

Teaching *from* Zion

"...for out of Zion shall come forth Torah
and the word of the Lord from
Jerusalem." — Isaiah 2:3

PRAISE & WORSHIP

"Let everything that has breath praise ADONAI! Halleluyah!"

Psalm 150:6



Netivyah **נתיביה** Teaching from Zion

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About Netivyah

Netivyah in Hebrew means "the Way of the Lord." "The Way" was one of the names by which the early community of believers was known in the Brit Chadashah (New Testament). Paul says, "I worship the God of our fathers in accordance with the Way (which they call a sect). I continue to believe everything that accords with the Torah and everything written in the Prophets." (Acts 24:14 CJB). As followers of "the Way," we believe in the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We try to be faithful to God's law (the Torah) and to the rest of Scripture—the Prophets and the Writings. We believe that the Messiah promised in God's word is Yeshua (Jesus), the one who "saves His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

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News from Netivyah

Dear Friends of Netivyah,

Shalom! Well, we have survived up to this point, the world is still spinning by God's grace, and aliens have not invaded yet. All jokes aside, the past year has been very challenging for most of us in many ways (financial, emotional, spiritual, health-related), and on many levels (personal, familial, congregational, national). I expect that the repercussions of all this will be long-term and will reverberate for years to come. As disciples of Yeshua, one of our greatest responsibilities is to trust our Father in heaven through these challenging times while simultaneously remembering that we are precious to Him, made in His image. He gave us heads on our shoulders with a brain with which to reason, and it is our obligation to use it. Regardless of opinions and perspectives on this subject or that (whether political, medical, or social), we have to use our brains and figure out what the correct course for ourselves is. However, we must also remember that besides a brain, the Lord also gave us a heart, and not a heart of stone but of flesh, so that even when we disagree with others, we must always show love and compassion.

Not surprisingly, Netivyah's finances have taken a hit from the COVID-induced, global economic crisis. Incidentally, we recently began working with an additional neighborhood locally in order to continue to adjust the focus of our food-distribution efforts to the poorest families of Jerusalem. So then, here is where the head/heart dilemma takes front and center. Our head demands we act prudently by lowering our expenses, reducing the number of families that we support, restricting our charitable help to other people and organizations, and so on. But our heart continues to yearn to embrace everyone we possibly can and help them. Our heart has pity on those around us who are suffering—those hundreds of thousands of families in Israel who are being hammered by lockdowns and restrictions—as the need for aid and support continues growing momentously. So, after prayerful consideration, we decided to balance these two objectives. We decided to reduce the number of families that we are aiding this year from 180 to 150, at least for now, although I expect that it will rise again to at least 160 organically. But I pray, hope, and trust the Lord that He will provide what we need to be able to return to helping 180 families or even surpass 200 by the year's end.

Besides this, our scholarship program has more than doubled this year, climbing from 20 to 41 students this year—all active members of Messianic congregations throughout Israel. It is imperative that we also support these young people (financially and through prayer) since they are the next generation of the believing congregation in Israel and will be integrating into Israel's future of professionals building bridges between the Messianic body and the rest of Israeli society.

Since we in Israel are still in lockdown, our offices are closed most of the time (except for the weekly food distribution program), and we are continuing our ministry work primarily from home. World travel is at a standstill, so Joseph and Yehuda are instead publishing multiple video teachings per week—be sure to catch them online at Facebook or YouTube. The local congregation continues to meet virtually every week, but of course it is not the same as worshiping the Lord together as an assembly. We crave to gather in person again enjoying fellowship together with our visitor friends from all around the world, and we continue to pray that it becomes reality again sooner than later.

Yeshua said, "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." We here at Netivyah lack just the right words to show you our appreciation for standing and partnering with us; after all, what could we accomplish without your faithful support? We are forever indebted to you for helping us continue doing God's work here in the Land of Israel, being a beacon of Yeshua's light to those around us, and giving hope to the hopeless.

Abundant Blessings,

Daniel Stern

Netivyah

What is Worship?

By Shiloh ben Hod

Have you ever met a person who does not worship? There are more than 7 billion people on earth, but you will never find one. Jews, Christians, Muslims, all people of faith—they are all aware of their worship, and some are willing to fight or die over worship.

Just open the news; with tensions between nations and tensions within nations, so many people are driven by the desire to be true worshippers before their god. What about the person who claims he does not worship anything? A non-believer might believe there is no one in heaven to obey or to fulfill its desires, but he will find himself subjected to fulfill the desires of himself, the laws of the flesh.

People will starve themselves, deprive themselves from sleep, repress other desires, sacrifice their family and even hurt themselves just for success, for money, a nicer body, sex, and for many other things that can become a god to a person. This level of commitment and adherence easily surpasses the adherence of many people of faith.

We even have God-like characters in our society. Celebrities have huge followings, they receive great praise and honor, they determine the fashion, the “dress code” of their followers, and they influence the way people eat, talk, and behave. Followers will pay and travel far just to be closer to a celebrity. Sounds familiar right?

The truth is that humans were created to worship. It is in our “DNA”, and we cannot escape it. That is how the true God - creator of man, made us—and

God himself loves to be worshipped. He loves it when His creation glorifies Him. So, He has made us worshippers and commanded us to worship Him, but still He has given us freedom to choose to obey, so that our worship could emanate out of our love for Him.

God commanding us to worship Him is actually His goodness for us. God is the only one that when we worship Him, good will flow from it, and additionally, when we praise Him, our joy is completed.

C.S Lewis said once that “all enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise.” When you enjoy something, you often praise it with your words before other people, and in a way, it completes your enjoyment. It is part of it, so God telling us to worship Him is actually what helps us to enjoy Him more!

Satan, too, loves to be worshipped; he is obsessed with it, that was his fall. In Luke 4, we read about Yeshua being tempted by Satan in the wilderness. At some point Satan shows Yeshua all the kingdoms of the earth saying, “I will give you all this power and glory. It has been handed over to me, and I can give it to whomever I choose. So if you will worship me, it will all be yours” (Luke 4:6-7). Yeshua of course refuses saying only God is to be worshipped. But notice that Satan is so obsessed over being worshipped that he is willing to give up everything just to be worshipped.

So, if we were created to worship, and God loves to be worshipped, but Satan is obsessed with being worshipped and will do anything to receive it, then worship is really important and making

Worship is not about the technicalities of this mountain, this place, this style or the other. It is about the heart.

sure it is directed at God is crucial. I would say the epicenter of all spiritual warfare comes down to - who will be worshipped? When trials come, who will be worshipped? When good things happen, who will be honored?

The enemy is in constant battle to receive worship. Look at the temple mount, chosen by God. We know it, the enemy knows it, and here the battle is who will be worshipped where God has chosen? The battle is manifesting in the natural world. God will be worshipped forever.

The Dream of Any Follower of Yeshua

In John 4, a Samaritan woman receives what is the dream of any follower of Yeshua - time alone with Yeshua, sitting and talking face to face! What would you ask Yeshua if you had this opportunity? Right after realizing Yeshua is not a mere man, the woman chooses to talk about worship, and to be specific, should people worship like the Jews or like the Samaritans?

Yeshua's answer does not give her the answer she wanted but the answer she needed. "God is seeking those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth." Worship is not about the technicalities of this mountain, this place, this style or the other. It is about the heart, and when it is about the heart, all the borders and divides we have raised—Jew, Samaritan, Gentile, Charismatic or Baptist—they all fade.

Worship in truth is worship founded in the knowledge of God; a response to the revelation of God in your life, without lies. It is focused not on the shadows of the real thing but on the heart of God behind them. Worship in Spirit is worship led by the Spirit of God.

God chose to call His spirit "ruach" in Hebrew which means also "wind" (John 3).

Wind/ruach constantly moves, for as soon as it will stop moving, it will stop existing.

Also wind/ruach you cannot see, but you can notice it by seeing its effects like the trees that it moves. You can feel it on your skin and know its direction.

I believe the Spirit of God is constantly moving. We cannot see Him, but we can definitely notice what He does and often personally experience His move and work. In order to worship in spirit, we must stay sensitive, aware of His presence and be willing to follow as He leads. These are the kind of worshippers God is seeking! And He would not have to seek if they were so common. Wouldn't you want to be the one He finds while He is seeking?!

So, What is Worship?

We often worship saying, "We give you glory" or "to you be the honor." In

Worship is not necessarily singing, dancing, tithing, etc. Worship is the expression of love, adoration, reverence, honor, and total submission to something greater than ourselves.

Hebrew, the word for "glory / honor / respect" is "kavod", and kavod comes from the root letters KVD which has to do with "weight." So, giving glory, honor, and respect to God is giving the weight to His will, His presence, His character.

Worship is not necessarily singing, dancing, tithing, etc. Worship is the expression of love, adoration, reverence, honor, and total submission to something greater than ourselves. That expression can manifest in singing, dancing, tithing and many other ways that we read of in the Psalms and the Bible in general, but it is only when it comes from this heart place that it is true worship.

King David, a man after God's own heart, knew how to shout, sing, bow, cry, be quiet, make music, dance, and more in worship. I believe there are many ways to worship God, and I would suggest all of us engage in as many ways of worship as we could! God the Creator has given us creativity that manifests in many ways, and when we worship Him through the different ways, we will experience Him in different ways. Many times, worship includes a lot of emotions, but we must remember that worship is a choice, just as love is, both when emotions are present and when they are not.

We have talked about David; he himself

commanded his soul to praise God and said he will bless the name of the Lord always. Looking at David's life, I am sure there were plenty of times that he did not have the right emotional state in order to worship, but he made a decision to always worship no matter what.

As a worship leader and a musician, I had quite a few times that I was supposed to lead worship but could not find the passion or even the will and strength to do so. But I remember one time when I thought I just had the worst time of worship, no strength or emotion—very "mechanical"—an older woman came up to me soon after, telling me that was the best worship time she ever had! I was humbled, clearly it was not for my "great performance," but it was God using my sacrifice of praise.

Sacrifice

Sacrifice is the purest form of worship, and we cannot talk about worship without speaking about sacrifice. Romans 12 tells us that we ought to live as a living sacrifice; that is true worship. A sacrifice needs a goal and a price. Without a goal or a price, a sacrifice has no meaning. The goal of our life is to worship God, and the price is our life!

There were many types of sacrifices in the Torah, for different reasons, but the

It is not about earning points or salvation; it is about expressing true love and adoration, true worship, a will to draw closer to God and to pay the price.

common theme for all of them was to draw closer to God, and that is why I believe the word for sacrifice in Hebrew, “korban”, comes from the root KRB which means “draw close.”

I believe God is near, and He is calling us to draw nearer to Him, an amazing goal for our life, but it is a goal with a price, it means sacrificing ourselves every day, fighting against our flesh and desires. That is why I believe another word from the same root means “battle,” because offering a real sacrifice will be a battle, but one worth fighting and winning.

A True Sacrifice Comes from the Heart

Cain and Abel both offered up sacrifices, but only Abel’s was received. It seems Cain did not offer his best, and worse than that, he was busy looking over his shoulder to see how Abel’s sacrifice was doing. If Cain’s heart was pure before God, his reaction to the rejection of his sacrifice should have been fear, or at least sadness, but what we see is anger and jealousy.

God is not moved by sacrifices that come from the wrong motives. First and foremost, a sacrifice must come out of love. “For God so loved the world, that He gave...” It was God’s love that moved Him to sacrifice His only Son, and it is our love to Him that needs to compel us to sacrifice for Him. Is our worship or sacrifice coming from a place of love, or is it from routine, tradition, peer pressure, or looking good in the eyes of men? We must examine ourselves and

ask the Holy Spirit to align our hearts with His in order that our sacrifice will have meaning.

