



HEBREW FRAGMENTS

DR. FRANK LEEDS III

Introduction

A Hebrew scholar, I am not. Years ago I received a scholarship to study Hebrew in Israel but it was not because of my intellectual grasp of this beautiful language, but rather because of my interest in it. My real interest, of which I had too many at the time, centered on the different personalities I observed with people who spoke different languages. The two extremes seemed to me to be Hebrew and Greek. Succinctly stated, these two languages are the results of people who do not think alike. Language is a reflection of the culture. Language is 'merely' words organized around cultural experiences.

As a student of the Holy Scriptures, the old and new testaments reveal vastly different mindsets, or so it seemed to me. I simply loved the fact that Jesus communicated via stories and parables and when I compared that with the doctrinal purity portions of my education, I rejoiced that Jesus was a Hebrew. I have no regrets about going to Switzerland for a period of study but I do regret not being able to work on a Kibbutz in Israel to learn modern Hebrew.

So, life happens and we have just moved on doing a variety of other things in life. I went on to pastor two churches and my church in New York City had services in English, Spanish, French, Mandarin, and Cantonese Chinese. A part time chaplain's job in a hospital unexpectedly turned into a full time administrative position. After that, I became the President/CEO of two different nursing home companies, a training center for adults with developmental disabilities, the president of an engine research and development company, and then finished my career as a part time assistant pastor at Oakhurst United Methodist Church in Seminole, FL.

I share this with you so that you understand that I have had many more interests than Hebrew and to underscore my lack of

Hebrew scholarship. That being so, why this little booklet? When I retired from my church, one of my dear neighbors [Arlette] asked me if I would teach her and her friends, the Torah. I immediately said “yes”. Because I discourage the taking of notes, I produced those notes in a booklet form entitled: **Penetrating the Pentateuch.**

Why you may ask would I want to discourage the taking of notes. Isn't that what education is all about? No, it is not. Education, particularly Hebrew education is about listening. Hebrew thought and religion is all about the ear. The great shama: “Hear Oh, Israel, the Lord thy God is One.” To understand properly the ancient text in either the Hebrew or the Christian texts, one has to engage in the stories. One has to feel the sand under your feet, the heat on your back, the sun in your eyes, the wind in your face, and to listen. To just listen and to engage in what is being said. One has to ‘be there’ and the taking of notes will remove your emotions and sensitivity to what is going on.



That process reinvigorated my interest in Hebrew and in checking on the meaning of words and seeing anew the different mentalities that I had already discovered. I do read a fair amount of the works of Hebrew scholars. In gathering some of these fragments or gems, at least gems to me, I wanted to share these findings with my class. This is not intended to be a scholarly work so I am not footnoting the source of all my readings. However, I also want to give credit to scholars past and present who have fed me. Thus, I will include a list of a few of these

“East is east, and West is west, and never the twain shall meet.” Rather than using the terms East and West, for the purpose of this work I shall use the terms Hebrew and Greek. One can certainly live in the USA and be a Hebrew but still think like a Greek or one could be a Greek and think like a Hebrew. What is the difference?

The Greek or western mind thinks in terms of adjectives. When asked to describe something they will tell you its shape, color, texture, and all about its appearance. The Hebrew will tell you about its function. Looking at a knife, for example, the Greek will tell you it is long, sharp, hard, has a handle, etc. The Hebrew will tell you it is a tool for cutting. The Greek is very comfortable speaking in abstract terminology. The Hebrew is interested in the concrete. If it is not relative to the senses or something that can be seen, touched, tasted, heard, or smelled, then it does not mean much.

One of my favorite stories is about the elderly gentleman who developed a reputation as a “lover of children”. He lived next to a school and could often be seen talking with the children as they were going to school or when school got out. One day, the gentleman was repairing his broken driveway and as he was troweling the cement smoothly, school got out and a group of children ran thru his work area and messed up all of his work on the cement. When this happened, he merely smiled to himself and began to trowel all over again.

His neighbor saw all this take place and went to man and said, “I can not believe you just smiled and repaired all your work without yelling at the children.” The old gentleman responded with, “I learned a long time ago that love is never in the abstract, it is in the concrete.” That, dear reader, is the Hebrew mindset. ‘Love’ for the Hebrew mind is not an emotion, it is an action. If there is no action, then there is no love.

“Loving your neighbor” for the Greek mind is feeling the warm fuzzy that comes from love. To the Hebrew, it is doing loving acts for your neighbor. So, one of the things that is helpful in understanding the Scriptures is to understand the ‘mind-set’. When you come across words that you can not touch, see, smell, taste, etc. it is helpful to know the action behind the words.

Another major difference is the western accent on the individual vs. the eastern accent on the community. The religious life for much of the west is about the cleanliness of your life or the purity of your soul. Some would call it sanctification or the movement towards perfection and it is all about ‘me’. For the eastern mind, morality is all about the social and one’s relationship and responsibility towards one’s neighbors. It is not about ‘me’ it is about ‘us’. Being moral means being about to ‘maintain face’ or ‘honor’ with your community.

A third difference is the expectation of the proper interpretation of a portion of scripture. We in the west have a tendency to expect there to be just one proper interpretation. Those in the east have no such expectation. For both, there is the technical interpretation as to the meaning of words at the time they were written, the syntax, the historical context, etc. Hebrew often has a story, within a story, within a story. Thus the interpretations are multi-leveled. There is also the emotional component. In reviewing what you have learned, the question for the eastern mind is: “How did that make you feel?” Then the interpretation follows the path of; “What did you learn for the way that you felt?”

The same issues service in the fine arts. In judging a painting on canvass for example, our western mind set usually looks at the technicality and the complexity of the brush strokes. The eastern mind set would judge the painting on how it made the viewer feel.

Both east and west would maintain that the scriptures were breathed into. Thus one will find one's self reading a portion of the text, and feel absolutely nothing. Reading it again later and the meaning of story can pop out with you. Why? We are different people on the later read. It is the same reason different people can read the same passage and see something differently.

Name: What is in a name? My name is a label. It is what distinguishes me from other people. My last name identifies my family via my father's and his roots. I am also Leeds III which further distinguishes me from my father and grandfather.

In ancient Hebrew the name is not just a label but rather a description of character and meaning that is tied to the person. An interesting example of this is taken from the book of Genesis, chapter 5. This is the written account of Adam's line:

ADAM	=	MAN
SETH	=	APPOINTED
ENOSH	=	MORTAL
KENAN	=	DWELLING
MAHALALEL	=	the LIGHT OF GOD
JARED	=	CAME DOWN
ENOCK	=	DEDICATED
METHUSELAH	=	HIS DEATH WILL BRING
LAMECH	=	the DESPAIRING
REST	=	REST

Putting his long line of decedents together we get: Man appointed a mortal dwelling. The light came down dedicated. His death will bring the despairing rest. [Note: Methuselah died the year of the flood.]

