting of the following: the giving of the Ten Commandments (Ex. ch. 20), the “judgments” (Ex. 21:1-23:13), the feasts (Ex. 23:14-19), and the instructions for the conquest of Canaan (Ex. 23:20-33). Scofield calls this first stage “pure law, with no provision of priesthood and sacrifice for failure.” (Emphasis mine). He views the giving of the laws of burnt-offerings and sacrifices as a separate stage, distinct from this first stage. According to Scofield, the laws of burnt-offerings and sacrifices were given as something *separate from and subsequent to* the people’s transgression of the Torah, and *because of* the people’s transgression of the Torah. In these notes, the anti-nomian Scofield has unwittingly shown that “the law [of burnt-offerings

and sacrifices] was added [to the Torah] because of transgressions [against the Torah]!”

All of this can be summed up in the words of Samuel: “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (1 Sam. 15:22). What God wants is obedience. It is transgression that creates the need for burnt-offerings and sacrifices; therefore the Lord has no pleasure in burnt-offerings and sacrifices. Hebrews 10:6-9 elaborates on this: “In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do Thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt-offerings and offering for sin Thou wouldest not, neither had pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second.”

In the above verse, God did not “take away” the Old Testament Law that He might “establish” New Testament Grace. In the context of this passage, the “law” that is being discussed is the system of burnt-offerings and sacrifices that were offered at the Temple by the Levitical priesthood for the transgressions of the people. Because the Messiah had been sacrificed and the Temple was soon to be destroyed, God was in the process of “taking away the first [system of animal sacrifices for transgressions]” in order to “establish the second [system of sacrifice, viz., the sacrifice of Messiah, who was ‘wounded for our transgressions’ and was stricken ‘for the transgression of my people’ (Isa. 53:5, 8)].”

A close study of Hebrews, especially chapters 9 & 10, will show that the writer’s goal was to show his Messianic Jewish readers that the sacrifice of the Messiah was the fulfillment of all the previous sacrifices and burnt-offerings that were offered in the Temple. As long as the Temple was still standing and as long as the Levitical priesthood was still operating, Messianic Jews were free to participate

in Temple worship during this period of transition. (This is obvious in the Book of Acts.) However, they needed to understand that Yeshua was the fulfillment of the sacrifices. The only value of burnt-offerings and sacrifices was in the fact that they pointed back to the sacrifice of the Messiah, the “more excellent sacrifice.” These sacrifices could not, however, be a substitute for the sacrifice of the Messiah.

This idea harmonizes quite well with the idea that “the law [of burnt-offerings and sacrifices] was added [to the Torah] because of transgressions [against the Torah].” The writer of Hebrews was telling his Jewish readers that the laws of burnt offerings and sacrifices were only necessary until the Messiah should come, and Paul was telling his Gentile readers in Galatia the same thing.

If this understanding of Galatians 3:19 is correct (which I believe it is), then it will make a great difference in how we understand some of the other references to “the law” in Galatians. This view takes into account the fact that “the law” which the so-called Judaizers were trying to push onto the Gentiles in Galatia *included the laws of burnt-offerings and sacrifices* that were offered at the Temple. And before Gentiles were allowed to participate in these offerings at the Temple, they had to undergo circumcision, which meant a full-fledged, formal conversion to Judaism. And this, of course, was what Paul was opposing - the idea that justification comes by a formal conversion to Judaism.

The next time you read Galatians, keep these four things in mind when you see the words “the law”:

1. Paul could not have been preaching against the Law per se, because Christians were still expected to obey some parts of the Torah.
2. Christians were not required to obey the laws of burnt-offerings and sacrifices.
3. The law that the Judaizers were trying to push on the Gentile believers included the laws of burnt-offerings and sacrifices.
4. For Gentiles, Temple worship involving sacrifices required a full-fledged, formal conversion to Judaism in order to be justified. □