The Smell on The Cross

Mark 14 starts two days before Passover, very close to Yeshua’s crucifixion. Yeshua stays in a house, and a dinner is prepared for Him. At a certain moment, a woman comes with a jar of perfume and pours it on Yeshua’s head. Some people in the room complained about it, saying this was a waste, for the perfume was worth 300 dinars, which is almost a whole year’s salary of a worker in those days!

Yeshua did not think it was a waste, but rather He praised her act of worship; it was valuable to Him. Sometimes people will criticize us for how we worship, for how much we sacrifice, but there is no sacrifice that is too much before God, we cannot outgive Him.

The woman’s generosity in her sacrifice reflected her love and adoration to Yeshua. In a parallel passage, we read that it is actually the sister of Lazarus, that man whom Yeshua raised from the dead! Now her sacrifice makes more sense to us; Yeshua gave her brother back to her! Our sacrifice and worship should reflect our heart, how much we love Him, how much we are thankful for Him. Yeshua even said it will be told about her sacrifice every place where the gospel is proclaimed! What a remarkable thing! Our sacrifice to God could be so much more meaningful to God than we can imagine!

We have to remember all of this is happening very close to the crucifixion. In a very short time, Yeshua is going to suffer the worst suffering a person can experience— beaten, whipped, being humiliated by dragging a cross on His back through the streets of Jerusalem, betrayed, mocked and finally killed. But I believe that throughout all of these terrible hours, there was a sweet fragrance, a spot of light; I believe Yeshua was physically able to smell the perfume that was poured on His head just a while before. I am sure Yeshua was remembering her sacrifice during that day, and I am sure it touched His heart deeply. He even knew it before, while she was pouring the perfume on His head, saying she has done it for His burial.

Our worship is not meaningless or small in significance. Our worship touches God’s heart in the deepest way. We should be encouraged to offer ourselves, every day, as a living sacrifice, in a way that lets God work through us and glorify His name.

Can you say that you are living the life of a living sacrifice? Is your life different

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We need to worship God for what He has done, for what He is doing, and for what He will do! Worship is a powerful weapon in spiritual warfare.

in that way from non-believers? Is your sacrifice coming out of love, or out of other reasons? Does your sacrifice have a cost? If we want to draw closer to God, a great way to do that is by asking the Holy Spirit, "What can I sacrifice to show my love?" It is not about earning points or salvation; it is about expressing true love and adoration, true worship, a will to draw closer to God and to pay the price.

The Foundation of Worship

I see four things we must have in our life, four things out of which worship flows:

Knowing God - You cannot worship what you do not know. We are to taste and see that the Lord is good. We are to read His word, to get to know Him, to spend time with Him, and the more we know Him, the deeper our worship will be. Imagine preparing food for someone,

and asking for his feedback, and that someone praises your food for how it looks, how it smells, but that person never actually took a bite to taste and experience the meal. The person's praise would not mean much. Do we worship God from tasting and knowing or from what someone told us about Him? Does it flow from relationship?

Love - The first commandment is to love God with everything. Serving and worshipping God without love is meaningless.

Total Surrender - Did you ever go to a worship service, or a prayer meeting, and felt so tired, or the music was not to your taste? Or you felt God urging you to talk to a person, but you did not really want to?

What you do in such situations actually points to your level of surrender. Worship should be sacrificial. Whenever we "don't feel like it", that is the perfect time to worship. It is easy to worship when you "feel it"; the real sacrifice is when you do not.

Identity - As Yeshua said, "He who is forgiven much, loves much". When we do not know who we are in Him, we are limited in our worship. It is only when we know we are children of God, forgiven and loved, that we can truly worship our Father in heaven with everything.

The Outcome of Worship

Worship is important to God's heart. He

has surrounded His throne with constant worship, and whenever He sees His children worshipping Him, He is deeply moved. Paul and Silas were worshipping in the middle of the night in a dirty prison cell, and God responded by releasing His beloved children!

Joshua told the Israelites to shout to the Lord for He has given them Jericho, but actually only after they shouted is when the Lord gave them the city. We need to worship God for what He has done, for what He is doing, and for what He will do! Worship is a powerful weapon in spiritual warfare! When we worship God, it breaks the power of the enemy over our mind, and God's thoughts start to fill our mind and heart.

Worship is our vehicle into God's presence. It says in the Psalms that we enter His gates with thanksgiving. Praise and worship are our vehicle into God's presence. Whenever we want to seek God, worship is a good place to start!

The last thing I want to mention, is that our worship is also meant for people who are not believers yet that they may see and put their trust in the Lord (Psalm 40:1-4). I am far from knowing it all about worship, but what I do know is that I want to be someone whom God finds when He searches for true worshippers, someone who worships in spirit and in truth, someone who is willing to pay the price, to live worship, and not just to "do" worship, not just in Kehilah, not only before people, but in His presence, at His feet.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shiloh Ben Hod is an Israeli worship leader who was born and raised in the Jerusalem area into a Messianic Jewish family. He attended Israeli schools and served in the IDF, all the while deepening the roots in his faith in Yeshua as well as his roots in Israeli Jewish culture. Shiloh and his wife Sarah, who have one son and one daughter, serve at a 24/7 House of Prayer as young adult leaders as well as in the congregation of Shiloh's father. Shiloh has already released two worship albums, and he travels around Israel and around the world to lead worship and teach at various congregations and special events.

TEACHINGS ON WORSHIP & PRAISE

By Betsy Ramsay



“Make a joyful noise unto the Lord... Enter into his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise.”

(Psalm 100:1, 4)

In the meditation that follows I will share my views and insights into what the Bible has to say about praise and worship. I will also mention some experiences of my own that I have had which have helped me better understand the benefits of praise and worship.

Very early after I first put my trust in Yeshua some sixty-seven years back, I was instructed by my friend who was also my spiritual mother that when we pray, we are to begin by praising our Lord. There is a reason for this, she continued. Our praise will help us draw

closer to the Lord as indicated in Psalm 100.

Those first weeks after I had experienced the new birth were a very special time. My spiritual mother and I were living on the same corridor in a college dormitory

was truly what I needed at that juncture in my life. When we are worshipping the Lord, the gates of our hearts are literally barred against slipping into wrong thought patterns, and it can be a great comfort to know this.

Departing now from the subject of the power of worship and praise, I am reminded of a way in which our Lord

God clearly expresses the importance of worshipping the Lord with all our strength and all our fervor. This even includes times when we find it difficult to praise Him at that moment.



protected Himself against falling prey to the enemy of our souls. This was through quoting passages in scripture which clearly exposed Satan's lies each time he tried to trip Yeshua up. I am thinking here of the occasion after He had been praying and fasting in the wilderness for forty days (Luke 4:1-2). At that time, He drew upon the word of

God as a weapon of defense against the devil's wily attempts to make Him sin. We read in I Peter 5:7 that if we resist the devil, he will flee from us, and this is what our Lord did on this occasion.

Yeshua was hungry after His long fast and Satan knew this. Therefore, he thought to tempt Yeshua to boastfully demonstrate

his power to perform miracles. Yeshua also knew that He had power to turn the large stone beside him into bread and to satisfy His hunger in this way. He knew also that this was not the Heavenly Father's intention for Him at that time. So, instead of falling into the enemy's trap and turning the stone into bread, Yeshua simply quoted Deuteronomy

Even if we do not feel like singing praises to the Lord, we need to remind ourselves of His infinite mercy and goodness and to praise Him with joy and thankfulness.

8:3, “Man does not live by bread only but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.” This is only one example of the numerous times we read about when Yeshua drew upon the Word of God to wisely and effectively block the enemy’s attempts to trip Him up.

Now turning to a scripture passage in the Apostle Paul’s epistle to the “saints and faithful in Colossae,” we will think about another way in which, as Yeshua’s followers, we can be overcomers. In the epistle to the believers in Colossae (3:16), we read that we are to “let the word of God dwell ... [in us] richly in

all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and in spiritual songs, singing with grace in your [our] hearts to the Lord.” In a few lines before this, we are likewise told (Colossians 3:14-15) to “above all things... put on charity [love] which is the bond of perfectness and to “let the peace of God rule in our hearts to the which we are called in one body: and be ye thankful!”

So, what if we come to a worship service one morning, and we just do not feel like worshipping and praising the Lord. Should we start singing anyway while our thoughts are far away on some other matter? Or what should we do? Indeed, time and again, the word of God clearly expresses the importance of worshipping the Lord with all our strength and all our fervor. This even includes times when we find it difficult to praise Him at that moment. Accordingly, these are the times when we may experience praising the Lord as a sacrifice.

See Psalm 27:5:6: “Therefore shall I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy. I will sing, yea I will sing praises unto the Lord.” The truth is that whatever our circumstances may be and whatever our feelings are at the time, the word of the Lord admonishes us to offer Him praise and to do it wholeheartedly. We see this again in the Apostle Paul’s epistle to the Hebrews 13:15-16: “To do good and to communicate forget not. For with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” And again, in the previous verse: “By Him, therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips giving praise to His name.”

This same emphasis can be found in Psalm 107:21-22 where we read: “Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men. And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving and declare His works with rejoicing.” So, there is actually no way out! Even if we do not feel like singing praises to the Lord, we need to remind ourselves of His infinite mercy and goodness and to praise Him with joy and thankfulness, nonetheless!

We are to seek the Lord while He can be found and to call upon Him while He is near (Isaiah 55:6), “For the earth is full of His mercy” (Psalm 119: 64). As long as we are trusting and praising the Lord for His goodness, we will note how the Spirit of the Lord draws us nearer to Himself.

Now as I wind up this meditation, I would like to take a look at some remarkable features of Psalm 119, the longest psalm in the Bible and perhaps the most challenging. One expression that we find repeatedly in this psalm is the exhortation to seek the Lord with our whole heart. This statement occurs in the psalm’s second verse, and I have found it again in five more verses (vv. 10, 34, 58, 69, 145). I may have also missed a few. This does not include verses like 119:11: “Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee”. The psalm writer has much to say in the lines of this psalm, and I would really recommend reading it and absorbing its contents with your whole heart! Reading a psalm in the Bible in this manner can also be a form of worship and praise.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Betsy Ramsay, American-born journalist, author, and teacher resided with her family in Sweden before moving to Israel in 1987. Betsy has authored twelve books, four of which are collections of her own, original poetry, and two are historical novels for children. She also has three full-color picture books for smaller children, for adults a personal memoir as well as the story of her Aliyah to Israel, and finally a story based on her German, Jewish grandfather’s account from the Holocaust both in English and in German.

PRAISE AND WORSHIP: ART OF LIVING

By Lion Erwtaman



Worship is one of the ways to open up to the spiritual reality where the Lord is. Worship should stem from wonder and surprise.

Wonder, Surprise & Respect

Living with faith is the art of always trusting in the Lord. The ultimate human trust is the answer to the all-inclusive solution to the problem of suffering which is connected to life on earth. It is as Psalm 23 describes our life on earth, "Although I walk through the valley overshadowed by death, I will fear no evil. For You are with me." The result of this trust in the midst of forces pulling us down is our worshipping the Lord upon whom we bank our trust and faith. The Kingdom of the Lord, the place of spiritual reality, is separated

from our world by an unbridgeable gap, according to the words of Yeshua (read Luke 16:26). Worship is one of the ways to open up to the spiritual reality where the Lord is. Worship should stem from wonder and surprise. It was the Greek philosopher Plato who said that the experience of wonder and surprise is the beginning of philosophy. As Psalm 111:10 says: ראשית חכמה יראת יהוה שכל טוב לעד, לכל-עשיהם תהלתו עמדת לעד, The beginning of wisdom (experience of wonder and surprise) is having awe for the Lord; good understanding to all who practice it. His praise stands forever. In other words, worshipping the Lord is an act of eternal value. And real awe is connected

to wonder and surprise, besides grand respect.