Why are names and its meaning important? By illustration, years ago I was a 'go-for' for a construction company. A 'go-for' if you

are not familiar with the term is someone who goes for this and goes for that. When I first started the owner drove me by a hardware store, a plumbing store, and a few other places the construction project was involved with and said to me “If you need anything, go to these stores and just tell them to put what you need **in my name**.” In my name meant, relative to what we are building, everything you need, relative to what this project needs, can be put in my name.

There happened to be some very nice men’s stores, restaurants, shoe stores, jewelry stores, sporting stores, etc. My going into those stores and trying to purchase something in my employers name, would not work. It would be wrong for me to do so. My self-centered interest would not be reflecting the character of my employer’s telling me to **“buy in my name”**.

Jesus says, “What ever you ask **in my name** I will give you.” [John 14:3]. In my name is not the magic words that will get things done like having the correct postage on a package you want to mail. Rather, it means, whatever you ask, knowing my character and what I want for you, I will give you. I may want things from the men’s store, the sporting store, and the fine restaurants, but it would be totally inappropriate for me to expect it “in my employer’s name.” If you ever pray **in Jesus’ name**, your prayer would need to be reflective of Jesus’ character.

“And His name shall be called...” As per the prophet Isaiah [9:6] His name shall be called: wonderful counselor mighty God everlasting father prince of peace. You will notice that I did not use any commas and I did that because the Hebrew does not use them. This is an example of the power of the translator. If you were going to add the commas, where would you put them? If you are familiar with Handel’s Messiah, you would do it this way: Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Later translators do it this way: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. The

reason for this is to try to keep consistent with the pairing of four sets of twos.

Wonderful Counselor
Prince of Peace
Mighty God
Everlasting Father

I would translate it: **Wonder Counselor**. By this, Jesus would not be a wonderful counselor, but rather the Counselor of the Wonders of life. Many people are wonderful counselors [my daughter Janna is one of them] but only Jesus is the one who understands the wonder of life.

Names are reflections of character and anyone taking on the name of the Lord is expected to reflect the character of the name.

Numbers 6:27 “So I will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them”. What is being said here is: “ I will put my character on the Israelites and I will bless them.”

Bless: I was one of the few children I know that was not fond of Halloween. I failed to get the genetic make up to appreciate it. I just couldn't get into it. When I was old enough to have children, I tried to hide that fact so they would appreciate it even though I had failed to. The goal even became stronger when I had grandchildren. I wanted them to enjoy it. But there was one Halloween that I did enjoy as an adult. My good friend Wayne had returned from pastoring a church in Kuwait and he brought with him the traditional Arab dress. It was the long white 'gown' or 'shirt' [not sure of the correct term] with the red and white head-dress. Around the head-dress is a black band. That band is called in Arabic an “agal” meaning a bond or a rope. Sometimes it is spelled 'iqal', 'egal' or 'igal'. It is an accessory worn by Arab men. It is a black cord, worn doubled, used to keep a 'ghutrah'.

in place on the wearer's head. It is traditionally made of goat hair. It is still worn throughout Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Iraq, Qatar, and Ahwaz. It can also be seen in Palestine, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.

So, this is what I wore for a Halloween party that my wife's real-estate broker had. As I recall, I even put a small can of 3-in-1 oil in my shirt pocket for effect. This was during the oil shortage in the U.S. which had people waiting in long lines, so my custom was timely. Of special interest which I enjoyed sharing with everyone with the use of the black cord on the hat.

That cord, which looks similar to a bungee cord, was and still is used to hobble a camel. When you watch a wild west movie, the cowboy rides his horse to the local saloon and ties his horse to a 'hitching post' which prevents the horse from walking off. Camels are not 'hitched' to a 'hitching post' because there are none in the desert. Rather, for the nomadic bedouin, one knee of the camel is bent and that cord is removed from the head-dress and wrapped around to keep the hoof of the camel up. A camel cannot run away on three legs. A horse would be tied to a post but a camel is hobbled at the knee.



Hopefully, I have not lost you completely, but please bear with me. The bending of the knee in Hebrew is called a Barakh. Now, there are times when the camel is lowered on all knees. Why would someone lower a camel to have it laying down? Can you think of any good reasons? Keep in mind that camels are very tall animals. If you were using the camel to carry your luggage [cargo] you would not be able to reach up high enough so the camel would have to bow down. Likewise if you were planning to ride it. The rider would not climb up but would bring the camel down in order to get on it. In essence, the camel is being a servant to the owner. It is kneeled in order to serve.

It is from this word Barakh, which means the bending down with the lowering of knee, that we get our word for bless or to worship. Do you kneel beside the bed to pray? Do you attend a church that has kneelers? To worship or to bless is to kneel and is often accompanied with a gift.

In our culture, the opposite of kneeling would probably be labeled 'sticking one's nose in the air' and looking down on someone.

I like the image of a children's see-saw. We have two components, 'humility and honor'.

Humility Honor
 ^

When humility goes down [bended knee] the honor of the person at the other end goes up. Honor going up [nose in the air and looking down] humiliates the other person. Humility going down raises the honor of the other.

The Moslem in prayer with both knees bent may be one of the images that come to mind. You may also visualize the Japanese bowing, not at the knee but at the waist, as a sign of respect to

the other and of humility of one's self. A gift often accompanied the bowing or the bending of the knee. When the wise men appeared before the baby Jesus, they bowed down and presented their gifts.

In our present culture, marriage proposals are often made with the bowing of one knee and the presentation of the gift of a ring at the same time. To bow and offer a ring is to give a barakh or a blessing. The groom is humbling himself in order to honor his beloved. In the Hebrew world, to bless is not a thought or a feeling but rather an action. So, the idea of bowing before the Lord is a sign of respect, and of humility. To bless the Lord is to humble one's self before Him. That is what it means to bless the Lord.

But I have another question: What does it mean to have God Bless you? Does one expect the Lord to bow down and honor you? That is not only what the Hebrew Scriptures proclaim, it is what the New Testament demonstrates.

This is a benediction that I have often used before ending many worship services that I have conducted. It is taken from Moses book of Numbers 6:24-27.

The Lord **bless you**
and keep you;
The Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.

I will go back later and look at some of these other words but for the time being, I am only interested in the meaning of **the Lord bless you.**

Dear Reader, take a good look at this following account in light of the above ... from John's Gospel 13:3.

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

The disciple, Peter, then asked the same question that I asked myself and am now asking you. *“Are you going to humble yourself to honor me?” “No,”* said Peter, *“you shall never wash my feet.”* Jesus then asked, *“Do you understand what I have just done for you?”*

Jesus did a barakh. He humbled himself to bless the disciples that they may humble themselves and bless others. Bless is an abstract term that Jesus makes concrete. He makes sure his followers know that to bless is an action.

AND, and I can not say this strongly enough, if you have ever given a barakh, where you have humbled yourself before another, and that person or persons has turned around and spit on you [literally or figuratively] then you have acquired a taste of the heart of God who has humbled himself before you, only to figuratively get kicked in the teeth.

It is the humbling of the one that lifts and honors ‘the other’.

“Signs and Wonders” This expression used in the Scriptures sounds like the words mean the same thing. In fact, they are very different. The Hebrew is **otot u’ moftim**. A moftim is a wonder or miracle caused by the power of God. A sign or an ‘ot’ is very different. The rainbow for Noah was an ‘ot’ or a sign that the earth would not be destroyed by a flood. Circumcision is an ‘ot’ or a sign. There is nothing miraculous about it but it ‘indicates’ or ‘points’ the way that this a covenant for generations.

In the Gospel of Luke, one will find the same usage: "This shall be a sign unto you...you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and laying in a manger.

Face or **Panim**. Of interest to me is that this word appears in the Hebrew four times in Genesis 32:20 and is rather significant but it does not appear in the English translation at all. 'Panim' means face. This is another one of those situations where the goal of the translator is to translate in such a way that it make sense to the reader. The English reads: *"I will pacify him with these gifts I am sending on ahead. Later when I see him perhaps he will receive me."*

The Hebrew reads: "I will wipe the anger from his **face** with the gift that goes ahead of my **face**; afterward, when I see his **face** perhaps he will lift up my **face**."

The context for all of this is relative to Isaac being blind and he could not see Jacob's face which made the deception possible. Seeing the face is truth revealing. Another point of interest with this word Panim is the fact that it is plural. Face is always plural! Why do you think that is the case? How many faces do you have? It could be argued you have only one face. Then again, you have a happy face at times, a sad face other times. You may even have an angry face, a confused face, or a look of surprise face as you think about this.

Nathan: The assistant Pastor of the church I attend in Florida [and the one who took my place] is named Nathan. Thus I add this little note for other Nathans that may be reading this. Nehemiah 7:5. *"Then my God **PUT** it into my heart to assemble the nobles, the officials and the people to be enrolled by genealogies."* Nehemiah seemed to understand that if he were to have a good idea - it had to come from God. Nehemiah has other good ideas, but those do not give the Lord credit. It literally translates, *"And he is giving Elohim of me into a heart of*

me,” I mention this because the word [give] is the word Nathan. In Hebrew it is Nun, Taw, Nun. It has the idea of giving out what has been given to you, and what you give out will be returned to you. Notice that Nathan is spelled the same both front word and backward: Nun, Taw, Nun. It is almost the same in English.

The Hebrew language is so dynamic that doing translation is never a case of finding the correct English word to explain the Hebrew word. It just doesn't work that way. There are Hebrew words that would take a complete sentence or a paragraph to translate.

For those of you who may not be familiar with the Prophet Nathan, he is the one who confronted King David, and most wisely used a story to confront his King with the King's evil. Nathan was a whistle blower on his King. To his credit, he did not run and tell the Jerusalem Times, but rather went to the King directly and confronted him “face to face”. To King David's credit, he not only listened to Nathan, he did not fire him. Nathan did not lose his job. Rather, King David kept Nathan close and in his inner circle for the rest of David's life.



Image of God: Genesis 1:26, Exodus 20:7

Man was made in the image of God. What does that mean? In Genesis, image is a shadow. Thus mankind is made in the shadow of God. When we get to Exodus, it is the name of God that must not be misused. “Name” means the character of God. It is about misrepresenting the character of God with the shadow that we portray. Mankind is to reflect the ‘character’ of God. I deal with this a little further along when I discuss Jesus's telling people “Whatever you ask in ‘my name’ I will give you. Our walk thru life is intended to reflect the character of God because we have been made in His image.

Anatomy: The anatomy of the Greek and Hebrew person are the same in physical reality. Linguistically however, they are different. Translators are not necessarily consistent but here are a few examples:

Psalms 40:8 Me'ah = heart.

2 Samuel 20:10 Me'ah = bowels.

Bowels or Guts means intuition....Gut feeling.

Genesis 1:20 Hhai = life

Job 38:39 Hhai = stomach.

Full stomach is life

Empty stomach is death.

Job 22:8 Zero'ah = Power - abstract

Exodus 6:6 Zero'ah = Arm - concrete

Isaiah 46:8 Lev = mind

Deuteronomy 19:6 Lev = heart

Western Culture: mind is the brain.

Hebrew mind is the heart.

Psalms 26:2 Kidya = heart

Exodus 29:13 Kidya = kidney

both equal emotion

Genesis 6:3 Spirit

Job 4:9 Breath

both equal character

Gut = Intuition [As in, I have a gut feeling]

Stomach = Life [full stomach]

Death [empty stomach]

Arm = Power

Heart = Mind

Kidney = Emotion

Breath = Character

Nephesh - This word is translated over 50 ways. A friend tells me he has counted 72 ways. Its major usages is the English word Soul. In all of its usages, it is not to be seen as some ghost like abstract spirit but rather as a variety of translated terms trying to represent the whole person or the character of a person. Likewise, as it is often translated 'heart', 'mind', 'spirit', etc. please do not assume these are all different. They mean the same thing in Hebrew.



Hebrew Poetry is used throughout the scriptures: It is another component that gets 'lost in translation'. One small example is found in **Psalms 1:1**. Look how it uses the following in the first:

In the council
In the way
In the seat

Keeping in mind that Hebrew deals with verbs and the concrete [meaning that which you can touch, see, hear, taste, or smell] as compared to our western use of abstract terms like **blessed** or **happy**, the following is a more concrete translation:

Level or straight is the man who does not walk in the council of those who have departed from the path, does not stand in the way of those who miss the mark, and does not sit with those who are imitators of the truth.

Hebrew use of Acrostics

Teaching and instructing the next generation is one of the themes of the Hebrew Scriptures. One of the ways of doing that is to encourage the use of memorization. The book of **Lamentations** for example is written as an acrostic. What does that mean? An acrostic is when the written material follows the alphabet.

In Hebrew, the first sentence starts with an A, the second with a B, the third with a C, the fourth with a D, etc. It would be Aleph, Bet, Gamet, Daleth, etc. in Hebrew and it goes throughout the alphabet.

Chapters 1, 2, and 4 all have 22 verses which corresponds to the Hebrew alphabet. Chapter 3 is a little different in that there are 66 verses and every third line is an acrostic.

Language of the New Testament:

In what language was the New Testament written? I studied Greek because it was believed that the New Testament was written in Greek and all of the ancient texts are in Greek. I never knew anyone thought differently...until recently.

For years, it was simply assumed. It was assumed that after the Babylonian captivity that the Hebrew language was lost. No one spoke it any more. When Jesus was crucified, the sign on the cross for "King of the Jews" was written in Greek, Latin, and Aramaic. Hebrew was not even used. Why? Because Hebrew was a dead language - or so it was assumed.

Following is an outline of the other position. I assume that most readers of this little booklet could care less, but I include this little outline anyhow.