Left and Right Hemisphere

Worshipping is tuning in and being in tune with the Lord. He is in another world than ours. His Kingdom is not of this world. His place is invisible for many of us. First of all, it is good to realize that our brain consists of two hemispheres, working together to assist us in processing what we are experiencing and observing. Our left hemisphere is occupied with spoken and written language, word analysis, numbers, analytics, and abstract thinking. We

In Judaism, we discern five souls, which are five levels of spiritual consciousness, our path to grow.

think in words as we sing in words. As for our emotions, the positive ones are processed here. Our right hemisphere is where our creativity stems from, as well as imagination and holistic thinking. Intuition, arts, singing without words, and daydreaming come out of this side. Negative emotions are worked through in the right hemisphere. Also, subjectivity is seated there – making things, experiences, and empathy personal - as well as faith. Singing in words and also without words is important to open the facilities of our brain. When we enter the place of worship, we might still be in a mode of academic and exact thinking and responding. The *tzores* (troubles) of the day, the recent past, or the coming days might still hinder us—left brain stuff.

Spiritual Openness

We need to open up our brain's right half in order to start a new fresh mode of spiritual awareness. It would be good to do this by way of a process. Start with texts of praise (left brain hemisphere) and songs with words. Somewhere during the same service, music without words needs to be hummed, in order to open the participation of the right brain half. Practicing this will enhance spiritual discernment and use the right brain hemisphere in order to receive more spiritual light, healing, comfort, and inspiration from the Lord. The Torah is a spiritual document and needs to be heard, read, and studied with that part of our brain which is made for the spiritual part. The spiritual aspect of Torah is mentioned in texts like Leviticus 18:5, "You will therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments which if a man does so, he shall live in them. I am the Lord". The New Testament says that the Torah

(the Law) is spiritual, see Romans 7:14. In I Corinthians 2:13-14, the text builds upon that: "...the holy Spirit teaches us. It compares spiritual things with spiritual words. The natural man does not receive the things of the spirit of the Lord. They are foolishness unto him. Neither can he know them because they can only be discerned spiritually".

Opened Eyes

If we optimize our reception during a worship service, it will benefit us and the people we deal with and bring us closer to the Lord. I think this is why there is *shacharit* (prayer in the morning), *minchah* (afternoon prayer), and *arvith* or *maariv* (evening prayer). In the morning, we are still closer to our night mode, as well as in the evening when we get closer to it. During the day, we are in the middle of doing business, and doubtless to say our brain will be more in business mode. The morning might be the closest to spiritual openness, as we see David sing: "השמיעני בבקר הסדך כי־בך בטחתי" (Make that I hear your lovingkindness in the morning. For I put my trust in you", Psalms 143:8). Opening ourselves is what it is all about. When Elisha and his servant were surrounded by soldiers of the king of Aram, his servant was afraid they would lose the battle. Elisha saw what his servant couldn't see, so Elisha prayed for him to be able to see: "Elisha prayed. He said, Lord, I pray to you, open his eyes, that he may see. The Lord opened the eyes of the young man. Then he could see in the spiritual reality. And *hinneh*, he saw that the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire around Elisha." Would it not be wonderful to see the spiritual warriors when we say our praises?!

Been in Heaven and Back

In the New Testament in Acts 7, Stephen is surrounded by enemies who have their eyes quite closed to the spiritual reality, and finally they stone him fatally. In his last moments in the earthly realm, he has a near death experience in which he can see into the spiritual realm. Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit of the Lord. He "looked up into the heaven. And he saw the glory of G-d. Yeshua stood as Metatron on the right hand of the Lord. And Stephen said: 'Look, I see the heavens opened. The *Ben Adam* is standing on the right hand of G-d'" (verse 56). It would be marvelous if we would be able to see this heavenly reality during our worship services! Four rabbis saw the Orchard, *Pardes* (Paradise, or heaven). Rabbi Rashi explains that they were able to because they meditated intensely on the name of the Lord. Their names were Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, Acher [Elisha ben Avuya, called Acher (the other one) because of what happened to him after he entered the Pardes] and Rabbi Akiva. Only Akiva entered in peace and left in peace. New Testament author Shaul (Paul) had an experience of this kind, and he wrote about it: "I knew a man who was a believer in Messiah. It must have been more than fourteen years ago. Whether he was in his body, or whether

When a person is born, she or he is given a nefesh. It is the soul of the flesh, the lowest level of awareness.



he had an out of body experience, I cannot tell. G-d knows. This person has been caught up to the third heaven” (II Corinthians 12:2). Paul – I think it was he himself – has been at the place where our worship is directed toward. Wouldn't it be glorious if we were able to observe where our prayers are landing?!

Five Ascending Levels of Awareness

It takes spiritual growth to reach the place where our prayers are landing. In Judaism, we discern five souls, which are five levels of spiritual consciousness, our

path to grow! If you look from the point of view of man's service to G-d, these five levels of soul may be described as five ascending levels of awareness of the Lord. They are called: *nefesh*, *ruach*, *neshamah*, *chaya* and *yechida*. When a person is born, she or he is given a *nefesh*. It is the soul of the flesh, the lowest level of awareness. Worship, our focus of this study, will be more mechanical, as part of the things one has to do to fulfill her or his religious duties. Think of the older brother in the parable of the two Jewish brothers (Luke 15:11-32) and his attitude to their father. The next level is

the *ruach*, the essence of awareness and of our attention. The younger brother in this parable teaching of Yeshua returned to the father and grew to this level of awareness. The following spiritual level is *neshamah*: the collective essence, where the souls of various individuals are connected.

Imagine how much light the Lord radiates. Stand in His light next time you worship.

The Bundle of Life

The next soul level of awareness is called *chayah*. It is the high level of spirituality where you tap into the power of living. Adam and Eve had reached that level once, when they were forbidden to touch and eat from the *Etz Chaim*, the Tree of Life, as we read in Genesis 3:22. This level is not one you could reach individually, but connected and collectively, like the collective soul of Israel which has gathered and is still gathering all of its awareness and memory. In the saying ‘You save one, you save the world,’ we might find a hint to this collective awareness. The highest soul level one can reach in this life is called *yechidah* (the bundle of the light), what has been described in I Samuel 25:29, where Abigail says to David who is being pursued by enemies: “A man has risen to pursue you and to seek your soul. But the soul of my lord shall be bound in *tzror hachayim*, the bundle of life, together with the Lord

We are called children of the Light, the Light which was called by the Lord at creation. It was this Light that was not created, only called.

your G-d". Part of this text appears often on Jewish gravestones: תהא נפשוה צרורה בצרור החיים.

It looks like this level of being with the Lord is only to be reached when we pass away after living a life of true worship. Messianic Jews have learned how important the insight is of what Rachav once said to the two *meraglim* whom Joshua had sent to spy out the land in order to let them know that she understood about how the G-d of Israel gave victories because of His unique way of existence and operation: "Because the Lord your G-d, he is G-d in heaven above, and in earth beneath" (Joshua 2:11).

Seven Ways to Express Worship

The role and position of Yeshua in our

worship is indispensable. He will lift us up and make us one. In connection with our Messiah, the smoke of the incense which comes with the prayers of the saints, will ascend up before G-d. Let us make it a spiritual exercise to grow in spiritual level and not take who we are and where we are at, for granted. Instead of just worshipping, it is perhaps time to get to discerning the different kinds of worship. Praise and worship are human actions out of awe for the Lord whereby also we connect and grow toward each other as worshippers. Seven Hebrew Biblical verbs express our desire, motive, and bodily position to exalt the name of the Lord:

הלל (halal): to dance, to jump, to be loud, to be foolish

ידה (yadah): to use your hands by throwing them up and forward while making a confession to the Lord

תודה (todah): thanksgiving by lifting your hands in the air

שבח (shabach): a loud, joyous shout of testimony

זמר (zamar): to worship the Lord while playing an instrument

ברך (barach): to kneel (knee: berech) in awe and submission

תהלה (tehillah): To sing a spontaneous, unrehearsed song regarding the Lord. Sung together the whole group will sing in one voice.

Worship by Standing in His Light

Another spiritual exercise is standing in the light of Messiah. We read, sing, and talk about it. So, let us take it a step further by applying it. The Lord gives it; we should receive it. A beautiful text regarding this light connection is found in Psalms 36:10, "With You is the source of life. By Your light shall we see light." We are called children of the Light, the Light which was called by the Lord at creation. It was this Light that was not created, only called. It was, and is, with the Lord, and it is what comes out of the Lord as Word; light as word, word as light. We have come to know Him as Yeshua the Messiah, Jew and Gentile souls alike. It is the true Light which shines upon and enlightens every human being, coming from the heavens into our world. (Read also John 1:9). Light from the sun helps us to see the earthly things. But this Light will be there when the sun and moon are not with us anymore, because we will be in the heavenly reality. Isaiah teaches about it, "The sun will be no more your light by day and neither for brightness will the moon give light to you. The Lord will be for you an everlasting light. Your G-d will be your glory. Your sun will no longer go down; neither will your moon withdraw itself. For the Lord will be your everlasting light. And the days of your mourning will be ended" (Isaiah 60:19-20; compare Revelation 21:23 and 22:5). Imagine how much light the Lord radiates. Stand in His light next time you worship and realize that the Light shines in darkness as well. And the darkness is not able to grasp it, nor take it away from you.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lion Erwteman, together with his wife Elze, is the cofounder, leader, and teacher of Beth Yeshua, a Messianic Jewish congregation located in Amsterdam. Nearing 30 years, they have been ministering to the congregation through teachings, worship, music, and dance, and Lion's organization is a long-standing partner of Netivyah in Jerusalem which is led by his son-in-law Yuda Bachana. Originally a biologist and viola player, Lion also completed studies related to Tanakh, Talmud, and New Testament. Lion and Elze are blessed with three children and five grandchildren.

beth-yeshua.nl/en

PRAISE & WOSHIP

By Joseph Shulam



Worshipping is one of the most ancient and indigenous human instincts. Why do I call it an “instinct”? Webster’s Dictionary defines “instinct” as “Natural inward impulse; unconscious, involuntary, or unreasoning prompting to any mode of action, whether bodily, or mental, without a distinct apprehension of the end or object to be accomplished.” The part of this definition that is most interesting to

me is the last phrase: “action...without a distinct apprehension of the end or object to be accomplished.” An instinct is oftentimes an action or reaction that is done without much thinking and without an understanding of what the benefit, the purpose, or the end of it is. In other words, an instinct is at least oftentimes an irrational action, feeling, or impulse! Worship in general is a kind of instinct, and that is why it appears universally and

globally from the very dawn of humanity. Some of the most ancient physical remains of human endeavor found in archaeology are places of worship and religious artifacts that indicate worship.

Worship is defined by the seventeenth-century poet and intellectual John Milton as the act of paying divine honors to the Supreme Being; religious reverence and homage; adoration, or acts of reverence,

paid to God, or a being viewed as God. “God with idols in their worship joined,” he wrote in his famous poem *Paradise Regained*.