Argument for NT being written in Hebrew

1. Archeological:

1. Coins of 30 AD were written in Hebrew
2. Dead Sea Scrolls, 90% Hebrew, 5%Aramaic, 5%Greek
3. Soldiers letters found that were written in Hebrew around the time of Christ.
4. Josephas - Ant 20.11.2 "Jews don't learn other languages

2. History:

1. Origen: Mathew wrote in Hebrew
2. Jerome: Mathew wrote in Hebrew
3. Paul wrote in Hebrew
4. Eusebus: Paul wrote in Hebrew - Clement translated into Greek

3. Manuscripts:

1. Sinai Codex - Greek
2. Vatican - Greek
3. Alappe Codex - Greek 900 years old
4. Leningrade
5. Year 1908. Oldest known manuscripts of OT are written in Greek
6. II Kings 18:26. "Please speak to your servants in Aramaic since we understand it.
Don't speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people on the wall."
7. Mathew manuscript found with Mathew written in Hebrew.

4. Text:

1. Numbers 30:3
2. Mathew 5:33-35 There is an argument that 'Jesus changed Torah?' It was a not a change in the Torah but it was a translation change! It was relative to swearing.
3. Mathew 23:1-3 Do what 'he'—being Moses, says. Not the Pharisees.
4. Acts 21:37 Soldier surprised that Paul spoke Greek.
5. Acts 21:40 Paul then spoke to the crowd in Hebrew.
NIV says Aramaic with footnote that it could be Hebrew. Greeks translation says Hebrew.

ANGER: *Sinner's In The Hands Of An Angry God* is considered one of the finest sermons ever delivered and it is from the American Preacher, Jonathan Edwards. To today's congregation it would sound cruel, naive, and certainly not about a loving God. God's anger is expressed often in the Hebrew scriptures but a better translation would be "ANGUISH."

For those of you who may be parents, did you ever watch and allow your child to do something that you did not want done but allowed it so they would learn from it? I recall vividly driving home from my work at the hospital, pulling the car into the driveway and being met with my five year old daughter Lani with her pillow in hand. She wanted me to know that she was running away from home because she did not want to eat what her mother was making for dinner. I gave her a hug, told her I loved her, and waved good-bye. I then quickly ran into the house, my wife called our neighbors and asked them to be on the look out. I then ran outside to follow my daughter, at a distance, to make sure she was safe.

I let my daughter go that she may learn to grow in maturity. When she returned about 20 minutes later, my anguish subsided. The Lord suffers anguish watching his children walk away.

JEALOUS: EX 20:5 ..."for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God "Just as the above word "Anger" left me with a question mark as to what that means, so does the word "Jealous", What does it mean to be jealous? My first reaction seems to think of it as envious, or perhaps covet, as in "thou shall not covet your neighbor's wife or the new car he just bought." In Hebrew it is always the context that determines the meaning of the word but here and in many cases it means "Protective". "I am protective of what is mine says the Lord."

POOR: Psalm 41:1 reads: “Blessed is he who has regard for the poor. The Lord delivers him in times of trouble.” Other translations may use the word “weak” rather than ‘poor’. It is not my intent to argue over the correct terminology, but rather to explain the ‘picture’ that is trying to convey. The Hebrew word is “dalal’ from which we get the word ‘delilah’.

Today, if you wanted to dig a well for water, massive drills are brought into place and are powerfully and rather quickly inserted into the ground to drill the hole to reach water. In ancient Israel, a hole was dug by hand. As the hole got deeper, a framework was built over the hole with a rope tied to the digger. This digging was a long process which took days and the digger needed to be pulled out of the hole. There was also the need to be prepared to pull the digger out if the hole began to collapse. The digger was considered to be ‘poor’ not in a financial case [although rich men do not dig wells] or to be ‘weak’ meaning he was dependent on someone else to pull him out. He was vulnerable and relied on others for help in time of need.

Life is full of people who are vulnerable and dependent on others. The Psalm is saying: “Blessed are the ones who have regard for these people.”

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The first book of the Torah is Genesis. This is basically a series of stories about individuals. The individual who hears the radical words “and the Lord said” was Abram whose name is changed to Abraham. The individuals that follow and are attached to this story line is his family. This growing family over several generations eventually end up in Egypt. When they arrived there seeking food, they were given the really futile land of Goshen. They worked hard. They prospered mightily, and they multiplied significantly. On the one hand, they may still be considered a family but there are so many of them that they have become a political threat to the powerful nation of Egypt.

We then have the story of the Exodus. It is at this time, this extensive family is referred to collectively as “God’s first born.” I look at the Exodus as God’s giving birth to this first born. They are slaves in the womb of Pharaoh and under Pharaoh’s control. They travel through the birth canal of the divided sea. Likewise there is nothing, absolutely nothing that they did to cause this birth. They were ‘thrown out’ of Egypt and when the Egyptian had a change of heart and pursued them vigorously with chariots, they asked Moses, “now what? Do we flee? Do we throw ourselves into the sea? Do we go back to Egypt? What shall we do?” Moses tells them to “just watch and see what the Lord will do for you this day”.

Recently I started to read an older book [1953] of my-father-in-law’s, John E. Glines, who died before I ever had the chance to meet him, [by Leon Uris titled Battle Cry]. My father was in the Coast Guard and my son is retired from the Air Force. I have no military experience and I found myself smiling when the commands of the D.I. [drill instructor] are being yelled out. Following is an example of what I am referring to.

Well I changed my mind. The language is crude enough that I did not want to offend any readers who did not wish to read a paragraph of one curse word after another as these young to be marines are getting laced out by their drill instructor. I wanted to mention this in context as the importance of knowing who is giving the commands.

Such is the context of some of the Commandments. What do you think of when you think of the term ‘commands’? When I think of the term commandments, I think in terms of military [even though I have no military background]. I am not sure why that is. Maybe an attitude I picked up visiting my military son at various bases even though I never heard anyone speak that way. Perhaps it comes from watching military movies of people like General George Patton giving orders. It comes across to me as

“do this or else!” The “or else” meaning some kind of punishment will follow for disobeying.

Now this will come as no shock to those who know me, but I have often been called ‘directionally challenged’. For a number of years I would go deer hunting in Vermont with my long time friend James Kempf. Put me in the middle of the woods, turn me around a few times, and all of those trees begin to look alike. I could easily earn a PhD degree on how best to get lost in the woods. Been there, done that! Now, being lost, and looking and acting like it, I come across another hunter and he kindly says to me “Go in this direction”.

Before the Ten Commandments are given, remember that the Hebrew people were slaves. Pharaoh or his ‘drill instructors for hire’ issued the commandments. Slaves are told when to get up, what to do, how long to work, what to eat, etc. As mentioned in my previous booklets, these people are lost. They went from being slaves to now collectively being called “God’s first born”. Now it is not about one nation ruling over another people, it is about “God the Father and the ‘first born-child” [the recently delivered slaves from Egypt]. It is about teaching the people the direction to go in their lostness. What is it that will unite them as a people? What is that will allow them to “bless the earth?” *It is one thing to take the slaves out of Egypt. It is quite another thing to take the slavery out of the people.* They now have a slave mentality. What is it that will point the way for a new beginning?

The Ten Commandments are family talk. The character of God is revealed as one filled with Grace and Truth [Hesed]...as is the Messiah. Is there punishment if not followed? I doubt it. Will there be consequence if they do not? Most certainly! Telling your children not to put their hand on a hot stove does not mean that if they do so, you will come along later and burn them. But

it does mean, the consequences of doing so will be a burn. A loving father shares that kind of information.

There is also a Hebrew difference between “obeying” and “keeping” the commandments. Another way of saying it would be the difference between “breaking” and “keeping” the commandments. To the best of my knowledge, Hebrew does not even have a word for “obeying”. When the hunter pointed out the direction I needed to go, it was not about ‘obeying’ the directions it was about following them. If I did, they would lead me in the correct path to overcome my lostness. If I did not, I would not be ‘punished’ but I would still be lost and dealing with the consequences. I am very familiar with the comment that the Ten Commandments are not the Ten Suggestions. But I would argue that the commandments are not coming from the drill instructor. The commandments are directions that they are to go that will lead them from their lostness to their being able to become a nation that will ‘bless the earth’.

When King David was still a youth and a Shepherd, his task was ‘to protect’ or ‘to guard’ the sheep. How was that done? Typically, a small corral of stones were organized in a circle with a small entrance way. On top of the stones were placed thorny bushes which would keep the wild animals away. The sheep were then put into the corral at night and the shepherd would sleep at the entrance of the corral. He was ‘keeping’ or ‘protecting’ the sheep.

Without wanting to get side tracked, let me give you a little understanding of how this ‘protection of the law’ developed. It first reveals itself in the story of Adam and Eve in the garden. One could read this story a hundred times and not see it. The Lord says: “Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not **eat**.” Later in the story, Eve says: “Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil we shall not **touch**.” Why the change in words? Touch is the beginning of the use of a ‘hedge

of protection” around the law. If you do not touch it, you will not eat of it. We often do the same thing to provide protection. Suppose you have an 8:00 PM flight, and you need to be at the airport an hour early at 7:00 PM. Your hotel is a half hour from the airport. Would you call for a taxi at 6:30 PM? Many people would. Others would get the taxi at 6:00 or 6:15 to give themselves “protection” incase of traffic or other problems.

Not to labor on the sabbath is a rather general statement and what constitutes ‘labor’? As the people asked their rabbi for clarification, protections were given about how far to walk before it was considered labor, or what you could carry before it was labor. Those were other ways of “keeping or protecting” the law.

Now, back to the Ten Commandments. These are the directions the people are to go and they are “to protect” or “to keep” these commandments so they always know the direction they are to follow. Will they break them? Who hasn’t? But they must not forget them, or trample them under foot.

I am thinking of several companies that have their “secret recipe” that is “locked up” for protection. Whether it be Coke, Kentucky Fried Chicken, or Bush’s Beans, the recipe is “protected”. The Ten Commandants are not a secret, but Hebrew Scripture require that they be “kept” or “protected”. The more they follow them, the greater the followers will be.

The significant component to ‘keeping’ the commandments is to learn and to understand them. It is to assume the responsibility to pass them on to your children. As is the sabbath, which is one day in seven. It is to be passed on and held up as the direction to go ... for this generation and the generations to follow. Are you lost? Do you need instructions for leading and encouraging your family how to live? Our founding fathers, beginning the

construction of a new country, conceived in liberty, knew and understood the supreme value of the gift given to Moses.

As you take a look at the Ten Commandments that follow, imagine for a moment what life would be like if all of these were “trampled under foot”. You think the TV news channels are filled with troubles now. Trample these under foot and you will quickly get the idea of what lostness really means.

1. “You shall have no other gods before me.
2. “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.
3. “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.
4. “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

5. "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.
6. "You shall not murder.
7. "You shall not commit adultery.
8. "You shall not steal.
9. "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."

HESED:

The greatest key to understanding the Ten Commandments is the understanding of the author of them. For many years I have used the Hebrew word "Hesed". In fact, my previous little booklet is dedicated to Arlette and Steve Xendis for their "Hesed" or loving kindness.

What is the meaning of "Hesed" and why is it important to understanding the Ten Commandments? The word is translated numerous ways. It includes words such as 'loving kindness,' 'mercy,' 'compassionate', 'graciousness', 'abounding in love', 'faithfulness', 'truth', etc.

There are only a few places in the scriptures where the Lord God defines himself. Knowing the author of the Ten Commandments is really important, and then of course the commandants themselves are quite revealing about the author.

Exodus: 20:6 ...showing loving kindness unto thousands of generations of them that love me and keep my commandments. [The King James does not include the word generations but the NIV does.] The great Hebrew scholars, Maimonides and Rushi, do argue that when the word is used previously in the same sentence, the following number refers to the above. Thus, it is thousands of generations.

Exodus: 34:6 And He passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, and maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.

With Hebrew being such a pictorial language, let me provide you with perhaps my favorite illustration of the word "Hesed". It is from the great novel by Victor Hugo. The first time I saw the play *Les Misérables*, I saw it with little understanding of what was going on. I later saw the movie. In fact I saw two different versions of it. I became so fascinated with it that I then read the book. The first half of the book is really left out in both the play and the movies. The first half is all about the character development of the "Priest". He is a symbol of "Hesed".

We reach the point in the story where the escaped convict named Jean val Jean is greeted with exceptional hospitality by the priest. When the escapee is fed and then given a night's lodging, one knew the generosity was coming because the priest's character had consistently been revealed. When the convict leaves in the middle of the night; stealing the priest's silver dinnerware it is a sad sight. One would expect reciprocity of kindness by the convict. But when he is captured by the police and brought back to the priest, then the meaning of "Hesed" shines forth. The priest's response is not to criticize the convict. Rather, he accuses him of failing to take the rest of the silver that he 'was given'. Knowing the silver was never 'given' but stolen, the priest's response was simply 'over the top' with

.... “Hesed”. What the priest did was really not definable, it was mind blowing generosity of spirit and love. It all flowed from the character of the priest.

The Ten Commandants flow from the character of God which is revealed as loving kindness, compassionate, gracious, abounding in love and faithfulness. That, dear reader, is the cornerstone of all that follows. It is reiterated again with the Messiah being described as “full of grace and truth.” [Jn. 1:14].

Question:

Have you ever asked yourself the question: Why is their evil in the world? Why do the innocent suffer? Moses asked the question. I hope you have also. The atheist has absolutely no answer to the question, although I am delighted the question is asked. There is no reason they should even expect justice. They seem to ask as a reason to conclude “therefore there is no God”. If there were no God there would be no atheist.

I ask the question upfront because it seems to be a major personality characteristic of Moses. He has a passion for righteousness and that is something none of us should ever lose. It is important for all of us but particularly important for a leader. Moses is a leader. My Jewish friends will all understand when I say that leading 600,000 people is tough enough but leading 600,000 Jews is extra difficult. I can only imagine. It must have been like herding cats.

When Moses encountered an Egyptian mistreating a Hebrew slave, his passion for justice was unleashed on the Egyptian. When the Lord sends him on his mission to Pharaoh, and it only made the situation worse for the Hebrews, Moses cries out to God that the Almighty is only making matters worse, not better.