Of course, there are many definitions and explanations of what is “instinct” and what is “worship.” I like these definitions because they suite my fancy. If I join my definitions of “instinct” and “worship,” the outcome is double: The Human relationship or need for a divine presence in his world is natural and irrational, and it motivates the human being to adore, revere, give homage to, sacrifice for, study, investigate, seek rationale and reason, and above all identify.

For this reason I thank the “unknowable Creator who Created this world that I live in and so loved the world that He the Creator revealed Himself and His love to us lowly humans by sending us His Son, Yeshua. The Creator sent us a human-being that has walked in our shoes and experienced the whole gamut of the good, the bad, and the ugly that we humans experience. Only through this Son of the Creator, Yeshua, can we

Israelite worship in the land of Israel was essentially the work of the priests in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple of Jerusalem.

begin to understand the Creator and His love and know why it is right, good, and necessary to worship Him!

Now we can proceed to the topic of this issue of the “Teaching from Zion” magazine!

Worship

In the Hebrew Bible there is no word that exactly translates the English word worship.

The closest word that is used in the modern Hebrew language is borrowed from the ancient Northern Semitic ancient languages, *pelachan* (פּוֹלְחָן). When in Israel, Jewish people use this word. Normally, it has the connotation of “foreign worship” or “cultic worship.” In Aramaic and other ancient Semitic languages, it means “work.” *Pelach*, in Arabic even today means “farm worker.” This root *pelach* means worker, servant. The Greek word that corresponds to the Semitic word *pelach* is *latreia*. The Apostle Paul in Romans 9:4, says, “who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises” (NKJV). In the Greek, what is translated as “service of God” is actually one word, *λατρεία* (*latreia*). Today, we get the word “liturgy” from this root. The USB Greek dictionary gives this Greek word the following meanings: “*λατρεία*, *α*ς *f* service, worship; pl. rites or duties (He 9:6).” The normal Hebrew Bible describes what people do to honor God and express their gratitude and devotion to the Creator as, *עבודה* (*avodah*), work, service. What the Priest sons of Aaron and the Levites did in the Tabernacle or in the Temple in Jerusalem was called *עבודה* (*avodah*), service. We are commanded to serve, work the LORD’s work, many times in the Hebrew Bible. The one that is most interesting for me is, “Let them shout for joy and be glad, Who favor my righteous

Worship in general is a kind of instinct, and that is why it appears universally and globally from the very dawn of humanity.

cause; And let them say continually, ‘Let the LORD be magnified, Who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant.’” (Psa. 35:27 NKJV). The LORD has pleasure in the prosperity of the person who serves (worships) Him.

Why does the Bible describe what is happening in the Tabernacle in the wilderness and in the Temple in Jerusalem as “work, service”? The Creator who created the world and all that is in His world is not in need of adoration and worship from people. The LORD has myriads of angels adoring, singing to, and worshipping Him non-stop forever—day and night! We people need to worship, adore, serve and dance to satisfy our instinct, relationship, gratitude, and adoration (honor) for the Creator and Master of our lives. The Creator is the one that serves His creatures and provides for them life, breath, and food. This is clearly expressed by the Apostle Paul in his teaching on Mars Hill in Athens: “Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, ‘Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found

Probably the most important form of giving homage and adoration to the God of Israel, the Creator, is the bowing down face forward before the Lord.

an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, "For we are also His offspring." Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17:22–31 NKJV)

When we read what God requires from people this is what we find in the Word of God. Micah 6:8, "He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God!"

I suppose that Paul is writing or dictating in Greek, so when he is talking about "worship," Paul is using the Greek word λατρεία (latreia) that the Septuagint uses in the following places: Exo. 12:25-26; 13:5; Josh. 22:27; 1 Chr. 28:13. [1] In all these places the Greek word λατρεία (latreia) is a translation

of the Hebrew Word הָעֲבוּדָה (ha'avodah) with the basic meaning of work and service and, in fact, appears in all the places that the Greek word λατρεία is used in the Septuagint. Furthermore, in English and other Christian translations of the Hebrew Bible, λατρεία is translated as work or service, but in the New Testament that same Greek Word is translated with the word "worship." The context of Exodus 12:25-26 is the preparation for the celebration of the first Passover. This "service" or "work" that is described involved cleaning, cooking, and sacrificing the Passover Lamb, and packing their bags, getting ready to leave Egypt by morning. There is no scene here of a place of worship or a general assembly of the people of Israel singing and dancing and taking a collection. In the context of the Hebrew "worship" in the temple in Jerusalem, "service" was the hard work of preparing animals for sacrifice, cleaning up, and dealing with large groups of people who have come from a long journey, who maybe have a challenging time dealing with the temple restrictions, or even who lost their child in the crowd; just look at the story of Joseph, Mary and Yeshua (entering his thirteenth year of life) in Jerusalem. His family just forgot to look for him, but when they returned to Jerusalem looking for him, they found him in the Temple discussing God with the sages and Rabbis.

The King James Version of the Bible and the New King James version translate the Hebrew word עֲבוּדָה correctly as service. These two translations to English do not

follow the Septuagint Greek translation that uses the Greek word for worship, λατρεία. We see an erosion taking place from the Hebrew concept of "serving" God as the highest privilege of the priests in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple in Jerusalem to a more pagan (later a Greek and Roman) format of worship meaning public admiration, praises, singing, dancing, and giving lip service to their gods. We see the word "worship" used in several descriptions of pagan worship like in Daniel 3:5-6, "that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; and whoever does not fall down and worship, shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace." This text in the book of Daniel is not in Hebrew. It is written in Aramaic, and the Aramaic word that is translated as "worship" uses the root sagad: וְתִסְגְּדוּן לְצֶלֶם דָּהָבָא – (vetisgedun letzelem dahava) = "you shall worship the golden image." Outside of Daniel, this Aramaic root appears only four times in the Hebrew Bible and all are in Isaiah (44:15, 17, 19, 46:6). In every place that this Aramaic word appears, it is in the pagan, idol-worshipping context. For comparison, a place of worship in the Arabic language is called "masjid" using the same cognate sajid = sagad.

Probably the most important form of giving homage and adoration to the God of Israel, the Creator, is the bowing down face forward before the Lord. The word "השתחויה" (hishtachavah), to



bow down, is translated into English with the word “worship” following the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible called the Septuagint. According to tradition, the story goes that the King of Egypt, Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285–247 BCE), invited 70 (or 72) Jewish scholars from Israel and from other places to translate the Hebrew Pentateuch into Greek for his famous library in Alexandria, Egypt. There is a document attributed to someone by the name of Aristeeas that records King Ptolemy II dividing the 70 scholars to translate the Torah and isolated each one of them, but when their translations were complete and compared, miraculously they all had the same identical translation. The rest of the Hebrew Bible was translated to Greek within the century. The Septuagint became the most popular translation of the Hebrew Bible in the Greco-Roman Empire and was most widely used in the period of the composition and writing of the New Testament. So, the Greek

word that translated the Aramaic word סגד, “sagad” also translated the Hebrew Word השתחוה (bow down), and English translations followed the Greek and translated them as “worship.”

As examples I bring these two texts that demonstrate that the Hebrew word “to bow down” does not carry with it the connotation of what is considered “worship” in the modern Christian sense. (1) Gen. 22:5, “And Abraham said to his young men, ‘Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.’” (2) Exo. 24:1, “Now He said to Moses, ‘Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship from afar.’” In Isaiah the prophet’s description of idol worshiping, he uses this same word in the following text: Isa. 44:17, “And the rest of it he makes into a god, his idol, and falls down to it and worships it. He plays to it and says,

I would say that a major part of the worship (bowing down) would be the participation of the family by sharing the food (meat) that is offered to the LORD.

[1] Exo. 12:25-26, “It will come to pass when you come to the land which the LORD will give you, just as He promised, that you shall keep this service. And it shall be, when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’” [Here the NIV translates the Hebrew עבודה and the Greek λατρεία as “ceremony.”] — Exo. 13:5, “And it shall be, when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall keep this service in this month.” — Josh. 22:27, “but that it may be a witness between you and us and our generations after us, that we may perform the service of the LORD before Him with our burnt offerings, with our sacrifices, and with our peace offerings; that your descendants may not say to our descendants in time to come, ‘You have no part in the LORD.’” [Here the NIV uses the word worship for the same word in Hebrew as Service, 1 — [עבודה] Chr. 28:13, “also for the division of the priests and the Levites, for all the work of the service of the house of the LORD, and for all the articles of service in the house of the LORD.”

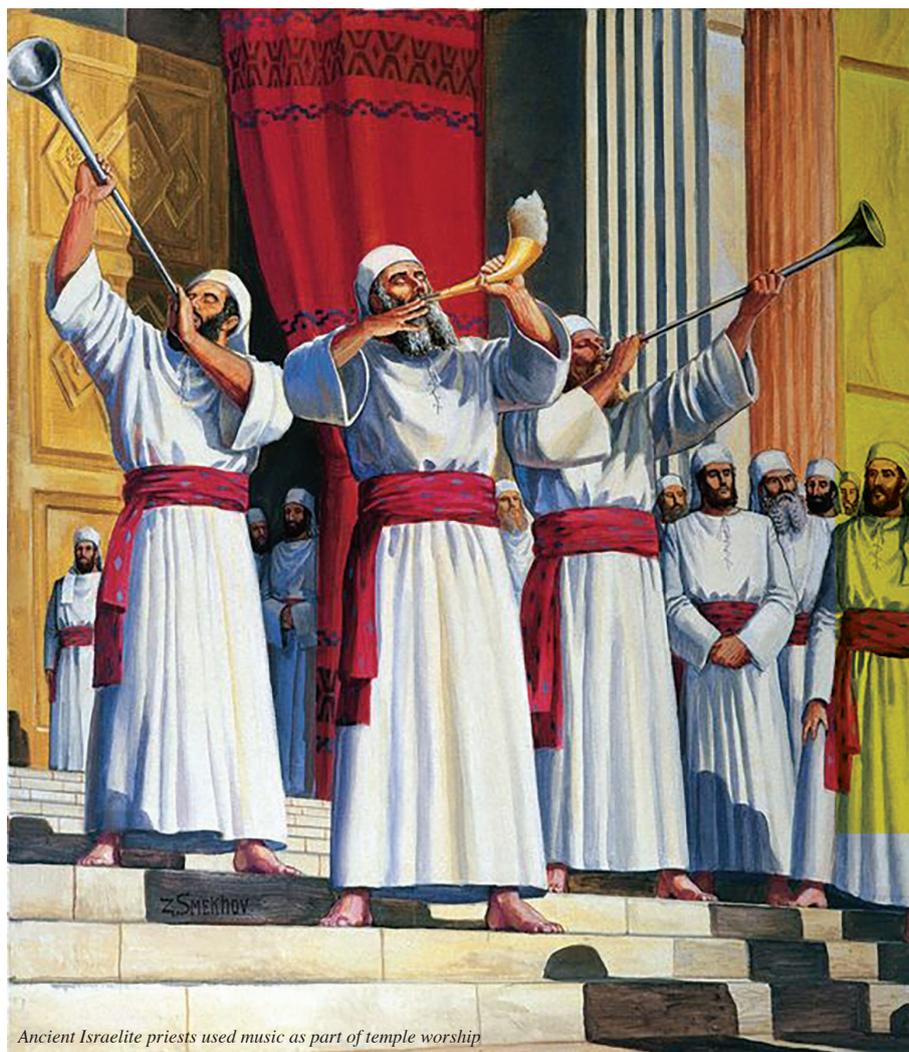
[2] The same phenomenon is seen in translations with the word “Gospel” and “Good News” and with the word “Grace” and “Truth” that are translated tendentiously between the New Testament and the Old Testament. The translators of the Hebrew and the Greek to their native languages translated according to their theological traditions and not according to philological consistency and rules.