Did not the Lord tell Abraham to teach the children to walk in the way of the Lord by doing what is right? I would be the last person who would want to white wash evil. It is real and it needs to be dealt with. At the same time, I do know a little about leadership. A good leader often has to make some really terrible decisions. Do we need to cut back this business financially and lay off many people? Do we send people to war knowing many will be killed? The leader knows full well that scores of families are going to be hurt by such a decision. To solve one problem, another is created. What about the parent who submits their child to surgery or chemo in the hopes that good will come from it? I am a father of three children and my knowledge of the pains of childbirth have only been watching, but some pains are more than worth the results.

A good leader does not shrink from making very tough calls. One who fails to make the decision may see themselves as too full of compassion to do so; but they would be an ineffective leader that would be flooded with greater problems in the future. Moses knew evil when he saw it and his anger provided the energy to face up to injustice. He understood the “Hesed” of God but like the rest of us, he was never able to see the role of ‘injustice’ in the Justice of the Almighty. So he continued to cling to the “Hesed” “loving kindness” of the Lord while continuing to fight for justice. That is the task for us all; is it not?

Eved. This is a Hebrew word that can mean one or two things. It can mean either a ‘servant’ or a ‘slave’. The Hebrew people were once Pharaoh’s slaves [*avadim*] but eventually became God’s servants [*avadim*]. That is not to be construed as a mere change of owners for the slave. Rather, it is a radical transformation into the world of freedom where one can live within the channel markers of ‘freedom and responsibility’ and ‘liberty and license.’ The free person understands that being created in God’s image applies both to one’s self and to the

‘other’. Thus, how one treats the ‘other’ is of utmost importance.

[Lo tov] Moses father-in-law said to him: “What you are doing is not good [lo tov]...trying to lead without a supporting team to help you.” It is the same word used in Genesis 2:18 “It is not good for man to be alone”. Moses takes the advice and creates a team to help him. Good leaders develop followers. Great leaders develop other leaders. Moses was a great leader.

Hayim: This is the Hebrew word for Life. One of the many things I appreciate about the Hebrew faith is its lack of individualism. It is never about ‘me’ it is about ‘us’. It is a communal faith. It is about the community. Hayim is plural. The gift of life is never owned, but shared.

I have often quoted the Swiss physician, Paul Tournier, who said, “there are two things you can not do alone, marry and be a Christian”. That may not sound like a contemporary idea but it is certainly a theme throughout the Hebrew Scriptures that one’s faith [loyalty] to the Lord is social not individualistic. Morality is a social grace. It is never just about me and my individual purity.

Melaka: Creative work. This is what is forbidden on the sabbath. Those of you who may have read my previous work on the Pentateuch know that I revisited the sabbath as I struggle with its super significance and yet knew that I was not grasping its entire meaning. Here is a little more as I continue to gravitate toward the sabbath.

It took six days to create the universe, but creation itself took seven days. Another way of saying it would be: The creative work went on for six days and the non-creative work was done on the seventh. The seventh day [the sabbath] is the holy day. It is the window from which we get our glimpse of the Holy. We

do our creative work, for the six days, as we participate as co-laborers in God's kingdom. On the seventh day, our function switches from co-creators to the recognition that we are created. We cease the process of 'making' in order to experience ourselves as being made.



As one reflects on the tabernacle, it was a place of God's holy presence ... When we stop our creative work on the sabbath, we see God's holy presence around us. We experience six days of **doing** and a seventh day of **"BEING"**.

"Holiness is the space we make for the Otherness of God - by listening, not speaking; by being, not doing; by allowing ourselves to be acted on rather than acting. It means disengaging from that flow of activity whereby we impose our human purposes on the world, thereby allowing space for the divine purposes to emerge".

"Right" and "Just". For I have chosen him [Abraham], so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just. Genesis 18:19

Right
Tzekaka

Just
Misphpat

^

This is another combination of words that need to be balanced or tempered. Doing what is 'right' is one thing, but 'justice', that is another issue. Issues like this surface every time there is the need to appoint a new Justice of the Supreme Court. What is justice and how is it to be administered? There are times it needs to be administered with 'punishment' and there are times when it needs to be administered with 'mercy'.

No two situations are ever identical. For minor events such as driving your car through a 'red light' is an infraction of the law. Going through a 'red light' cautiously because your passenger is having a heart attack and you are trying to get that person to a hospital ASAP may be a little different. Driving your passenger to a hospital at 90 miles an hour through a red light is different still. In this case the public is put in jeopardy.

For major events, in our complex world, there are a variety of issues that need to be considered. Good justice is never cold and calculated. Good justice sees the big picture, tries to distinguish excuses for contextual realities that need to be considered. What is the 'right' thing to do? Sometimes it is spelled out rather clearly. Other times, some real tough decisions need to be made between conflicting 'rights'. There are not only political realities but personal realities that need to be faced.

There is nothing so cruel as to have justice administered without compassion and mercy. At the same time, justice needs to be administered. The purpose is to make things right and to restore to the extent possible the shalom. It is not about 'winners' and 'losers'. It is not about how to punish but "how to make things right."

Eye for an Eye: Exodus 21:22. Often quoted and used as "The Law of Retaliation" could not be further from the truth. Hebrew law as I understand and read the book of Moses has nothing to do with retaliation. It is just the reverse. It is about 'fairness'

and it is about 'proportionality'. Moses introduces proportionality into the law. The question is always, "What is fair and just?" Another way of saying it would be "no more than an eye for an eye." If someone were to knock your eye out, you had no right to demand that the other person lose his eye, his feet, and his hands. That would not be justice, it would be revenge. Moses explains it: If a man hits his servant and the servant should lose his eye, then the servant shall be set free. A whole series of examples are then given as to how to apply the law in a spirit of fairness. Remembering that these people have been slaves for numerous years, the Ten Commandments and the social laws to follow are the beginning of creating a new people and a new nation that will bless the earth. These laws are the beginning of the creation of a civilization built on law and not brute power.

Moses deals with proper ways to treat servants, personal injury law, protection of property, and social responsibility to one's neighbors, justice and mercy. It is fabulous stuff.

Abortion:

Although it does not deal with 'abortion' per say, there is an interesting case that is presented. It is found in Exodus 21:22-23. It is about men fighting and happen to hit a pregnant woman causing her to miscarry. In such a case, she is to be compensated for her loss. If however the woman should die, then that is a much more serious crime. This point of law makes a distinction between the value [legal status] of a fetus and the value of the woman. The woman is rated higher than the fetus.

One of the great Hebrew scholars [Philo 20 BC-50 AD] who lived many years later was informing the non-Hebrew reading public in the great Jewish Community of Alexandria, Egypt. He read this passage:

But if anyone has a contest with a woman who is pregnant, and strikes her a blow on her belly, and she miscarry, if the child which is conceived with her is still unfashioned and unformed, he shall be punished by a fine, both for the assault why he has committed and also because he has prevented nature, who was fashioning and preparing that most excellent of all creatures, a human being, from bringing him into existence. But if the child which is conceived had assumed a distinct share in all its parts, having received all its proper connective and distinctive qualities, he shall die; for such a cheaters as that, is a man, who he has slain while still in the workshop of nature, who had not thought it as yet a proper time to produce him to the light, but had kept him like a statue lying in a sculptor's worship, requiring other more than he be released and sent out into the world.