Worship before the LORD in the courts of the Temple in Jerusalem was an atmosphere of celebration and expression of devotion.

‘Deliver me, for you are my god!’” The English translation distinguishes the translation and translates the same word “worship” when it is to THE LORD and when it is clearly pagan idol worship by bowing down the same word is translated as “fall down.” [2]

We see that bowing down before the Lord is one of the highest forms of showing submission and devotion to God. This is true for Abraham, Moses, and all through the scriptures, both Israelites and pagans use this form of expression when they are connecting, submitting, and showing devotion to their God.

Later than the eighth century B.C.E., we see in Hosea the prophet and in Rabbinical literature after the destruction of the



Ancient Israelite priests used music as part of temple worship

Temple in 70 C.E. the same development, and in the Book of Hebrews chapter 13, the exact same development as in Hosea and Rabbinical literature. “For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. Therefore, by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget

to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Hebrews 13:14-16).

It is obvious in this text that it was written very near to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by Titus in 70 C.E. The emphasis is moved from the Priestly duties that are performed in the Temple

[3] Midrash Tanchuma, Chukat 8:1, and Midrash Bamidbar Rabba 19:8.

[4] A gentile asked Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai, “These rituals you do, they seem like witchcraft! You bring a heifer, burn it, crush it up, and take its ashes. [If] one of you is impure by the dead [the highest type impurity], 2 or 3 drops are sprinkled on him, and you declare him pure?!” He said to him, “Has a restless spirit ever entered you?” He said to him, “No!” “Have you ever seen a man where a restless spirit entered him?” He said to him, “Yes!” [Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai] said to him, “And what did you do for him?” He said to him, “We brought roots and made them smoke beneath him and pour water and it flees.” He said to him, “Your ears should hear what leaves from your mouth! The same thing is true for this spirit, the spirit of impurity, as it is written, (Zachariah 13:2) “Even the prophets and the spirit of impurity will I remove from the land.” They sprinkle upon him purifying waters, and it [the spirit of impurity] flees.” After he left, our rabbi’s students said, “You pushed him off with a reed. What will you say to us?” He said to them, “By your lives, a dead person doesn’t make things impure, and the water doesn’t make things pure. Rather, God said, ‘I have engraved a rule, I have decreed a decree (chukah chakakti, gezeira gazarti), and you have no permission to transgress what I decreed, as it says “This is a chok (rule) of the Torah.”

to a more organic and personal form of expressing our devotion and appreciation to the Almighty God who created the World. Now, based on Hosea chapter 14, by “offering the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” In other words, we see a shift from the formal service in the Temple a pre-emptive move before the fall of Jerusalem for the first time since 586 B.C., the destruction of the First Temple. Now in place of Temple worship by Priests and Levites and a rather passive role of the person that wants to express his gratitude and appreciation to His Creator, now he himself, the person, is bringing sacrifice of praise to God and the fruit of his lips

for edification” (1Cor. 14:26). These instructions of the Apostle Paul to the community of disciples in Corinth is in full compliance to the instruction that Hosea the Prophet gave to the people of Israel on the eve of the destruction of the first temple in 586 B.C.

The synagogues in the land of Israel during the same period were also doing the same thing with the exception that the main reason for the coming together was the reading and the study of the Law of Moses, just as it is recommended even for the non-Jewish disciples of Yeshua the Messiah to go to the synagogues on the Sabbath day where “Moses” is being read. The liturgical part in the first century after Yeshua was very scant. There was the saying of the Kaddish that today is

reject the LORD because of the events that are about to take place in the fall of Jerusalem. The Pharisees faced the same problems and Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai gives the very same twist right after the fall of Jerusalem for his disciples when they ask him about the meaning and practice of the Red Heifer,[3] a practice of the command in the Torah that would end with the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple and all that surrounded the temple worship.[4]

Israelite worship in the land of Israel was essentially the work of the priests in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple of Jerusalem. The priest did most of the work, and the work was mainly physical. The sacrificial system required the worshipper to bring his sacrifice who then handed it to the priest, and there is not much talking or discussion between the priest and the worshipper. The few examples that we have are sketchy at best. The first two chapters of the book of Samuel describe the procedure that went on in the Tabernacle in Shiloh when a family came on the feast day to worship and bring the sacrifices to the LORD. “Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim Zophim, of the mountains of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. And he had two wives: the name of one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. This man went up from his city yearly to worship and sacrifice to the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. Also, the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the LORD, were there. And whenever the time came for Elkanah to make an offering, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, although the LORD had closed her womb” (1 Samuel 1:1-5 NKJV). Here is what we can glean

After Yeshua’s ascension, the disciples continued to go to the Temple in Jerusalem and to worship and pray like every other Jew.

giving thanks in the name of God. This shift in emphasis in the worship mode of the people of Israel is carried through to the New Covenant community. The devotees to the faith gather together in homes daily, and what do they do there? Acts 2:42, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” In the communities of the diaspora what do the worshipers do in their fellowships? “How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done

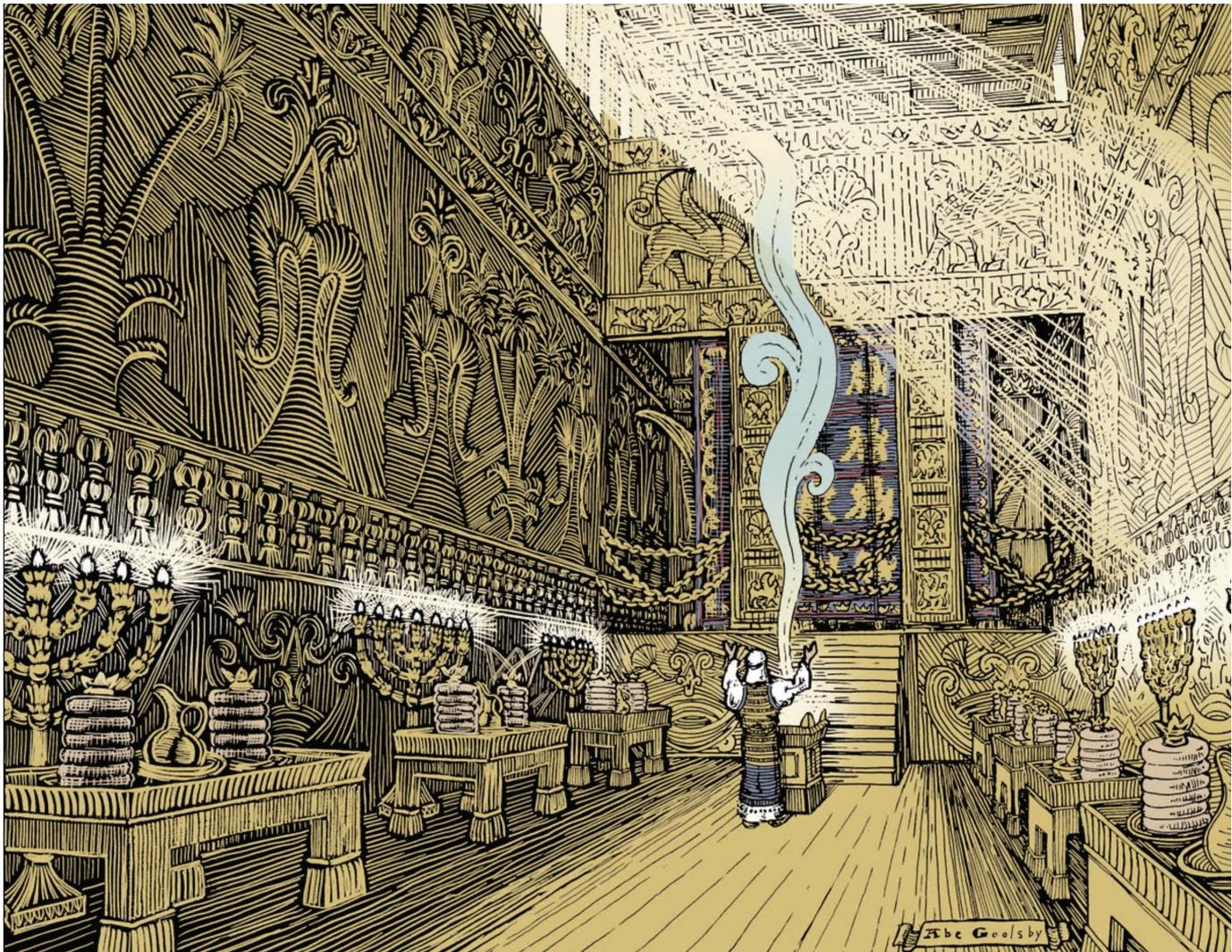
considered by most Jewish people a prayer associated with eulogizing the dead, but in fact it has nothing to do with the dead but rather affirms the importance and sanctity of the LORD God of Israel and His relationship with us.

The author of Hebrews is writing his letter to encourage and strengthen the disciples of Yeshua in Jerusalem and in the land of Israel preparing them for the fall of Jerusalem that would bring an end to the Jewish worship in the Temple. He is giving them guidelines to prepare them for the tragedy and encourage the disciples not to give up or

from this story. The Israelite family, all the family including the children, go to the place of worship. The Tabernacle that was built in the wilderness of Sinai is now settled in Shiloh in the territory of Ephraim. The family of Elkanah, comes every year on a special day to worship the LORD in Shiloh. They come to bow down before the LORD and have a feast. It is a kind of holy celebration that included bringing the sacrifices and handing them to the priests, and the priest would perform the sacrifices and take his portion, burning the portion that was for the Lord, and giving a part of the meat cooked in the sacrifice

to the worshippers to eat. If I could be sacrilegious, I would say that a major part of the worship (bowing down) would be the participation of the family by sharing the food (meat) that is offered to the LORD. For the worshippers, it was a special occasion going as a family to the “house of the LORD” – showing devotion and faithfulness to the LORD. Bringing their gifts to the LORD for sacrifice.” This was the day of great significance for the worshippers and encounter of gratitude and requests and expression of devotion to the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel.

What the children of Israel did to show their devotion and honor to the LORD was so very different from what their pagan idol worshipping neighbors did for their gods. Among the neighbors of Israel, there were some who sacrificed their children to Molech and had days of festivals of music, dance, gluttony, and even self-mutilation as signs of devotion to their idols. Israelite worship during the first temple period was sedate, peaceful, and very much self-motivated and self-organized. The physical work was given to the officials in the holy precinct where the priests and the Levites did their work in preparation of the sacrificial cult and



the invitation of the worshippers to partake of the meat of the sacrifices that they offered.

Obviously, in the Temple there were singers and musical instruments like the trumpets and stringed instruments that were used by Levites. The regular Israeli worshiper could have a personal expression of devotion and sing a song (Psalm) or have a personal expression by a recitation of poetry, but it was not something that was organized and commanded by the Lord. It was an expression of devotion and faith based only on the personal overflowing of emotion and faith in the individual, not an organized commanded liturgy.

Isaiah 30:29, “The song will glorify you as a whole, a holiday and a joy of heart in the flute come on Mount Hashel to Tzur Yisrael.” In this context, the music and celebration will be a battle cry for the Lord and His glory over His enemies who come to battle. (Please see the context of Isaiah chapter 30 and continue reading through the next verses of the chapter.)

It is interesting that dance and playing the flute at holiday ceremonies are practiced among all our neighbors all the way to Mesopotamia to the north and Egypt to the south, and Moab, Ammon, and Edom to our east. The difference in Israel’s worship was the sedate and serious ceremonies that did not call for the worshipper to act ecstatic and lose control of their faculties. The story of Elkanah and Hannah in the first chapters of 1 Samuel is a great example. When Hannah became too emotional, Eli the High Priest at Shiloh was concerned that she got drunk with too much wine.

The Biblical holidays were of course occasions for worship and adoration of God with food, drink, and the sharing of the meat of their sacrifices. The individual worshipper and his family had freedom

to express his faith and dedication to the LORD and thanksgiving with his own talent and song. Worship before the LORD in the courts of the Temple in Jerusalem was an atmosphere of celebration and expression of devotion.

I would like to jump to the New Testament to see what worship, expression of devotion and sanctity looked like among the disciples of Yeshua in the first century after His birth.

In the New Testament, we find that the early disciples of Yeshua went to the Temple, and for most of the first century after Yeshua’s ascension, the disciples continued to go to the Temple in Jerusalem and to worship and pray like every other Jew. The most revealing text about this is actually in Acts chapter 21 in the words of Jacob (James) to the Apostle Paul and the disciples that accompanied him to Jerusalem. Acts 21:19-20, “When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, ‘You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law. . . .’” Of course, we can see the same thing in the earlier chapters of the book of Acts, how the Apostle Paul and (I assume) the other Apostles went to the Jewish synagogues every Sabbath, and how Jacob also rationalized that the Gentiles (in Acts 15:21) would go hear Moses being read in the Synagogue. So, for the early church, it seems clear that they worshipped in the synagogues like all the other Jews in the world.

The worship of the early disciples of Yeshua differed strikingly from that of other religions in the Roman world in that it had no cult statues, temples, or regular sacrifices (whether of animals or produce) or the customary musical

We see in one of the earliest Christian texts outside of the New Testament that worship is discussed, and there again the element that is central is the eating of bread and drinking of wine in memory of Yeshua’s sacrifice.

accompaniment. Christian worship had a primarily verbal character, and in this respect, it was similar to the worship in the Jewish synagogues, but yet it was different because the focus was on Yeshua as the central piece of the worship and included the partaking of the bread and the wine in memory of Yeshua’s death, burial, and resurrection.

Based on a few passages, the time of the communal meeting of the early disciples might have been at the end of the Sabbath, in the evening, which would already be the first day of the week in Hebrew reckoning. “Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came

The apostles, Paul, and his disciples did not forsake worshiping in the synagogue as long as they were able to worship with the Jewish community in every city that they visited.

together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight” (Acts 20:7 NKJV). This particular passage was special because Paul was departing in the morning. Possibly the same is witnessed in 1 Corinthians 16:2, “On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.” Thirdly, Acts 18:7 might contain a misunderstanding of an original Hebrew phrase that tells us when believers met. We read that Paul and Silas went to Justus’ house which (according to the Greek) was “attached to the synagogue”. Maybe the original idea here was that Paul went to Justus’ house “acharei” or “after” synagogue, but when this was penned into Greek, it was understood as the Hebrew “me’achorei” or “behind” the synagogue. But whether or not this is the case, Paul went to a believer’s house after synagogue. So, what did the Disciples of Yeshua do when they gathered together for worship on the end of the Sabbath day after they returned from congregation in the synagogue?

The description of what ought to be happening in the fellowship and the meeting of the disciples is described in a few places in the New Testament, but the shortest and clearest is from 1 Corinthians 14:26-28, “How is it then,

brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God.”

What is clear to me from the above texts is that the meeting of the community was primarily to “break bread” (see 1 Corinthians 11 and Acts 20:7) and the floor was open for any brother (and I assume any sister) to have a song or a psalm or some teaching, a revelation or interpretation that would be beneficial for the edification of the community. If there is a manifestation of speaking in tongues it would have to be limited to two or three at the most, and interpretation is a must after each speaker in tongues. If there is no interpretation the speaker is to keep silent in the church and not make a fuss about it.

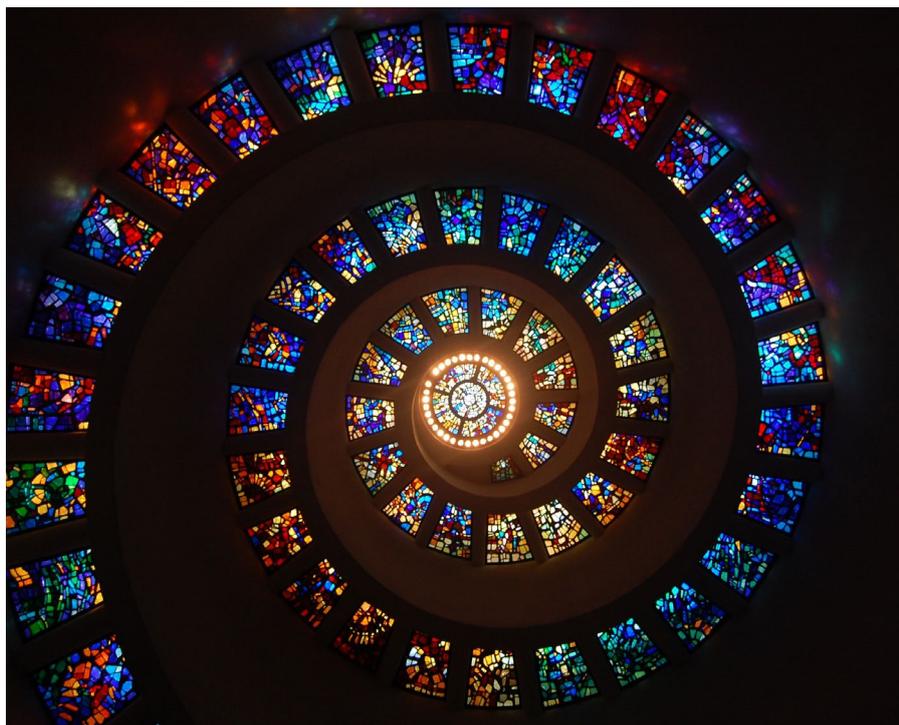
The picture that is clear from the book of Acts is that Paul and those who accompanied him went every Sabbath Day to the synagogue and in many of the places he was invited to read from the Torah and to give the teaching. This is an indication that Paul and those who were with him went on the Sabbath days to

worship with the Jewish communities in Asia Minor and Greece, and when Paul comes to Jerusalem he goes to worship in the Temple.

What does this indicate? It indicates that the worship of the early disciples of Yeshua was in the synagogues when possible. Most of the converts from among the Gentiles that Paul reached were those who were already in the synagogue, i.e., they were already God Fearers who understood that idol worship was futile. The apostles, Paul, and his disciples did not forsake worshiping in the synagogue as long as they were able to worship with the Jewish community in every city that they visited. Only in the first quarter of the Second Century after the Messiah did that condition change, and Jewish disciples in the synagogue were persecuted and oftentimes forbidden to continue their participation in the Jewish synagogues.

From Paul’s first letter to the Corinthian church, it is clear that the Lord’s Supper was a very important and central part and purpose for the gathering and fellowship of the disciples in every location. Paul preserves a short account of the Lord’s Supper in 1 Cor. 11:23–26, the emphasis being on the order and mutual consideration that ought to be preserved in the taking of the bread and the wine. This is without a doubt for me one of the main ingredients of the worship and community gathering of the first-century community of disciples. The discussion in 1 Corinthians 14 of the public meeting and the need for order, decency, and respect for each other and for the occasion is the emphasis.

We see in one of the earliest Christian texts outside of the New Testament that worship is discussed, and there again the element that is central is the eating of bread and drinking of wine in memory



of Yeshua's sacrifice, resurrection from the dead, and His return. These central elements of our faith in God and in Yeshua are also the focal point of the disciples in their worship.

Pliny the Younger who was the Roman governor of Asia Minor in his correspondence with the Emperor Trajan describes what the Christians do when they gather together. In fact, Pliny's description is one of the oldest outside of the New Testament. The first letter exchange between Pliny and Trajan dates to 108 after Yeshua's ascension. The letter exchange between Pliny the governor and Trajan the Emperor is very important because it is a picture of what the disciples did in the beginning of the second century after Yeshua. This text is also important because it

provides the perspective of an outsider. The information that Pliny shared was provided by spies that were sent to find out what the disciples of Yeshua were doing when they gathered together. Pliny provides the following details: 1) Christians met on a regular basis on a fixed day (what day was not mentioned) early in the morning before beginning work. The set day does not necessarily mean Sunday. It could be any day of the week according to Pliny's letter. 2) They sang songs honoring their Messiah as though to God. 3) They bound themselves to abstain from immoral behavior. 4) They assembled again after work to share a meal together.

This outsider witness of what was happening in the community of disciples

in Asia Minor at the beginning of the second century C.E. is important, because essentially this is more or less what is being done today in the churches and in most of the Messianic communities. There is one thing that is missing in the Didache that is probably the most important item of worship in the evangelical churches of today, and that is the collection of money that is done in public in most churches and Messianic congregations.

Worship and giving honor, praise, and thanks to our LORD is very important. The order, aesthetics, and decency in our worship service is of extreme importance, but it must be said that there are more important things that the Body of the Messiah must add and emphasize, all without stopping or diminishing the importance of worshipping in spirit and in truth our Lord and our God!

If too great an emphasis is on the ceremonial, aesthetics, singing and music, it diminishes our zeal for obedience and doing the work of the Kingdom outside of the meetings and worship services. Let us remember the teaching of our Lord of feeding the hungry, caring for orphans and widows, and the other important things outside of the gathering and worshipping of God and celebrating our Messiah, Yeshua! Let us concentrate on all the important things and remember that worshipping God is very important. It ought to be done decently and in order with a heart of joy and without complaints; only praise and joy in the Lord.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joseph Shulam was born in Sofia, Bulgaria on March 24, 1946 to a Sephardic Jewish Family. In 1948, his family immigrated to Israel just before the establishment of the State. While in high school, he was introduced to the New Testament and immediately identified with the person of Yeshua. In 1981, Joseph and the small fellowship that was started in his house established one of the first official non-profit organizations of Jewish Disciples of Yeshua in Israel – Netivyah Bible Instruction Ministry. Joseph has lectured extensively and has assisted in encouraging disciples around the world. He and his wife Marcia have two children and two grandchildren.



THE WARRIOR BRIDE ARISING

By Karen Davis

In my earliest days as a Jewish believer in Yeshua (Jesus), I discovered the beautiful love story found in the Song of Solomon. As I spent time meditating on the words, “O my dove, in the cleft of the rock...let me see your face, let me hear your voice, for your face is lovely and your voice is sweet” (Song 2:14), my life was utterly transformed by a revelation of the depth of God’s love toward me.

Alongside this new unspeakable joy filling my heart, I was awakened as never before to the deep pain and comfortless grief of my own Jewish people. Centuries of anti-Semitism perpetrated by so-called “Christians” had created thick walls of resistance within Jewish people to even hearing the name of Jesus. Most Jews today remain blind to their own Jewish Messiah and stand outside the gates of His healing love, unable to enter

into His goodness. After the atrocities of the Holocaust, many Jews arrived in Israel with their essential belief in God shattered.

As the Lord began to lead me into the depths of His heart in intercession and travail for the Jewish people, I received His promise that one day I would live in the land of my inheritance and would share His gift of love with my people – His beloved Israel.