The different interpretation between the before and after Philo of Alexandria hangs on the Hebrew word 'ason'. The first translation from the Septuagint [the Hebrew scriptures that were translated into Greek] translated the word '**form**' and Philo translates it as '**calamity**'. He makes the distinction between an early pregnancy which is form and the later pregnancy which is "like a fine sculpture that has not yet left the workshop of nature". He sees this as murder.

I realize full well that many readers may not follow the argument but I share this, not to solve the debate about abortion, but to show the power and the significance of words and their meaning. Words are powerful. Translators are finite...and so the debate continues. We must also remember the value of context. No two situations in life are identical and so we live between the channel markers of life making the best decisions we are able to make.

Law / Hedge

Within the Garden of Eden story there is a minor detail which could be read many times over and missed. It has to do with the Lord's saying: Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat. Later in the story, Eve is quoted as saying, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not touch." Do they mean the same thing? Perhaps! It could be argued that it would be hard to eat unless one first touched it in order to eat it.

Remember from the above how King David 'protected or kept the sheep' by building a hedge of protection around them? Remember also they were to protect and keep the commandments of the Lord? That, dear reader, is the beginning of the understanding of what I mean by the hedge around the law. The oral law was developed to help protect the commandments. Thus the list of things that one should not do on the Sabbath was to help guarantee in the same sense that if "one did not touch then one would not eat."

Gave up the ghost: Genesis 28:8 What does it mean to give up the ghost? Perhaps, 'put your Halloween material away', but I doubt it. Genesis says, "And Abraham gave up the ghost and died of old age, an old man, full of years; and was gathered to his people."

Why does it not just say, he died of old age? Two different Hebrew words are used. 'Muth' meaning to die with gray hair, of old age. 'Yigeva' needs a little more explanation. When my beloved father was told he had six months to live, he wanted one more wedding anniversary, one more time to see his children, one more Thanksgiving, one more Christmas, one more birthday, etc. The more he was able to check off the list, the more fulfilled he became. He never got them all checked off, but he got many and he was grateful. Being fulfilled in life, he 'gave up the ghost, or spirit, in a similar fashion to Jesus' death when

he said “Into your hands I commit my spirit.” Life was not taken, it was a gift that was given and then given back after a life fulfilled. That is what is being said about Abraham. Not only was he old, but he was fulfilled, and gave his life back. Rabbi’s call this: *Dying in Harmony*, and/or, *The Divine Kiss*.

Wife: [Ishah] Proverbs 18:8. *Whosoever finds a wife finds a good thing and finds the favor of the Lord.*

Today, I think most of us who have a wife, did our own finding. When the above was written, one generally did not find a wife but had someone else find one for them. Additionally, the definition of the word “wife” has changed and is changing significantly. Wife is now a legal category and could be a male or female. The clergy or the person with legal status before the State declares the persons husband and wife and they are married.

Then there is the issue of “thing”. What does that mean? Does one have to either have a ‘thing’ or be a ‘thing’ in order to have the favor of the Lord? The word “Ishah” means: woman, wife, female, spouse, old woman, and sometimes even hen.

Given the context, the translation is wife and the word ‘thing’ is not even in the Hebrew text. A better translation would be: “Find a woman who loves you and you love her and you have found the good, and the favor of the Lord.”

Widow: [Almanah] Proverbs 15:25 *The Lord tears down the proud man’s house but he keeps the widows boundaries intact.* In Hebrew the term ‘almanah’ may mean widow but it is often used for the young unmarried woman. The accent of the word is a person with little to no influence. In this context, it is used as a contrast to the proud man’s house who thinks he is more important than he really is. The contrast is the widow’s, or the person with little influence, boundaries being protected by the

Lord. Please notice how many times the image of boundaries of protection have been used. There was the hedge of protection around David's sheep. There was the hedge of protection around the commandments. In the same manner, the Lord gives His hedge of protection around those like the widow even though they may have little influence against the proud man on a power binge.

Love: [Ahav, Chav.] Mark 12:30-31. When Jesus is asked, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" Jesus said, "The most important is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.'"

What many people fail to realize is that Jesus is mostly not saying anything original. What he is doing is quoting from the Torah. The Torah says: [Deut. 6:5, "Love the Lord thy God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength." Leviticus 19:18 says "love your neighbor as yourself."

This is one of the reasons that I argue if one wants to know the mind of Christ, it is important to understand the Torah. Jesus quotes it all the time. But here is the point of originality. Regarding loving your neighbor, Jesus uses a play on words. He switches the word 'ahav' for love and uses the Aramaic word 'chav' which has its root in 'twigs'. What he is saying is, when you find your neighbor very unloving, a small 'twig like' act of kindness will act like a twig when starting a fire. It is the little things of kindness that heats up and inflames the larger logs. Don't underestimate the value of the smaller things in life.

Hevel: For some reason, this has become one of my favorite Hebrew words. It is the word that is on the cover of this little booklet...with thanksgiving to my friend Ron Priest. It is one of

the words for 'breath'. Hebrew has many such words but this is the shallowest of breaths. It takes us to the thin edge that separates life from death and it is a very thin line of separation. You have a shallow breath and the next one never comes. I guess I like this word because it keeps one conscience of life and its value. Another way to describe this word would be 'soap bubbles'. Like soap bubbles it is fragile. The book of Ecclesiastes calls it 'vanity'. "Vanity vanity, all is vanity". One could say, "Soap Bubbles, soap bubbles, all is soap bubbles." When you see them you will note that they are here, they may float off into the distance, and then they are gone.

Like the flowers of the earth that are here today and gone tomorrow, these soap bubbles vanish quickly. But it is the 'breath' of the Lord that breathed life into us to begin with. Thus the accent is not on the time expanse of the bubble, but the sacredness of the bubble. It is not how long the bubble will float, but on what keeps it floating to begin with. Your breath, which you are experiencing as you read this, is God's breath. Breathing is good. Do your breathing as unto the Lord with thanksgiving for every breath.



Follow the money! I happened to think that the real news on T.V. is the financial channels. If you want to know what is going on; follow the money. In the world that I know, money is the lubrication that keeps all things moving. Synagogues need money. Churches need money. All organizations need money. But how should it be gotten and how should it be spent. That is what all organizations have to decide.

There is a lesson in the Torah about money and how it was spent that I have shared in a previous booklet, but I want to share it again because I find it so valuable. I want to compare and contrast two significant people. The first is Moses, and the second is Solomon.

Moses and the building of the tabernacle:

There are two lessons I want to take away from the tabernacle. The first one centers on the supervision of its construction and the second one centers on how it was financed. Moses was given very detailed instructions on how this was to be built. This was priority one but with the admonishment that the sabbath is to take priority and 'rest' means no work on the tabernacle during the sabbath. Two people were chosen to supervise the construction, giving direction as to how this whole thing was to be made. They were Bezalel and Oholiab. I doubt very much if these are very significant names to even the highly literate of the Torah. Let me tell you who they are.