That day came in the summer of 1989 when my husband David and I immigrated to Israel leaving behind the world of theater and the arts that had once drawn us both to New York City. I knew from my own experience as a Jew coming to know Jesus that it was not with “persuasive words of wisdom but in a demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Corinthians 2:4) that my eyes

He was clearly calling us to take an offensive stand, as Elijah did, to declare triumphantly the victory of the Lord Yeshua, Adonai Tzevaot, over the powers of darkness.

We were being called to pierce the darkness with the light of truth, knowing that our struggle was “not against flesh and blood but against the spiritual hosts of wickedness.”

had been opened to the truth of who He is. Just like with Peter, truly flesh and blood did not reveal it to me. I knew as we settled into a neighborhood of Holocaust survivors on Mount Carmel that in ourselves, we had no power that could possibly convince one of these precious ones that Jesus was the way to their salvation and healing. The multi-layered walls of misunderstanding and resistance to His name appeared before us as an immovable mountain, but the word of the Lord came to us as it did to Zechariah, “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit.”

We began by reaching out to the drug addicts of Haifa, Jews and Arabs, those who had already lost hope in themselves and were more willing than most in Israel to open their hearts to Yeshua. As we saw the power of the Lord setting these men free from addictions, we soon realized the Lord was calling us to plant a congregation that would serve as a community for these men and also be a place that other Israelis could experience Yeshua for the first time. As we began to search for an appropriate meeting place for our new congregation, which became known as “Kehilat HaCarmel” (Carmel Congregation), the Lord opened a door for us at the very top of Mount Carmel, in the area where Elijah defeated the prophets of Baal (see 1 Kings 18).

As the worship director of the congregation, I was keenly aware that the Lord had given us a strategic assignment on this high place. His word came to me

from Isaiah 42:11-13, “Shout from the top of the mountains, let them give glory to the Lord...the Lord will go forth like a warrior, like a man of war, He will prevail against his enemies.” He was clearly calling us to take an offensive stand, as Elijah did, to declare triumphantly the victory of the Lord Yeshua, Adonai Tzevaot (the Lord of armies), over the powers of darkness. We were learning that our city of Haifa, built all across the slopes of Mount Carmel, had the highest concentration of Satanism and New Age cults in Israel. Many were deceived by the modern-day prophets of Baal, and the spirit of Jezebel was clearly still entrenched here.

I understood from these verses in Isaiah that the role of worship would be central to the battle set before us and that as we would stand in faith, giving glory to the Lord, immovable in the face of the enemy, He Himself would fight the battle and prevail. Our part was to “position ourselves, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord” (2 Chron. 20:17). Our worship was to be characterized by a prophetic “shout of victory,”—seeing and proclaiming that victory by faith, not by sight—just as the singers went out before the army in the time of Jehoshaphat saying, “‘Praise the Lord, for His mercy endures forever!’ Now when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushes” (2 Chronicles 20:21-22).

We began fervently seeking the Lord to give us new songs that would equip us to

“shout unto God with a voice of triumph” (Psalm 47:1), knowing that “the shout of a King is among us!” (Num. 23:21). We prayed for the Lord to open our spirits to hear the “sound of heaven” over Mount Carmel—new rhythms, melodies, and textures that would “launch” the mighty weapon of the Word of God into the heavenlies, “to the intent that...the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places” (Eph. 3:10). We were being called to pierce the darkness with the light of truth, knowing that our struggle was “not against flesh and blood but against the spiritual hosts of wickedness” (Eph. 6:12).

One after another, new songs were released to our team, songs with a fresh sound, carrying powerful prophetic scriptures that the Lord was speaking to us. From week to week, the living Word of God, the Lord of Hosts, was leading us forward in His triumphal procession (2 Corinthians 2:14).

All of us in the body of Messiah have been called as spiritual warriors to take this stand in the face of the enemy, in this fundamental fight of faith.

The primary battle in which we are engaged is a battle over our faith. Our praise and worship is an expression of faith that becomes an act of spiritual warfare.

In the Book of Ephesians in chapter 6 which deals with the subject of spiritual warfare, we are told “having done all, to stand.” All of us in the body of Messiah have been called as spiritual warriors to take this stand in the face of the enemy, in this fundamental fight of faith. “This is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith” (1 John 5:4). The primary battle in which we are engaged is a battle over our faith. Our praise and worship is an expression of faith that becomes an act of spiritual warfare—even a “shield of faith that can thwart the fiery darts of the enemy” (which sometimes are the dangerous missiles aimed at our cities from terrorist groups on our borders!). We must be a prophetic people who “see” the Lord high and lifted up (Isaiah 6:1), who “see” Him going before us with the chariots of God thousands upon thousands (Psalm 68:7-12). Asaph, the Levitical choir



The Lord is calling His body to arise in this hour as His warrior bride—warring in the Spirit while resting in our Beloved.

director, was described as a “seer” (2 Chron. 29:30). It is a powerful prophetic statement to declare in the face of the

horrors of suicide bombings that we have faced so often here in Israel, “Hodu l’Adonai ki tov, ki l’olam chasdo!”

As we await the return of our Bridegroom King, we are blessed to “know the joyful sound and walk in the light of His countenance”

“Give thanks to the Lord for He is good, and His mercy endures forever.”

During the eighteen months of my late husband David’s battle with cancer when I became his primary caregiver, I remember the day the two of us were sitting at our little kitchen table, David in his wheelchair, asking ourselves, “Do we really still believe that ‘God is good and His mercy endures forever?’”—these words which we had been singing

for decades. In the midst of the most intense trial of our lives, we learned that by stirring up the Spirit of God within us, we were able to sing this honestly with “truth in the inward parts” (Ps. 51:6).

We must be able to say, “I know in Whom I have believed.” The Word of God must be tested in our lives before it can come forth from our mouths in song or in speech with true authority and anointing of truth. It then becomes a powerful spiritual weapon that pierces the darkness—not only the darkness which hinders our people from seeing their Messiah Yeshua but also the darkness in our own hearts, those thoughts and emotions that war against the truth of God within us. “Bringing down every high thing that exalts itself above the knowledge of God” (2 Cor. 10:6).

In these unprecedented days of global pandemic, lockdowns, and chaos, it is clear that the shakings and end-time battles have intensified with the powers of darkness converging as never before as an “occultic arrow” against the Kingdom of God. The Lord is calling His body to arise in this hour as His warrior bride—warring in the Spirit while resting in our Beloved. Each of us is being “called

up,” mobilized into active duty, into the discipline and obedience of worshipping warriors. When we submit to the testing of our faith which the Lord allows into our lives, we are brought into a deeper level of the crucified life in Yeshua. When we can say that we “have already died and our life is hidden in Messiah Yeshua” (Col. 3:3), then fear will have no power over us, and we will emerge from our trials victorious, unshakeable, as polished arrows which are “sharp in the heart of the King’s enemies” (Ps. 45:5).

In the uncertain days ahead, we may find ourselves “hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed...persecuted, but not forsaken...” (2 Cor. 4:8-9), “sorrowful, yet rejoicing” (2 Cor. 6:10) for we have been given a foretaste of the “new wine” of the Kingdom—the joy of the Lord—which is our strength to run the race with endurance in the midst of the birth pangs coming upon the earth. As we await the return of our Bridegroom King, we are blessed to “know the joyful sound and walk in the light of His countenance” (Ps. 89:15). “Who is she who looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, awesome as an army with banners?” (Song 6:10).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karen Davis is the Worship Director of Carmel Congregation (“Kehilat HaCarmel”), a Messianic congregation located on the top of Mount Carmel, Israel, where her late husband David served as Founding/Senior Pastor for 25 years. Born in the U.S. to a Jewish family, Karen had a life-changing encounter with Jesus (“Yeshua”) in New York City where she was developing her musical talents. Karen and her husband immigrated to Israel in 1989, and in 1991 they founded the House of Victory rehabilitation center for Jews and Arabs and Carmel Congregation. Karen and her “one new man” worship team of Jews and Arabs are dedicated to building unity in the body of Messiah in Israel through praise and worship.

Karen is also a recording artist and song writer, well-known internationally for her Messianic praise and worship music. She has recorded numerous solo albums of original music in Hebrew and English, which are distributed internationally by Galilee of the Nations/Sony Music. Her latest recordings are “Songs in the Night” and “The Lord Roars from Zion – Songs of the Warrior Bride.” Karen is also a featured artist on the highly acclaimed Galilee of the Nations recordings “Adonai,” “Elohim,” and the “Heart for Israel” series.

Permanently residing in Israel, Karen and her late husband David also ministered for many years internationally as a team with a strong emphasis on the prophetic and the “one new man” in Yeshua. Since her husband’s passing Karen continues to speak and lead worship internationally, with a passion to see the “warrior bride” of Messiah arise in the nations.

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THE POWER OF THE TONGUE

By Lydia Bachana



As this Teaching from Zion sheds lights on the subject of Praise and Worship, I have perhaps made a slight detour to which I feel is the base of praise, namely ‘the power of the tongue’. Based on reflections on our daily family life and contemplating the universal search for how we (as parents) can raise and lead our family more positively, I would like to take a deeper look at how speech has the power to break or heal.

Praise, worship, speech—most of these are expressed with mouth-uttered words and sounds. During my linguistics studies, we started analyzing the physical aspect of speech, dealing with the way different sounds are produced due to the shape of our mouth, in connection with the brain. However, there is also a non-physical component that influences what we utter. The tongue is not only

connected upwards to our brain, for it is able to utter and express that which lives inside the heart. The tongue can even express inner stirrings from the sub-conscious. An example of this is the so-called ‘Freudian slip’: a slip of the tongue that is motivated by and reveals some unconscious aspect of the mind. This shows a correlation, albeit a subconscious one, between body and mind.

The tongue is not only connected upwards to our brain, for it is able to utter and express that which lives inside the heart.

Perhaps the Bible relates to this matter in Proverbs 4:23 as it warns about matters of the heart, and specifically for influences by external factors, for “above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” The speech-producing movement perhaps is not so much downwards, allowing the brain and mouth to cooperate, as it is an upward movement between outer influences that touch the mind and heart, steering subconsciously upwards towards the brain and then being uttered by the tongue.

James 3:5 describes the tongue as “a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark.” If that depiction of the tongue was not clear enough, Proverbs 18:21 strongly states that, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue”. In a day and age where all things seem relative, it is easy to brush this pearl of Solomon’s wisdom away as a grave exaggeration. Of course, had its meaning been literal, probably not many people would be alive, with the possible exception of a rare saint. Because,



haven’t we all sinned by means of gossip, or lashon hara (the ‘evil tongue’, as it is called in Hebrew)? I know I have.

I presume this verse does not merely point towards a physical death, but rather functions as a warning of how our speech could cause an emotional state of decline that equals decay. The tongue is so powerful that the Bible connects it to life and death. Taking this warning seriously, I wonder how many cracks my (thoughtless) utterings may have caused others in life? Let us look beyond these thoughts, trying to use these insights as a tool to cause some goodness; how can I achieve this alternative, life-giving aspect in my speech? If we wish to bless with our words, let us look at how we view our circumstances.

There are two ways of looking at life: looking through our eyes and looking through faith. When our tongue utters what the eye sees we tend to say things negatively, to emphasize what lacks. Perhaps the core of this lies within the Garden of Eden, where life in paradise

was risked just to have ‘some of the other, greener grass’. In Paradise, man and woman alike, acted on the temptation from a sneaky snake, who sold them perfect eternity in exchange for some luscious looking fruit and the mere promise that they would be like G-d. Apparently, they were willing to sell their G-d-given Paradise-reality for some promise by a creature that the Creator Himself had made. You see? The human heart tends to be (easily) discontent: we want more, and we want it now! This point of view focuses us naturally on what we do not have, and what we do want. I remember how we prayed for months for a good home for our growing family. As we finally moved, my husband voiced his gratitude every morning for months. Of course, eventually we got used to it. Grateful, but used to. Now we still mention our happiness but just less frequent. In a world where prices go down and people replace objects to suit their style and fashion, we tend to compare. In a time that is very visual and fashion-sensitive, it is hard to remember to not merely ‘see with our physical

When our tongue utters what the eye sees we tend to say things negatively, to emphasize what lacks.

A wise friend once taught me to focus on what I wish to amplify. This tool enables us to shift focus from what we do not wish to what we do want by encouragement.

eyes' and search for exterior beauty, like might have been the case already with Adam and Eve. In this 'visual race', it is easy to forget that what the eye sees is only part of the truth. When trying to put a daily-life circumstance in other words: yes, my day may be hard, and that is a fact; however, that point of view blocks out the other good things that I chose not to focus on in my day.

Faith, on the other hand, is a ray of light. Faith acknowledges that which my eye sees is reality. For example, "the kids acted out today" is true. Yet, faith can rise above that fact and make lemonade from lemons. With faith, I can say "Yes, the kids acted out; however, when I realized they were disappointed (for example: school was cancelled again due to the Corona pandemic), I managed to remain calm and be a safe haven for my family." These moments are when my point of view looks beyond the mundanity of my daily life. I tell my husband about them

and my self-esteem is strengthened, as well as my sense of honor as a mom. Faith lived out in such a way allows me to take charge of my own emotions and keeps my feelings from overwhelming me, but it also reminds me to not make this about me. I can see that the children acted out because they were overwhelmed. I rise above and the eyes of my heart see that the children just experienced something emotionally hard and therefore acted out. Perhaps it was a toy that broke; or the first day in the new school after a tough season at the old school; or the girl who called my princess something ugly hours earlier that made her feel ugly and insecure. It is in my power when I feel overwhelmed to pause and count to 10. Look through the eyes of the heart of the responsible adult that I am called to be as a mother. That is tough, but it is the way I want to be seen by my family. It is also the way I prefer to guide them after they calm down, when I tell them that it is okay to be angry but then I ask them how we could solve this next time. It is not ignoring the hardships in life; it is acknowledging in order to rise above, much like an eagle uses a storm and the wind. It is just a choice that I must make daily and sometimes 25 times daily.

I am reminded of a very simple story. It was about a sick child who was hospitalized for a prolonged period of time, or perhaps it was an elderly man or woman. It does not matter, but the moral of the story is universal. The person receives a visit and describes the view, while looking out the window: "What beautiful, purple-blue flowers... Every morning a new flower opens which then closes at night. Do you hear those birds chirping, and do you see them playing at the water? I watch them daily." The visiting guest is curious and gets up to look. "What are you talking about? All I see is concrete buildings, a few flowers, sure, and a few sparrows..." Beauty is truly in the eye of the beholder. Yet, I

am unwilling to accept that it is "luck" that bestows that viewpoint upon a blessed few. For it truly is a choice that we sometimes have to will ourselves to see, even when there is mainly concrete in our lives.

I will never forget the story of a Christian singer who died young leaving behind her loving husband and young children. This was a true story of someone whose life was on display as she deteriorated physically. From within her shone a light that surpassed everything that was managing to tear down her physically due to terminal sickness. I followed her story for a few years and saw how the message of her songs grew deeper about enjoying the smallest joys of life to their fullest and hoping for a life with Messiah after this life had passed. This change opened my eyes: if a terminally sick mom managed to see and convey such beauty, I could, too. Her life and music voiced the moral of the hospital story that I shared earlier, where beauty was chosen to be seen. If the music was made merely to sell faith or records, the effect would have been temporary and superficial. Yet, this was an authentic, living faith, stirring up from the depths of the soul, pouring into the thoughts and then spilling over into the deeds and songs that affected her surroundings.

It all is a matter of focus. A wise friend once taught me to focus on what I wish to amplify. This tool enables us to shift focus from what we do not wish to what we do want by encouragement. That shift is so freeing! Imagine hearing what you do wrongly: it breaks down and usually causes anger. No wonder children usually protest such negative focus on their behavior. You see? If someone feels rejected, they can act like a reject resulting in an unwanted negative spiral. Also, shouting or verbally abusing a child hurts their soul just as spanking would. Sadly enough, plenty of believer

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homes are stuck in such a hurtful spiral. Now imagine what happens when looking through the eyes of faith, expressing what you believe and wish to see. You would see potential, dreams, and a positive reaction. Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder.

I am not saying I succeed at positive focus all the time, for it really is a process that is still growing on me, but I do love the grace of the process. Even when I fail, I know I can just admit it, ask forgiveness, and start over. That in itself is a precious lesson. Some time back, we had a negative cycle with the kids. It was a trap to react to their negative behavior then. I told myself just to manage to focus on two positive things at a time, and then another two, and another two... I wore a handmade bracelet that says “love” to remind myself to react in love. Cutting the challenge into little steps made it simpler, and something started to happen. That is how a negative cycle can be changed by simple goodness.

The book of Proverbs reminds me to guard my heart; to know the Scriptures and instill His truth inside me, because the Scriptures remind me that Our Creator made us all wonderfully (Psalm 139). Expressing goodness by means of a simple, encouraging phrase also nourishes our natural, built-in desire to be loved, esteemed, and respected. We are sons and daughters of the Living G-d, created in His image (Genesis 1). If we are to bring out the best in our children

or someone close to us, we need to sow seeds of encouragement. As I elevate another person, I in return am elevated, and my soul gets watered, too. Like any living being that grows, encouragement can chip away hardness and sadness, and it can nourish. It strengthens the self-



esteem.

Perhaps the secret lies within taking a step back and by shifting our focus outward. Encouragement has the ability to lift up the speaker and the receiver. Worship too, is the lifting up of our Heavenly

Father. By praising Him, we get lifted up from whatever “concrete reality” we were focused on or the worries that held us captive. This elevation adds joy and lifts up the spirit.

This secret of taking a step back and shifting our focus outward also reminds me of one of the pearls of wisdom my mother taught me from an early age on: “thankfulness is the key in prayer.”

She taught me that gratitude reflects the state of the soul and holds the key to open my eyes to see what G-d does for me, and it enables me to see my surroundings—not just in the good times, but rather “give thanks in all circumstances; for this is G-d’s will for you in Messiah Yeshua” (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

On Shabbat, our traditional prayer service ends with the following words that are quoted in 1 Peter 3:10, emphasizing their timeless truth from generation to generation: “My God, guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking deceitfully” (Psalm 34:13). Interesting, how even after the prayer service we need a reminder to focus on life-bringing speech that is truthful. It is a humbling reminder for myself that, as I exit the holiness of prayers, I need His help to act accordingly in holiness in my day-to-day life, too.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lydia Bachana was born into a believing family. She is married to Yehuda Bachana, and they have three children and a dog. Lydia studied English Literature and Linguistics at the Hebrew University. She loves to write and sings in a choir. After having worked part-time as an editor, Lydia is now home full-time to invest in their family.

WORSHIP IS THE REWARD: WHY IT IS OK TO LOSE YOURSELF

By Adam Lee Rosenfeld

I have this memory of receiving a birthday gift from my brother when I was around eight years old. By the time I was born, he was all grown up and out of the house, so I did not see him all that often. He would come to visit every once in a while. One day he came by to give me a present for my birthday. He handed me a rectangular, heavy object. I took it from him and tore away the wrapping paper. What could it be? A box of Transformers? A new video game?

To my utter dismay, I found that I was holding a dictionary. A dictionary... for my birthday. I was so disappointed that I actually cried, right there, in front of my brother. I made no attempt to look happy or say thank you to him. It was awful. My brother just left the house and was gone. I felt bad about that moment ever since. And as bad as I feel about that moment, I think of how I have done the same thing to God over and over again.

Doing it Wrong

I have been blessed with a gift from God. He gave me the ability to worship Him through music. In my early teenage years, I learned to play guitar, sing, and write songs. Later on in life, He gave me opportunities to play on worship teams, lead worship, and to be on staff

with a worship ministry. But I did not always appreciate those opportunities as I should have. At times, I saw them as a means to an end. I thought that if I chose to use my gifts in worship, God would “be nice to me” and one day let me do the other stuff I wanted to do in life. This shows that I did not understand the gift I had been given.

The truth is that God is not just “nice” to me; He loves me. He loves me so much He gave me all these opportunities to worship Him. My brother gave me a dictionary to express his love. Maybe we did not know each other well enough, but God knows me on a deeper level, and gave me gifts accordingly. But in my heart, I treated both my brother and God the same.

Lose Yourself...

King David understood this concept of God’s gift of worship. He was “a man after God’s own heart,” as the Bible says (1 Samuel 13:14). When the ark was being brought into Jerusalem, his response was to remove his royal garments and dance before God with all of his might (2 Samuel 6:14). The source text for this historical account implies “whirling and twirling.” Can you imagine some of today’s world

leaders taking off their suit jackets, and whirling and twirling in public? That is not the kind of PR these guys are usually looking for. But here is the point – we all need something to whirl and twirl about.

A long time ago, the Israelites in the desert tragically decided it was in their best interest to worship a golden calf. It says that after they made sacrifices, and after they sat down to eat, they “got up and played” (Exodus 32:6). The source text here implies “laughing in a playful manner.” Although this is not exactly the same thing as “whirling and twirling,” I believe that both have something in

David removed the garments that identified him with royalty in order to worship God. He cast off his royal status before Him – he lost himself.

But when I lose myself in worship to God, indeed I find myself. He is the only one worthy to receive my loss of inhibition.

common. They both allude to the desire to cast off inhibition.

The account of David dancing before the Lord also hints that he took off his clothes to do so (2 Samuel 6:20). My understanding of this is that David removed the garments that identified him with royalty in order to worship God. He cast off his royal status before Him – he lost himself.

I need something like this in life. I need something that warrants a total casting off of the social order – of all inhibitions. I need to somehow get to that place where I totally lose myself. This is a big theme in today's culture. "Lose yourself to the music." "Go wild to the beat." Sure, I get it. I have been there. Be it the beat, the music, the pop star, the rock band, the hippie bonfire festival, whatever, those things do not have the ability to properly receive my deepest adorations. They are not worthy of the casting off of all my inhibitions.

If I lose myself to this stuff, I only end



up lost. And then I have to go find myself again. All this does is drain my time and resources – my life. It can keep someone in an endless cycle of working to find yourself just so you can lose yourself again. And in the end, nothing gets accomplished. That is not the kind of life I want for myself.

...To Find Yourself

But when I lose myself in worship to God, indeed I find myself. He is the only one worthy to receive my loss of inhibition. And that is how I am supposed

to worship Him. Not as a means to an end. Not as something that will make me more righteous. Not as something that will open more doors for work/ministry/recognition in life – no. Worship itself is the reward.

So, when God gives you the gift to worship Him, do not think that it is going to lead you anywhere in life other than closer to Him. And if you cannot appreciate that, you are like that 8-year-old boy crying on his birthday. You have just been given a gift, and you do not even realize it.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Adam Lee Rosenfeld is an indie rock artist, a coach for creatives, and a full-stack marketer. He currently serves as the Media Director for Netivyah. Adam lives in Jerusalem with his wife and eight children. Learn about his music and art at haradonai.net.

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