Oholiab was the son of Ahisamach of the tribe of Dan [Exodus 35:34]. Of the tribes of Israel, based on the sons of Jacob, Dan was the lowest in rank. His father was Jacob but his mother was neither of the two wives of Jacob [Leah and Rachel]. Rather, he was the son of one of Jacob's maid-servant Bilhah. Bezalel on the other hand would be considered 'noble'. His grandfather was the one who assisted Moses in the battle against the nation of Amalek [Exodus 17:10]. His Mother was Moses sister, Miriam, and his father was Caleb, son of Jephunneh, distinguished leader of the tribe of Judah. Judah was the son of Jacob's wife Leah and the forebear of the kings of Israel.

If it were just Bezalel, I would call it nepotism. But with Bezalel and Oholiab, we have the highest and lowest in the social structure, both great at their job, pulling together to get the job done and done correctly. How good it is to see the full spectrum

of social life working together! Bezael is singled out as the person named for its construction. Should you find yourself in the building of a synagogue or church or any other project endeavoring to do the work of the Lord, make sure you get the best qualified people to do it.

The second lesson is the way this was paid for. It is to be paid for by each man ***“whose heart prompts him to give”***. This is not a tax, it is not something that is taken from anyone. The tabernacle is to be paid for only ‘as a gift of the heart’. The offerings include but are not limited to: gold, silver, bronze, blue and scarlet yarn, fine linen, gems, acacia wood, etc. This is all specifically laid out. Several chapters are given to the content and design of this tabernacle. It even includes a menorah of seven lamps [before Hannuka]. There are descriptions of what the priest are to wear, what this tabernacle should smell like, etc. Eventually, there is a required offering for all those over the age of 20. It is a required offering of half a shekel. The rich are not to give more and the poor are not to give less. The accent is: we are all in this nation building together and we each have a part to play. When everything was paid for, they had to stop the people from continuing to donate toward the project. They were receiving more than they needed. Then when they were all finished. They did an accounting of all they received and spent.

Solomon and the building of the temple:

Solomon, who is considered the apex of wisdom, and often quoted as such, is known for the well known story of settling a dispute with two women both claiming to be the mother. His solution was to say the problem could be solved by cutting the baby in half. One of the women said “yes, do it” and the second woman said “no, save the child’s life”. The second woman was awarded the child. Those who know me know my fondness for Jewish humor which I think is in a class by itself. With that in mind I offer you this little story for a little comic relief as we get close to finishing this study.

In a small nineteenth-century Russian town, two families negotiated with a prominent yeshiva to provide two students as husbands for their daughters. The two young men set out for the town. En route, their wagon is attacked by Cossacks, and one of the men is killed. When the survivor finally arrives in the town, a fight breaks out between the mothers of the two unmarried girls. Each claims that the young man is the intended groom for her daughter. The man himself can shed no light on the matter, and the case is brought before the local rabbi. "Cut the boy in half" the rabbi rules, "and let each girl be given half of his body."

"Oh no", the first mother says. "Don't kill him. My daughter will give up her claim." "Go ahead and cut him in half", the second mother says. The rabbi stands up and points to the second mother and awards the young man to her daughter. The people are in shock. When asked why he made that decision he said, "Isn't it obvious that she is the true mother-in-law?"

Now, back to the 'wise' Solomon and the issue of money. Whereas Moses had the tabernacle built with generously given money from the heart, Solomon had the temple built with forced labor and whip in hand. He made slaves of people and pushed them hard. Solomon's faults were numerous. He enhanced himself with the collection of gold, silver, horses, women, etc. Putting himself above the people is something Moses warned everyone about. There is always 'power' that goes along with enhanced wealth but the proof of this power resulted in destructiveness. His people rebelled and the country split. The Lord's lesson to Pharaoh was "The people are not your people - they are mine!" *I do not see any difference between Pharaoh and Solomon.* This is one of the reasons that the lessons of the Torah are universal and will be relevant as long as people fail to realize that the 'earth is the Lord's'.

So from the way the construction of the Tabernacle was done, as compared to the way the Temple was made a reality, indicates the power for freedom and the mixed results of 'force'. Force got the job done, but split the country in the process. Freedom got the job done and the people united. Both the Tabernacle and the Temple were built as dwelling places for the Lord Almighty. Everyone knew it could not be limited there but the Lord would dwell there. Dwelling in the hearts of people is where this dwelling is eventually aimed.

The money lesson: Money given in freedom, and accounted for appropriately, yields a completed task and a united people. Money taken by force and unaccounted for may get the job done, and may make the leader very prosperous but it will turn into a disaster. If you are involved in a building project with your synagogue or church, accenting the giving from the heart, and good accounting of the sources and uses of cash will serve you well.



Shalom:

I end this little booklet with the word ‘shalom’. It was the first word I learned to write in Hebrew. Jews and Christians alike understand the word to mean “peace” and it is often used in both greetings and salutations. On the surface it conveys the sense of calm, at ease, and a relaxedness. Those are all true, but there is an assumed reality of ‘completeness’ that is essential to having peace or shalom.

What do I mean by completeness? One day I was rushing to get dressed to go out of town for some reason. I had my suit on, all dressed to go, and the last thing I had to do was to put on my new shoes. I put the left one on. I was trying to put the right one on and discovered it was too small. The shoes in the box were not the same size! On the one hand, I had everything, but on the other, I was not complete. What good is one shoe? The shoe store happened to be on the way to the airport, so I ran into the store, met with the owner [Alan Gordon—we became better acquainted as years went by] and he fixed the problem. I now had matching shoes, both in style and size, and I was complete. Peace, or Shalom, had been restored.

Life is full of components that rob us of our peace because we are not complete. Some can be as minor as the wrong size shoe, or those that threaten to alter your lifestyle significantly. So we wish each other shalom or peace. We even pray for peace. Here is the fine point I wish to make. Praying for the peace of Israel for example is not to pray that this nation has no more wars. That would be a good thing, but the prayer for its peace is more than that. It is a prayer for the nation’s “completeness” that will result in peace. What does the nation lack? A King and a Temple come to mind.

We are: the food we eat. People who have fed me are far to numerous to count, but relative to the Hebrew language and its mindset, I am indebted to the following. Some from their writings, some from the lectures, and some from conversations over lunch.

Dr. Earl Kalland

Dr. E.J.Young

Dr. Gary A. Anderson, Notre Dame

Ancient Hebrew Research Center

Jeff. A. Brenner

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

Steven and Sarah Levy

Moses Maimonides

Hyman E. Golden

Michael Card

Chaim Ben Torah

Many thanks to my friend Ron Priest, who has always been there for me, over many years, with his creative art work covers. To Rose Hailey who takes my texts and puts them into the booklet format. To my wife Ginny Leeds who has lovingly read thru my writings and my disregards of spelling for over 52 years. She is convinced that my belief that “It is a pretty poor mind that can not find at least two ways to spell a word” is less than humorous.

Dr. Frank Leeds III
136 Boca Ciega Pt. Blvd. N.
St. Petersburg, FL 33708
fleeds3@yahoo.com